

Xavier Deutsch

Belgian candidate for the Hans Christian Andersen Award 2018

(author)

Nominated by IBBY-Belgium, French branch

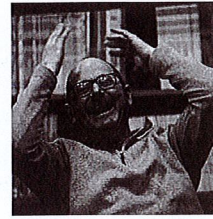


Table of contents

About Xavier Deutsch.....	3
His contribution to literature for children and young people	6
Awards and other distinctions	7
Bibliography of his books for children and young people	8
Translated editions	10
Five of the most important titles by Xavier Deutsch and... also sent to the jury	11
Two interviews with Xavier Deutsch.....	12
Reviews of Xavier Deutsch's books submitted to the Jury	16
About The Boys by Mallollo, April 13 th , 2010 on a Web Site dedicated to book review and critiques.	18
Xavier Deutsch's Bookbird profile.....	20

About Xavier Deutsch...

Remark : this biographical information is mostly inspired by Xavier Deutsch's website. As you will notice, Xavier Deutsch's work is linked to his life... despite his novels are never biographical (as he says). We start with what he likes before giving you more down-to-earth facts about his life.



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Xavier Deutsch likes true life. He likes slowness and silence. He likes to light a fire in his chimney with two matches, no paper, a handful of twigs and little wood, or three embers of yesterday's fire, nothing more.

He likes what is real, not virtual. He likes to meet his friends in a pub and not on Facebook. He likes reading paper books and not screens. He likes when it gets cold in winter, hot in summer, and he does not like air conditioning. He easily finds his way on a map or by instinct, and he has no GPS. And he prefers to have birds in his garden rather than on the ringing of his cellphone.

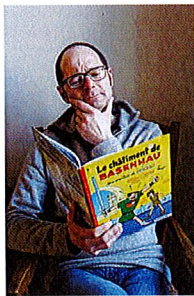
He likes trees, birds, geography maps, fire, apples, Belgian beer, whiskey from Scotland and Ireland.

He likes his country. And Standard of Liege (famous soccer team).

He likes the French department Yonne (Burgundy) and his basilica in the town Vézelay.

He likes photography. It is a beautiful garden inside his universe. He is also a living model, for drawing classes, painting sessions, sculpture workshops and for photographers. Nudity is not trivial to him: it is a precious gesture, a rich act.

Of course he likes reading novels. Sometimes people say he is not paying much attention to his contemporaries. That is true. He reads classical writers and his father in literature would be Georges Simenon, one of the four or five greatest writers (with Céline, Garcia Marquez, Jim Harrison) of the 20th century. He read his two hundred novels, and he is reading them again ! Reading changes his life.



He also likes to read crime novels, or more recent books, or atlases, books on prehistory and migratory birds, books on politics, on the Celts, the press... he is curious anyway ! Interested in the World he lives

in. And he also reads the Bible from time to time.

Well this very interesting man, Xavier Deutsch, was born in Leuven (Belgium) on 9th of February 1965. He presents himself as living in a normal environment, having a normal childhood and following normal studies.

In January 1989, he published his first novel: *The night in the eyes* (La nuit dans les yeux), with famous publishing house Gallimard where he met Geneviève Brisac, to whom he owes very much.

In 1990, obeying the call of the flag, he served the homeland and the collective interest in the ranks of the 1st Wing of the Air Force during his military service. He is still a reserve sublieutenant.

In 1994 he obtained his driving license for trucks and, on 21st December 1995, his diploma in Philosophy and Letters from the Catholic University of Louvain.

On April 1st, 1996, having published a significant number of novels, he began to live on his writing. He regularly published his novels at the following publishing houses: Le Cri, Le Castor Astral, and later Mijade. All famous Belgian publishing houses!

In 1999, he travelled through Belgium with Marina Cox to draw a picture of his small country: Marina's photographs and his texts appear every Monday of the year in *La Libre Belgique* (one of the most important newspaper of Belgium), and are later compiled in a book in 2002: *Belgium is telling herself stories* (*La Belgique se raconte des histoires*). Yes, Xavier Deutsch is committed !

On the Christmas day of the year 2000, he integrates a pretty old house that he acquired a few months before, in a village named Chaumont-Gistoux (located in Wallonia).

On December 4th 2002, the novel *Under the stars* (*La belle étoile*) won the Rossel Award (famous award of Belgium, organised since 1938 by *Le Soir*, another very important newspaper). A few weeks later he aligned himself, in federal elections, on the Green list of the senate and buys a chainsaw to take care of the trees in his garden. Commitment again.

In the autumn of 2003, during the famous *Sint-Martin's celebration* (*Fêtes de la Saint-Martin* in Tourinnes-la-Grosse, a village next to his), a collective show that he wrote is represented in the venerable Romanesque church of the village. This is the beginning of a beautiful story that will last for years. Did we say committed ?

In May 2004, he begins a collaboration with the magazine *Gael* (famous ladie's periodical), and from February 2005 to June 2007, he also write a weekly section in the columns of the newspaper *Le Soir*.

He also writes other novels. Like in 2010, with the French publisher Robert Laffont, he releases *A beautiful love story that ends well* (*Une belle histoire d'amour qui finit bien*).

On May 2012, he is made citizen of honor in Gujan-Mestras (French city), and he is very proud of it !

In summer 2013, he is so happy that he buys himself a motorcycle. A Mash Seventy-five that he likes very much and with which he discovers the taste of travel.

Today, he has published about forty books as well as numerous texts in the press or collective works. He has written several plays, and go on holding writing workshops. Fine arts excite him, and his texts regularly accompany photographers' and painters' creations.



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It has been more than twenty years that writing is his job but Xavier Deutsch is very conscious that this would not have been possible without the constant support of two institutions. The Ministry of the French Community (*Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*) on one

hand: especially the regular work of the Promotion of Letters department and the grants he got, which been an indispensable help. And on the other hand, the Scam (literary and artistic property company) of which he is a member, and which sustained him with a formidable and valuable efficiency.

His contribution to literature for children and young people

Since 1989, Xavier Deutsch has been writing for teenagers and young adults. As for many writers, Xavier Deutsch's characters are more or less the age of the readers of his novels. Through his novels, we discover adolescents like many others, who try to understand the society they live in. Sometimes they wonder what it means to go into adulthood, they live their first love, they must live complicated life of children whose parents are separated, they must deal with bigger than they are, they look for a parent...

Xavier Deutsch's novels deal with major themes that affect the majority of potential readers: survival of democracy in a society abused by television and consumption, economic lobbying of large enterprises on policy, or the necessary critical spirit, freedom of opinion and the merits of resistance or obedience...



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Many young readers will identify with the characters created by Xavier Deutsch and understand their reasons for revolt. Readers can't help wondering how they would react in the place of the fictional characters created by Xavier Deutsch.

Does Xavier Deutsch want to say something special? Is there a message to deliver?

No, this is not Xavier Deutsch's conception of literature. According to him, "*literature is not a little obedient mule that carries on its back the thought of the author, to transmit it obediently to the readers. Literature is a wild horse that springs wildly out of its author, without the author attempting to domesticate it, then gallops through unknown plains and mountains*".

XAVIER DEUTSCH

Xavier Deutsch's books are full of freedom. He dares telling the truth. He does not hesitate to talk about true life: love of course, tenderness, soccer, young boys and girls' desires or obsessions, bonds of friendship or family and also jihadists... He remains committed to what he talks about in his books and this is certainly the reason why he is regularly contacted by non-governmental organizations that order him books about AIDS, development cooperation and ecology.

Awards and other distinctions

- ✍ **The Boys** (Les garçons) : Maeterlinck award 1990
- ✍ **Victoria Bauer!** : RTBF (Belgian radio & television) award 1997
- ✍ **Come On ! Come On !** (Allez ! Allez !) : Totem award of Montreuil bookfair 1999
- ✍ **The Bright Star** (La belle étoile) : Rossel award 2002
- ✍ **Fallen from the Truck** (Tombé du camion) : finalist Farniente award 2003
- ✍ **The Canticle of Riffles** (Le cantique des carabines): selected for Swiss-French award of Young adults literature 2010 ; selected for French High School students Jean Marcel award 2010
- ✍ **Eleven** (Onze) : Best Belgian Novel Libbylit Award 2011 ; Swiss-French award of Young adults literature 2012; selected for The White Ravens 2012 (Bologna); Ruralivre French award 2012; finalist Farniente award 2012; finalist French High School students Gujan-Mestras award 2010; Juke Box selection in Montreuil bookfair 2012
- ✍ **Hope** : selected for Incorruptibles Award 2015

Bibliography of his books for children and young people

Remark : all works are written in French. Translations of titles are made by our team at IBBY Belgium French branch.

- 📖 **La nuit dans les yeux** (The Night in the Eyes), 1989, Gallimard (France, Paris)
Two stories for the first book of Xavier Deutsch. In the first story, a young girl explains her life, her dreams, her hope, till we discover her destiny. In the second story, a young man is travelling across America with a map in his pocket, searching a treasury. But is reality so good as our dreams ? And do we always know what we are looking for ?


- 📖 **Les garçons*** (The Boys), 1990, L'école des loisirs (France, Paris)
- 📖 **Les foulards bleus** (The Blue Silk Scarves), 1990, L'école des loisirs, (France, Paris)
The blue silk scarves are the one carried by the rangers who have set their tents in the prairie. Bénédicte writes to her father. She describes the excitement of the camp, the fear of the totem and the mysterious disappearing of Caracal during two days. Where has he gone ?


- 📖 **La petite rue claire et nette** (The Little Neat Street), 1992, L'école des loisirs (France, Paris)

In the cemetery near the little neat street, four individuals have violated Ferdinand's tomb, the uncle of Stéphanie. The young girl is shocked and tries to understand why. Who could have done this to this man who always wanted to be elsewhere, who always wanted something else ? A man capable of giving away a valuable painting against an hypothetic cobalt mine. What were his secrets ? Stéphanie can count on Cécile, her best friend to help her and on Rodrigue, who slowly invade her heart. A very intense book where the characters are looking to find their ways in life and who's also a fierce criticism on the ideology of the extremists.
- 📖 **La guerre que je n'ai pas voulue** (The War I Did Not Want), 1994, De la démocratie, (Belgium, Brussels)
- 📖 **La petite sœur du Bon Dieu** (God's Little Sister) 1995, L'école des loisirs, (France, Paris)
- 📖 **Victoria Bauer**, 1996, Le Cri (Belgium, Wavre)
- 📖 **Pas de soleil en Alaska** (No Sun in Alaska), 1997, Labor (Belgium, Brussels)

In the town of Suchun, a mysterious sickness attacks the people. A sickness that can transform a young man in love in an old wicked man. The inhabitants are in despair and lost. They are angry against everything and everybody that's not from Suchun accusing them to have brought the sickness from the outside.
Humour, derision and a lot of humanity in this book, written on demand from the Sida Preventing Agency to make young people aware about this sickness and to show them the exclusion that often goes with this sickness.
- 📖 **Allez! Allez!*** (Come on ! Come on !), 1997, L'école des loisirs, (France, Paris)
- 📖 **Le grand jeu des courages de l'ours en Alaska** (The Big Game of Courage of the Bear in Alaska), 1997, Le Cri (Belgium, Wavre)
- 📖 **Les Bernarches cravant** (The Barnacle Geese), 1999, Le Cri (Belgium, Wavre)
- 📖 **Samuel est revenu** (Samuel is Back), 2001, Le Cri (Belgium, Wavre)
- 📖 **La Belle Étoile** (The Bright Star), 2002, Le Castor astral (France, Bègles)
- 📖 **Le Bestiaire de Rotterdam** (The Bestiary of Rotterdam), 2003, Le Cri (Belgium, Wavre)

📌 **Tombé du camion*** (Fallen from the Truck), 2005, Labor (Belgium, Brussels)

📌 **Derrière nous** (Behind Us), 2005, Averbode (Belgium, Averbode)

Miss Pauline is a french literature teacher and loves her books. To help her pupils to feel the emotion the books gave her, she asks them to do a video on a book or a text that speaks to them. Sylvain, Elodie and Samuel decide to illustrate a poem of Appolinaire. But it is no easy to do something on "Alcools" (Alcohols) if you're a young men or women whose life just began. The impact of literature on young people is a recurrent theme in the work of Xavier Deutsch. This gives a work full of emotions.



📌 **En haut de la Terre** (Above Earth), 2007, Le Cri (Belgium, Wavre)

📌 **Carnaval à Fada N'Gourma** (Carnival in Fada N'Gourma), 2007, Couleur Livres (Belgium, Brussels)

📌 **Les Poissons** (The Fishes), 2008, Le Cri (Belgium, Wavre)

📌 **Le Cantique des carabines** (The Cantic of Riffls), 2009, Mijade (Belgium, Namur)



In a little town in Sicily, Leonidas is raising onions. With his brother, Ponce, he goes to the market in Catane to sell his products. But a certain Count asks him to take some hidden riffles with him and to give them to a mysterious buyer. Inspired by an old carrier's song, the author shows us some gloomy, but also luminous characters. People that are as hard as the soil they are living on, but they are at the same time honest and malicious. They are not talking too much, but the rare words they speak have a density and a particular force.

📌 **Une belle histoire d'amour qui finit bien** (A Beautiful Love Story that ends well), 2010, Robert Laffont, (France, Paris)

📌 **Onze !*** (Eleven!), 2011, Mijade, (Belgium, Namur)

📌 **Hope*** (Hope), 2014, Mijade (Belgium, Namur)

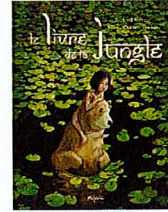
📌 **Something in the sky** (Quelque chose le ciel), 2016 Mijade (Belgium, Namur)

*Books selected for the jurors and described further.

Translated editions

Xavier Deutsch adapted two masterpieces of youth literature for the children, that were illustrated by Quentin Gréban. His adaptations were translated into Dutch.

- ✎ **Peter Pan** (Peter Pan), 2014, Mijade (Belgium, Namur) → Clavis publishing house (The Netherlands)
- ✎ **Le livre de la jungle** (Jungle Book), 2016, Mijade (Belgium, Namur) → Clavis publishing house (The Netherlands)



So far, we are not aware of any other translated work, but Xavier Deutsch is nevertheless read in several French speaking countries.

Five of the most important titles by Xavier Deutsch and... also sent to the jury

- Les garçons (The Boys), 1990, L'école des loisirs (France, Paris)

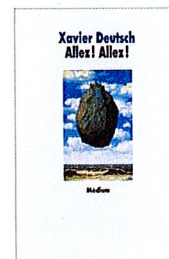


The young Rimbaut whose parents unfortunately called him Arthur, shares with his prestigious predecessor a certain rebellion against life. The literature hours of Miss Pauline will open for him the doors of an unknown world and will take him on a journey with his friends Quentin and Frédéric.

A very colourful writing, very poetic and allegoric. This second novel announces the best loved themes of the author.

- Allez! Allez! (Come on ! Come on !), 1997, L'école des loisirs, (France, Paris)

On 18th of August 1904, Emile celebrates his 11th anniversary by killing his dog and writing a poem on his memory. Emile is a difficult child to love, maybe because he has a big hole in his heart. He's missing his father who only left him a coat, too big for Emile, and an atlas that he reads every evening with his mother. And if Emile's father was God ?? This novel is like a fairytale. It's sad, funny, like life itself. Emile is a very strange kid, but a very interesting character.



- Tombé du camion (Fallen from the Truck), 2005, Labor (Belgium, Brussels)



Tom learns that for his 16th birthday, a chip will be implanted in his chin with all his personal data and for the authorities to be able to locate him at all time. It's the law and for the benefit of everybody, tells him his mother, who's working for the police force. It's antidemocratic and a violation of the private life tells his father, who's against this law. Tom makes his own opinion and decides to go against the law. It's science-fiction, but not only. The novel is questioning the reader about his opinion on democracy and how far can decisions be taken in the name of the citizens.

- Onze ! (Eleven!), 2011, Mijade, (Belgium, Namur)

1983 : to everybody surprise, the football club of Eendracht Winterfeld, a little Flemish club, has achieved to be in the final of the Cup of the Cup winners and is preparing himself to play against the giants of the A.C. Milan on his field, in the middle of the town. This is purely fiction, but the author tells the story like a mythological epopee, where the humans, those "Sunday players" will face players who are seen as gods regarding their statutes and salaries. The characters and the settings are very well described. The reader, even if he is not fond of football, is taken by the story and will stand up for those "little" players for whom the sport is more their money or glory



- Hope (Hope), 2014, Mijade (Belgium, Namur)



The story takes place in a little town in the Wyoming in the fifties. Joseph Petersen is a much appreciated young boy, who delivers newspapers every morning to earn a little money. That's how every month he discovers in the garage of Mr Carlson a new pin-up on the calendar hanging on the wall. The one from September is not like the others. Joseph is fascinated and dreams to meet her one day. He nicknames her Hope. Happy are the few who doubt of nothing and follow their dreams. But we are in a little town in America, at this time it's not good to be communist in such a place and Indians are regarded as drunken degenerates. The author takes his time to describe the town, the characters. He is very close to Joseph, revealing his feelings. His writing is full of poetic and evocative images. It's up to the reader to go through the story and to make this journey.

Two interviews with Xavier Deutsch...

Remark : Xavier Deutsch's books are often proposed by teachers to their students in high school. Many pedagogical files (in French) are available on line to accompany the reading. Here, we have tried to give more information about who is Xavier Deutsch as a writer.

Xavier Deutsch wins the Rossel Prize «*This Rossel is like a base on which to rest*»

Already a finalist in 1990, the Belgian novelist finally receives the supreme award, thanks to The Bright Star (La belle étoile). Interview by Pascale Haubruge, on Thursday 5 December 2002, in Le Soir

To have the Rossel for this novel, does it enchant you?

Yes. I publish about a novel the year since "The boys", which is the only one with "The Bright Star" to have been retained like finalist of the Rossel prize. I sometimes wondered: "Why not also this one, or that one? And then, having the Rossel for "The Bright Star" is ... well. What to say ? I speak very badly of my novels, but I find that this one is strong, complete. I change my writing. I live adult heroes. I think this is a turning point in my journey.

Having the Rossel, for me, is crucial. Not so much for a question of money - even if this check falls well - but because it legitimizes my work. Writing means climbing a steep hill. It's raining, it slips. Sometimes it's hard. I have readers, but I do not find myself very much supported by official literary bodies.

This Rossel is like a granite slab, a base on which to rest. They are people who count in Belgian literature who tell me: "That's fine. Your work has value. You are on the right track ". It calms me a little. This award establishes clearly that I have done my job well, that I am in the right place.

I find it good for me but also for my novel. "Rossel", upside down, it gives "the rise" (NB : in French, Rossel >> l'essor). And I believe that this prize will give rise to "The Bright Star", to offer new readers to this novel that I particularly love.

"The Bright Star" takes place in uncertain times, at the pace of the end of the world. This novel has an imaginary geography of its own. How did you put it in place?

The novel came to me like that, in those colors. I had the name: "The Bright Star". The name of a freighter. I searched for a cold sea shore where to anchor it. It fell in China, but I also thought of southern Argentina and northern Canada. I just needed a port.

The rest, the museum, the bistros and the alleys, has nothing to do with the real geography of Lushun. I'm a novelist, not a documentalist. The important thing when writing a novel is to tell places that are not accurate but plausible in the reader's head and imagination. It's about being fair.

Regarding the sailors, the horses, the people who get on the boat and what they will actually do, it came after, in the course of writing.

And these dogs, which push forth all the tribes of Asia, the people of the towns and the country, the lakes and the mountains, is the image of all violence and all oppressions?

In my mind, no. I do not write novels to give my worldview or something, say it is black or white. I want to tell a story. That's all. The reader puts what he wants in there. Free to see in the pack of dogs the symbol of all the violence.

I would simply say that "The Bright Star" tells the story of a boat on which one counts to fulfill a mission and fight dogs. It happens when you want. At one point, there is talk of a telecommunications tower. So we are not in the Middle Ages. Let's say it happens... tonight.

To tell the truth (<http://www.xavierdeutsch.be/avraidire.htm>)

Xavier Deutsch is often questioned about his work, and he tells us more about it on his website, in an interview :

It happens that, for various reasons, I am questioned about my work.

I noticed that some questions came back in a relatively systematic way, and I thought it was worthwhile, in order to allow everyone to save time, to propose my answers.

If you have any other questions, no problem: write to me, I will answer you gladly.

What made you want to become a novelist?

It's always a question that I can not answer. In fact, the answer is in the question: I started writing novels, simply, because I wanted to. As to what may have been the source, the origin, of this desire, I have no idea. Do we know, in life, what drives us to such a path? What makes us in love with such a person?

What is certain is that I was not driven either by the desire to become rich or by the desire to become famous: neither fortune nor notoriety attract me particularly.

Is that your only job? Or do you do something else besides writing?

It's my job, yes. Since 1996. That's very important to me. Literature is not a gadget, it has value for humans that we are and I find it natural to put it in the middle of my life, and not in the peripheries. It deserves that I dedicate myself to it in a professional way, and not as if it were a hobby that is practiced on Sundays or holidays, when the "serious work" is finished.

Writing novels is a real skill. And, like all skills, it takes time, investment, and practice. In short, professionalism. It is normal for a doctor to practice medicine every day, or a baker to spend his weeks in his bakery: in my eyes, it is the same for literature.

Where do you find your inspiration? (A variation of this question is: Where do you find your ideas?)

My problem is that the word "inspiration" has no meaning to me. It's a word I never use, with which I do not work.

As to knowing where my "ideas" come from, the question provokes the same perplexity, for (as Mallarmé once said to one of his friends who told him that he wanted to write a novel, Of ideas, but that he could not do it) "*we do not write literature with ideas, but with words.*"

An idea is an intention, a thought which the author constructs, and which he wishes to communicate to his readers. But it is not ideas that are at the origin of novels.

In short, how does this happen?

One day, quite unpredictably, I get a kind of flash. This can happen anywhere, at any time of the day. An image is formed in my mind, a music goes on the radio, four strange words appear before me. It's mysterious, it comes unexpectedly, without warning. And I feel that "something" is triggered in me, turns on, crystallizes, begins to germinate. It is not an idea, it is something much more mysterious. And this "something", later, will become a novel.

I keep this image, this spark, in me, a few weeks, the time it sets in. Then, at the appropriate time, I set to work, and I begin to write my novel. I do not know anything about him, I do not know his story, I do not know what he is going to tell, I have no plan, I have not planned: at that moment, when I start the novel, I possess only that spark of the beginning.

Little by little, page after page, my novel emerges, unfolds, comes into the world.

And this world was formed, with real autonomy, in my imagination. I feel its strength, I feel its freedom, I feel that it knows what he wants, and I respect it. I do not try to impose my ideas, my decisions, and I take care to leave my ideas and decisions asleep so that they do not disturb anything.

I only had to listen to the novel, and I gave it to the world by respecting its shape, its contours, its color, its trajectory. But let's not be mistaken: this birth is a real work, hard and demanding.

Are your novels autobiographical? Do they tell episodes of your life?

No of course not ! A novel does not serve that purpose. In my novels, I do not talk about myself, I do not tell my life. In literature, this has no interest.

What is inevitable : snippets of my own existence may emerge, but I do not do it on purpose. We write with what we are, with what constitutes us, and fragments of the author's life appear fortuitously. It can happen, it happens. But this is not the goal and, when it happens, it is unconscious, and it is transformed, it has passed through the profound digestion of the imaginary. Otherwise, I repeat, you would not be in contact with a novel, but with the character of the author who would want to talk to you about him. It may very well be interesting, but in this case we are not at all in a literary context.

What did you want to express? What is the message of the novel?

This question, which is asked of me frequently, is based on a misconception of literature. On the fact that many authors consider and practice a very impoverished form of literature. These authors have an idea, they have something to say, a thought to convey, a message to express, emotions or memories to communicate to the readers. They are the patrons of their work, they are the ones who direct, they control: they have a thought to convey, and they will use their novel for that purpose. They will write an obedient novel which will serve only to communicate the thought of the author. This conception has, in my opinion, no interest in literature. Literature is a wild horse that gushes savagely out of its author, without the author attempting to domesticate it, then gallops across unknown plains and mountains. In literature, the author has nothing to say, nothing to express, no message to convey. For me, literature does not serve that purpose. It can not have as its function to put itself at the service of an author, to allow this author to talk about him through a novel. On the contrary, it is the author who puts himself silently and respectfully at the service of his novel, to bring it into the world by giving it form. When I begin to write a novel, it is my novel that decides what " He will be, of what he will tell. Not me. At no time do I try to "convey a message" (which would imply that I would instruct my novel to submit it to my own project, submit it to an intention coming from me, and my book would lose all its freedom, all its beauty). My only goal is to make a novel exist, this new and free territory never having existed. Expressing one's ideas is fine, but it happens elsewhere. An author who wants to express his thoughts can do so by writing a newspaper article, a psychology treatise, a history textbook. An author who wants to express his emotions has only to write a letter to his wife. But not a novel. When an author expresses something, he puts himself outside of literature.

Can you explain a passage in the novel that has not been understood? Or its title?

This is impossible. I know very well that when I meet students, some of them say that this meeting will be an opportunity for them to clarify and understand, thanks to me, the obscure and mysterious passages of the novel. They rely on me to elucidate these shadows. But it's impossible. I have indeed written each of my novels, but that does not mean that I know them, that I have the meaning, the truth. I am not like those authors who, having submitted their novel to their will, to their thought, to their intention, are capable of explaining everything. My novels are, for me, comparable to children that I would have brought into the world. They are therefore mysterious in my eyes. They possess secrets, shadows, and multiple meanings. A novel does not respond to the same rules as logical thinking. It is more like a strange garden in which every reader walks and in which every

reader finds paths, shrubs, animals, Shadows and drafts. It is the same garden that is open to readers, but each one makes his own walk there. And I affirm : the author (that I am) does not possess the truth, does not hold the meaning of the novel that he wrote. In the same way that a gardener who has created a garden will always find small things that he did not anticipate, imagine, and which he was not aware of, and that other walkers reveal to him, then That it is indeed he who created this garden. What matters is not what I meant (since, I repeat, I did not mean anything). What matters is the meaning that each reader gives to the novel during his reading. A free horse leaves the reader free. There is no precise answer: there is only the multitude of answers that the readers give to this text. Some readers expect from me clear answers about certain Obscure passages of my books. These clear answers do not exist. And even if bits of answers do exist, I do not own them. Ut in a situation to explain a passage that you would not have understood. Besides, it interests me very much that you tell me what you, you, have been able to understand. Even if that's not enough: whether you realize it or not, you have plenty of things to teach me about my own novels.

Xavier Deutsch's Bookbird profile



Xavier Deutsch was born in Leuven (Belgium) in 1965. He earned a PhD in philosophy and literature, and has written about forty literary works (novels, short stories, plays, articles, essays...), for adults and for teenagers. Some of these are "Come on ! Come on !" (Allez ! Allez !) awarded "Prix Totem du salon du livre de jeunesse de Montreuil", and "The Bright Star", that earned Belgium's most prestigious award, the "Prix Rossel". He may be writing since 1989, he started dedicating himself completely to writing in 1996. Xavier Deutsch writes for teenagers and young adults. As for many writers, Xavier Deutsch's characters are more or less the age of the readers of his novels.

Through his novels, we discover adolescents like many others, who try to understand the society they live in. Sometimes they wonder what it means to go into adulthood, they live their first love, they must live complicated life of children whose parents are separated, they must deal with bigger than they are, they look for a parent...

Xavier Deutsch's novels deal with major themes that affect the majority of potential readers: survival of democracy in a society abused by television and consumption, economic lobbying of large enterprises on policy, or the necessary critical spirit, freedom of opinion and the merits of resistance or obedience...

Many young readers will identify with the characters created by Xavier Deutsch and understand their reasons for revolt. Readers can't help wondering how they would react in the place of the fictional characters created by Xavier Deutsch.

Does Xavier Deutsch wanted to say something special? Is there a message to deliver?

No, this is not Xavier Deutsch's conception of literature. According to him, "*literature is not a little obedient mule that carries on its back the thought of the author, to transmit it obediently to the readers. Literature is a wild horse that springs wildly out of its author, without the author attempting to domesticate it, then gallops through unknown plains and mountains*".