

A gripping biography about love, language and loss

# Language Without Me

KRISTIEN HEMMERECHTS

In 'Language Without Me', Hemmerechts calls herself 'the inadequate ghostwriter' of the autobiography of her deceased husband, poet Herman de Coninck. She beautifully shows what it is like to lose the person closest to you and how, even in his absolute and definitive absence, that person still remains close. In this book, the author uses language like a poet. This serves to avoid sentimentality, or at least to control it. Also, it brings her close to what her husband was: a poet. Hemmerechts explores the narrow line between the private and the anecdotal, and the general and the philosophical.

**More than a tribute to a loved one and a poet: a sincere work by a sensitive and powerful writer**

NRC HANDELSBLAD

The author uses De Coninck's poems as the vehicle to tell his story; with them she is able to describe the biographical background and the intimacy of their shared life, while retaining the balance she seeks. The development in De Coninck's poetry parallels the evolution in his own life. From writing poetry in which he never doubted his own 'being', nor the ability of language to give that 'being' form, De Coninck increasingly seemed to withdraw from his own poems, until only an 'Empty poem. Language without me. Meaning', remained. This is what his poetry will always be now for Hemmerechts; language without him. But it is within this poetic space that she makes clear what Herman de Coninck was – and is – to her.

**A moving and austere book**

HET PAROOL



## AUTHOR



**Kristien Hemmerechts** (b. 1955) is known for her outspoken opinions on social issues in which she doesn't shy away from controversy. Her extensive body of work contains frequently awarded novels, collections of short stories and autobiographical essays, mostly focussing on relationships, trauma and desire. Her most famous work is *Language Without Me*, an autobiographical essay in commemoration of her late husband, the celebrated Flemish poet Herman de Coninck.  
*Photo © Keke Keukelaar*

**ORIGINAL TITLE** *Taal zonder mij* (1998, Atlas, 150 pp. Latest edition by De Geus in 2017.)

**TRANSLATION RIGHTS** 2 Seas Agency - [contact@2seasagency.com](mailto:contact@2seasagency.com)

**TRANSLATION GRANTS** Marieke Roels - [marieke@flandersliterature.be](mailto:marieke@flandersliterature.be), Elise Vanoosthuyse - [elise@flandersliterature.be](mailto:elise@flandersliterature.be), Yannick Geens - [yannick@flandersliterature.be](mailto:yannick@flandersliterature.be)