

In Word and Thread

Justice for Entgen Luyten

Dear Entgen,

You lived in Limbricht, a small village in the border region of Limburg. By the time you were accused of witchcraft, you were already advanced in age. You were a widow and lived alone.

The sources tell us nothing about your childhood. They are silent about the colour of your eyes, the sound of your voice, and the people you loved. They do not tell us what you did during long winter evenings, which memories you carried with you, or how often you walked the same roads through the village.

But we know that you had a life before you became an accusation.

You were part of a community that had known you for many years. You saw the seasons come and go. You experienced times of abundance and times of scarcity. You lost your husband and learned to continue without him. Like so many women of your time, you lived a life that remained largely invisible to the historical record, yet was essential to daily life.

In a world of fields, livestock, flax and linen, women kept households running. They cared for children, prepared food, mended clothing and passed knowledge from one generation to the next. Their work left few traces in archives, yet formed the foundation of the lives around them.

Then everything changed.

In 1674, you were accused of witchcraft.

These were among the final decades in which such accusations could still lead to a death sentence. In many parts of Europe, doubts about witch trials were growing, but that change came too late for you. To put an end to the rumours and accusations, you chose to have yourself imprisoned, hoping to clear your name. While the proceedings against you were still ongoing, you were found dead in your cell. According to research, you were murdered, but your death was presented at the time as suicide. You were never convicted, yet even after your death you were treated as a criminal. Even your grave was to remain unmarked. Looking back, it is difficult to understand how fear and suspicion could transform a community so profoundly that a woman could be deprived of her good name even after death.

You were not a legendary witch. Not a woman from folklore. Not a figure from a tale.

You were a human being.

A widow. A neighbour. A woman growing old in the village where she had spent her entire life.

For centuries, little remained of you beyond a handful of documents preserved in an archive. Your voice disappeared. Your face disappeared. Even the memory of your existence was slowly covered by the mist of time.

But names can be found again.

This veil bears your name because it does what history sometimes forgets to do: reveal what has been hidden. As mist lifts from the landscape, this piece of handwork brings a small corner of the past into the light. Not to relive the pain, but to acknowledge that you existed.

The veil refers to the Low Countries, where mist and water shape the landscape. It refers to the fragile boundary between remembering and forgetting, between visibility and oblivion. Beneath that veil lie countless stories of women, men and children who were accused, condemned and erased during the witch persecutions.

Your name stands here for them all.

In thread and memory, the veil is lifted.

So that what was hidden may be seen once more.

Micca

About the Handwork

The Veil of the Low Countries is a tribute to the victims of the witch persecutions in our region. This piece of handwork lifts the veil of history: what was covered is made visible once again.

A veil of mist often hangs over the Low Countries; a thin layer between visibility and oblivion. Beneath that veil lie the stories of women, men and children who were once accused, condemned and erased from collective memory. This veil seeks to make their names visible once more.

The shape of the work is a half moon. In many traditions, the semicircle is associated with feminine power, cycles and transformation. It forms a bridge between heaven and earth, between the visible and the invisible.

Within modern witchcraft and Wicca, the arch is sometimes seen as a gateway between worlds. This image resonates with the idea of veil moments, when the boundary between past and present, life and death, memory and forgetting seems especially thin. The crescent thus represents a passage: an opening through which forgotten stories may emerge once again.

The veil is knitted in linen. For centuries, the Low Countries were renowned for their flax, linen, lace and weaving traditions. These were crafts often practised by women and passed from one generation to the next. The use of linen refers to that tradition of female knowledge and skill. At the same time, it restores value to a form of handwork that history has often underestimated, even though it helped shape everyday life.

The lace incorporates crosses enclosed within a circle. The cross refers to the simple marks with which illiterate people signed documents. Many victims of the witch persecutions entered history without a signature of their own. Their name was followed by a small cross beneath a statement that had often been obtained through pressure or torture.

The circle surrounding the cross gives the symbol a new meaning. It stands for wholeness, connection and remembrance. Where the cross may once have been a sign of powerlessness, it becomes here a symbol of recognition. It no longer marks a confession, but an existence.

Along the upper edge of the veil runs a black border, like a silent mourning band.

Black is the colour of farewell, remembrance and reverence. It marks the absence of those who can no longer speak, yet whose names and stories continue to live on.

The border forms the boundary between the visible and the invisible, between the world of today and the lives cut short by persecution. Just as the veil itself forms a passage between remembering and forgetting, the black edging marks the moment when we pause in the presence of loss.

At the same time, the border is not an ending. It encloses the work like a protective line, a sign that these stories must not disappear again. Where victims were once erased from history, the mourning band gives them a place of dignity and respect.

The black border may also be read as the horizon of the Low Countries on a misty day: a dark line where sky and earth meet, where past and present touch one another.

The Veil of the Low Countries is therefore at once a mourning cloth, a cloth of remembrance and an unveiling. Not to rewrite the past, but to make it visible.

Thread by thread.

Name by name.