

A magnum opus on history and generational shifts

While the Gods Were Sleeping

ERWIN MORTIER

Now that she feels death approaching, Helena looks back on her youth, the loves she has known, her marriage and the distressing time she experienced in World War I. A large part of her memoirs are devoted to the difficult relationship with her mother, a strict bourgeoisie, who does not approve of Helena's new views and lifestyle. At the side of her lover, a British photographer, Helena is confronted with the full impact of the war at the front in Northern France and those experiences encumber the rest of her life.

A beautifully unorthodox novel, a kaleidoscopic palette

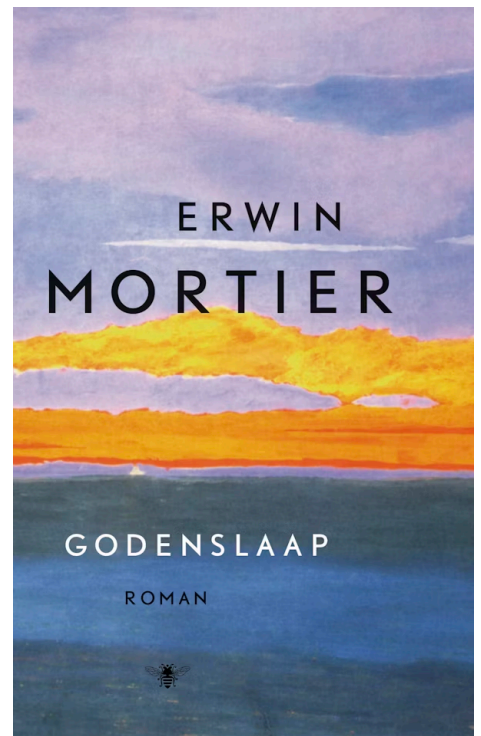
THE INDEPENDENT

Mortier masterfully portrays the war as an immense machine of destruction that leaves a deep impression on everybody. The relationship between mother and daughter in this book is symbolic of that great breach in mentality history. The novel takes place on the interface between great history and the lives of ordinary people, between historiography and stunning literary prose.

Mortier presents this impressive account in a stately, baroque style following in the footsteps of an old literary tradition. A number of critics have compared him with Marcel Proust. The topic and style make 'While the Gods Were Sleeping' in all respects an exceptional literary experience.

The footprint of Proust visible on every page

THE FINANCIAL TIMES



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. 'Stammered Songbook' won the Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger in France. Photo © Lieve Blancquaert

ORIGINAL TITLE Godenslaap (De Bezige Bij, 2008, 405 pp.)

PRIZES AKO Literature Prize, shortlisted for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize

RIGHTS SOLD English (Pushkin), French (Fayard), German (DuMont), Spanish (Acantilado), Croatian (Fraktura), Afrikaans (Protea)

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

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