

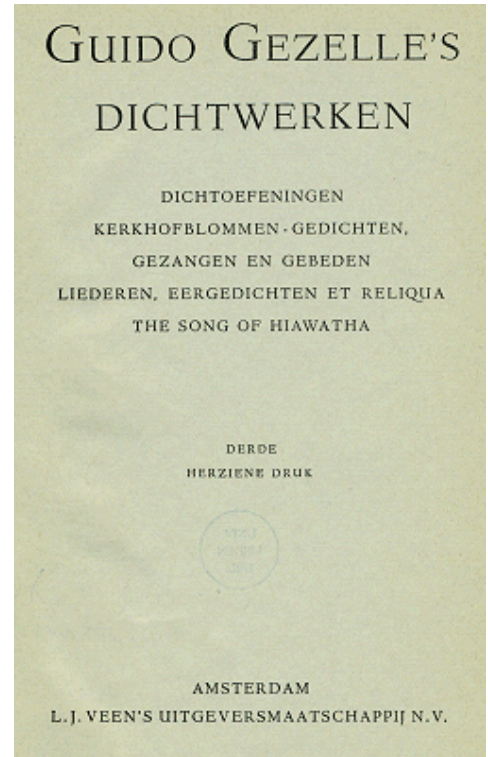
A pantheistic polyglot language poet

Complete Poems

GUIDO GEZELLE

The Bruges-born poet-priest Guido Gezelle is generally considered as one of the masters of 19th-century European lyric poetry. At the end of his life and in the first two decades of the 20th century, Gezelle was hailed by the avant-garde as the founder of modern Flemish poetry, and his unique voice was also belatedly recognised in the Netherlands and often compared with his English contemporary Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889). With Hopkins – if only the two had met, or at least read each other’s work! – he shares not only a dual vocation for the priesthood and lyric poetry, but also a troubled sexuality (see his elegy on a favourite pupil) and, more importantly, an eclectic experimentalism. His knowledge of foreign languages was not confined to English: he made wide use of French, Spanish and Italian in his teaching work with trainee-priests, and translated extensively. Nevertheless, the English link was the strongest.

The cosmopolitan, polyglot and pantheistic side of Gezelle will appeal to some, while his conservative Catholic, regionalist allegiances may deter others: time will be the final arbiter of what survives.



AUTHOR



Guido Gezelle (1830-1899) was a catholic priest, poet, linguist, journalist and translator. In 1854 he became a teacher at the preparatory seminary in Roeselare. He dreamed of becoming a missionary in England, but was not allowed to do so. Instead he became a teacher at the English Seminary in Bruges. The house he was born in Bruges has been turned into the Gezellemuseum.

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