

An overwhelming portrait of a mother's deterioration

# Stammered Songbook

ERWIN MORTIER

'Stammered Songbook' is one of those rare books that grab you by the throat from the first sentence and never let go. After Erwin Mortier's mother falls victim to Alzheimer's disease at the age of 57, he becomes the chronicler of her slow deterioration. His observations and meditations are couched in the scintillating, lyrical prose that has become his trademark.

In arresting images and sentences like strung pearls, he traces the slow breakdown of his mother's mind and its impact on her husband and children. The patient and those who love her enter a shadowy realm between life and death, narration and disintegration, language and silence. The resulting book is a fragmentary portrait of his mother's illness.

**It's written with this precision, tenderness and sense of desolation**

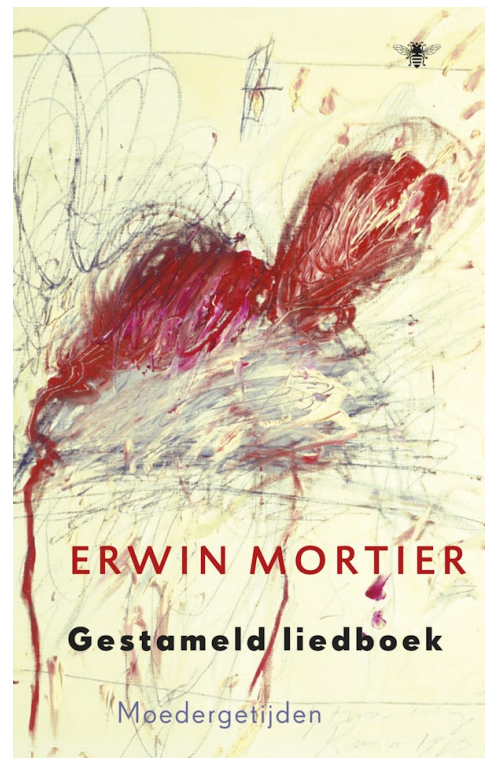
JULIAN BARNES

The stammerer in this story is not only the mother, as language gradually slips away from her, but also the author, so distraught by his mother's condition that he found himself utterly incapable of writing – until he began work on this book.

'Stammered Songbook' is not solely about mourning, but also about language, and above all about love. Mortier's book is an essential, universal lament, bitter and razor-sharp yet pure and sublime in its beauty.

**Mortier digs at least one diamond each page**

DE STANDAARD



## AUTHOR



**Erwin Mortier** (b. 1965) made his mark in 1999 with his debut novel 'Marcel', which set the tone for a consistent oeuvre of a very high literary standard. A grand stylist, his evocative descriptions bring past worlds brilliantly to life. *Photo © Lieve Blancquaert*

**ORIGINAL TITLE** Gestameld liedboek (2011, De Bezige Bij, 190 pp.)

**PRIZES** Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger Essai, Prix Transfuge du meilleur poche étranger

**RIGHTS SOLD** English (Pushkin), French (Fayard), Spanish (Acantilado), Danish (People's Press), Hungarian (Ab Ovo), Polish (Foksal)

**TRANSLATION RIGHTS** Marijke Nagtegaal - m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl

**TRANSLATION GRANTS** Elise Vanoosthuyse - elise@flandersliterature.be , Marieke Roels - marieke@flandersliterature.be , Yannick Geens - yannick@flandersliterature.be