

What happened at a boys' summer camp in 1980?

European Birds

BART KOUBAA

Four members of a church choir, still boys, spend the summer of 1980 with their choir master on the Dutch island of Texel. Bird watching, the choir master assures the parents. But is that really the whole story? Decades later, Maarten, in the meantime married with three children and working at the Directorate-General Statistics and Economic Information, recognises one of his childhood friends in a missing persons announcement on television. He is overcome with restlessness and goes in search of the man whom he last saw thirty-five years ago.

Koubaa grabs the reader by the scruff of the neck.

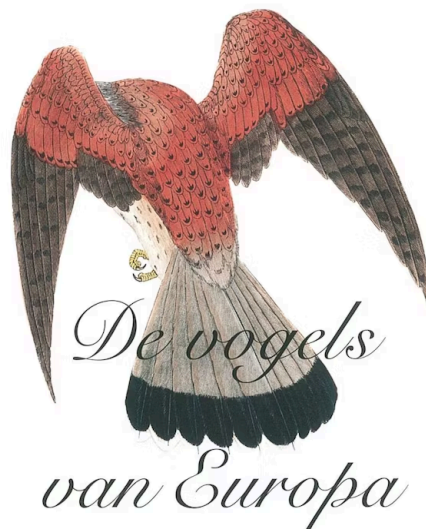
DE MORGEN

Maarten gets so wrapped up in his quest for what happened in the past that he fails to notice how he is becoming estranged from his family and friends. Can we really understand the past? Why do we so readily overlook the factor of chance? This makes 'European Birds' a novel where the truth is literally at stake: it is about probability and chance, about letting go and the art of not knowing for sure.

Koubaa approaches the style and yearning of Elsschot's best work.

DE GROENE AMSTERDAMMER

BART KOUBAA



AUTHOR



Bart Koubaa (b. 1968) is a writer and photographer. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, he caused a stir in Flanders with his rock band Ze Noiz. Koubaa is a true storyteller: major and minor histories blend effortlessly in his novels. Each of them is based on thorough research, something that is reflected in his meticulous observations. His work also stands out for its quasi-impassive narrators, who register everything from a distance and create an alienating, almost surreal atmosphere. Away from contemporary trends and fads, Koubaa has been steadily building a diverse body of work. Photo © Laila Koubaa

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TRANSLATION RIGHTS Jolijn Spooren - j.spooren@singeluitgeverijen.nl

TRANSLATION GRANTS Marieke Roels - marieke@flandersliterature.be, Yannick Geens - yannick@flandersliterature.be