

In Word and Thread

Restoring Evette Van Den Kerchove

Dear Evette,

Some people leave a trace that endures for centuries. Others leave behind little more than a name written on a faded piece of paper.

You belong to the latter.

Evette Van Den Kerchove. About fifty years old. Born in Etikhove. Married to Jean Van Erpe. Living in Ellezelles. The archives reveal almost nothing more. No occupation. No children. No house we can confidently call yours. Not a single word spoken in your own voice.

And yet, your name was written down.

Not so that you would be remembered, but so that you could be condemned.

In the autumn of 1610, a wave of accusations swept through the region. In Ellezelles, but also in Flobecq, Lessines, Ath and the surrounding villages, people were accused of witchcraft. Accidents, illness, failed harvests and dying livestock suddenly had a human culprit. More often than not, that culprit was a woman. Someone who was vulnerable, poor, growing old, or simply different from what society considered normal.

On 26 October 1610, that fear claimed six women.

Agnès de le Plache.

Martine de le Vigne.

Catherine de le Voye.

Quentine de le Censserye.

Madeleine Lestarquy.

And you.

You were strangled before being burned at the stake.

When I see your names written one beneath another, I imagine ordinary women from the same village. Wives. Mothers. Neighbours. Women who must surely have known one another. Perhaps you met at the village well or in the fields. Perhaps you baked bread together or spun flax side by side. Perhaps you did not. We can no longer know. Yet I find comfort in imagining that, before the trials, you simply shared the same everyday life.

What moves me most is that even after your death, you were in danger of disappearing once again.

Today, the folklore of Ellezelles usually speaks of five women executed in 1610. In books and on many websites, your name is often missing. Yet the judicial records clearly mention six condemned women. You were one of them.

Why your name so often faded from memory, we do not know. Perhaps it mattered that you were born in Etikhove before settling in Ellezelles. Perhaps it did not. History gives us no answer.

But it does give us your name.

And sometimes, a name is enough to begin again.

That is why I chose a Moebius.

A Moebius has neither beginning nor end. A single line continues endlessly, never breaking away from itself. As I worked with that shape, I found myself thinking about memory. Memory, too, need never end, as long as someone is willing to carry it forward.

The flowing line that winds across the cowl is always in motion. It recalls the ancient spiral, a symbol that has existed throughout Europe for thousands of years. Not because it tells the story of your trial, but because, to me, it represents protection, connection, and the endless cycle of remembrance.

As the Moebius is knitted, every loose end disappears between its two layers. They can no longer be seen, yet they continue to hold the whole together. I find that a beautiful image for history itself. So many people disappear from view, while remaining an inseparable part of the story.

That is how I want to preserve your name.

Not as a footnote.

Not as the woman who is sometimes forgotten.

But beside Agnès, Martine, Catherine, Quentine, and Madeleine.

Six women.

Six lives.

Six names that deserve to be spoken once more.

Micca