

An exceptional debut about a dark family secret

Marcel

ERWIN MORTIER

This novel, peppered with countless striking metaphors and colloquialisms, describes the vivid history of a family in a Flemish village. A young boy of ten lives with his grandmother who watches over the family past like a hawk. In the living room stand photographs of her dead loved ones as well as a portrait of Marcel, once the apple of the family's eye, who died young.

A literary debut of great originality

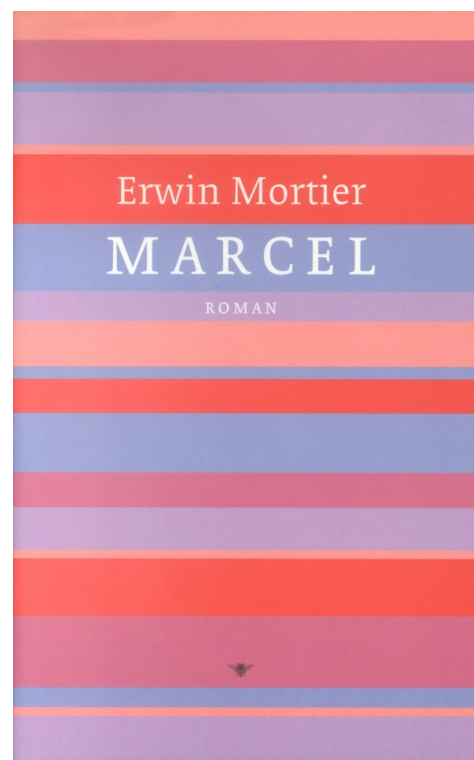
THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

The circumstances of Marcel's death are a mystery to the young boy. At first he does not understand the allusions to Marcel's 'black' past but once he discovers letters from Marcel in the attic and, full of pride, shows them to his teacher at school, all is revealed. He finds out that Marcel died on the Eastern Front, a soldier in the SS. Not out of admiration for Hitler, 'The Moustache', but for the sake of Flanders. Marcel was 'wrong'. This had given his family a very bad name in the village.

The essence of the novel is a cautious fumbling for truth. The young boy attempts to fathom his grandmother's proud, dour demeanour and to get closer to his teacher. But above all he wants to understand what happened to Marcel. Erwin Mortier unravels this shameful family past in an unusually sensitive and evocative manner.

An uninhibited virtuoso of language, he writes sharp dialogue and is unusually witty

DE VOLKSKRANT



AUTHOR



Erwin Mortier's (b. 1965) oeuvre is of a very high literary standard. His evocative descriptions bring past worlds brilliantly to life. His majestic 'While the Gods Were Sleeping' was shortlisted for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize. *Photo © Lieve Blancquaert*

ORIGINAL TITLE Marcel (1999, Meulenhoff, republished in 2005 by De Bezige Bij, 142 pp.)

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

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

