

A European classic of  
experimental fiction

# The Alpha Cycle

IVO MICHIELS

'The Alpha Cycle' is one of the most overwhelming reading experiences in postwar literature. This five-volume series owes its legendary status to Michiels' unsurpassed use of crystal-clear, almost primitive language. The first two volumes in particular, 'Book Alpha' (1963) and 'Orchis Militaris' (1968), have lost nothing of their punch.

**A language experiment never before  
seen in Flanders**

DE STANDAARD

'Book Alpha' is a book of doubt, in which Michiels assimilates his war experiences in the character of the soldier who, under threat of imminent war, expresses existential uncertainty. Guilt feelings and the search for an individual identity are central themes in the book. The soldier reflects on his past life, unearthing a jumble of childhood and adolescent memories. From these snippets and snapshots in time emerges a mental portrait of someone who, thrown back and forth between indecision and resistance, must continue to live in uncertainty.

In 'Orchis Militaris,' the focus shifts to the essence of warfare itself. The human figure disintegrates completely. Humanity is no more than an amorphous collective, subject to incomprehensible and irreversible destructive processes.

The books 'Exit', 'Samuel, oh Samuel' and 'Dixi(t)' complete this fascinating cycle.

**Michiels is a superb storyteller, witty  
and wacky!**

TROUW

**Ivo Michiels**  
**De alfa-cyclus**  
**Het boek**  
**alfa Orchis**  
**militaris**  
**Exit Samuel,**  
**o Samuel**  
**Dixi(t)**



## AUTHOR



**Ivo Michiels** (1923-2012) rose during the postwar years as one of the most talented of a group of Flemish writers, including Louis Paul Boon and Hugo Claus. Michiels began as a filmmaker before turning to fiction with 'The Leavetaking' (Het afscheid) in 1957 and, in the following year, with the first volumes of his ten-volume series 'Journal Brut'. But it was only with his 1963 fiction 'Book Alpha' that he drew major and international attention.

**ORIGINAL TITLE** De Alfa-cyclus (1963, De Bezige Bij, 480 pp.)

**PRIZES** Arkprijs van het Vrije Woord, Belgian State Prize for Narrative Prose, Emile Bernheim Prize, America Award 2012

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