

Poems as little snow machines

The Link Between the Days

MIRIAM VAN HEE

Miriam Van hee debuted in 1978 with her poems about homesickness, melancholy and loneliness. To her displeasure she was classified by the critics as neoromantic, the predominant trend in Flemish poetry at that time. Nevertheless, her poetry is not a flight from reality, as Van hee does broach realistic subjects.

It snows a great deal in the poems of Miriam Van hee; snowflakes slow the world down and blanket it in a subdued silence. Her poems are little snow machines that bring the reader to a standstill, able to reflect on his or her own life.

The poetic discovery of the past few years

MAGAZINE LITTÉRAIRE

The poetry is invariably grounded in the discrepancy between a desire for certainty and community and feelings of uncertainty, desertion, loneliness, doubt, imperfection and deficiency. She does not express those feelings in so many words, but instead makes them palpable. The mood of the poem emerges from between the verses, which circle towards the reader. Her poems are probably most important for what is left unsaid.

Van hee's style is close to spoken language: elliptical, direct, simple. It appears, if anything, cautious. The poet makes faltering attempts to come to terms with the world and herself. She holds on to the ordinary, familiar, everyday things: landscapes, conversations, relationships and moments of intense love. The seeming transparency of her language gives a universal dimension to our everyday images of loss. The reader imagines himself safe in her world, an illusion that is often suddenly dashed.

In 1998 her poems were collected in 'The link between the days: poems 1978-1996'.



AUTHOR



Miriam Van hee (b. 1952), an expert and teacher in the Slavic languages, has translated works by authors including Osip Mandelstam and Anna Achmatova. A compilation of her poetry called *The Link Between the Days: Poems 1978-1996* was published in 1998, and since then four other volumes have appeared: 'Blackberrying' (2002), 'Foreign Country' (2007), 'There too Falls the Light' (nominated for the 2014 VSB Poetry Prize) and 'As If We Were Summoned Somewhere' (2017). For this latest volume, she won the Ultima 2017 for Literature.

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PRIZES Literature Prize of the Province East-Flanders, Jan Campert Prize, Dirk Martensprijs, Flemish State Prize for Poetry, Herman de Coninck Prize

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