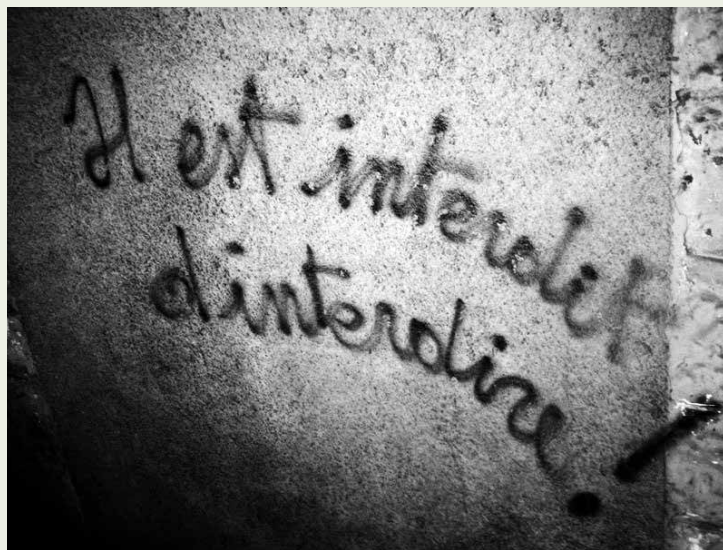


## 'Beneath the Paving Stones the Beach!'

A Small Anthology from and about the Sixties

100





## An Extract from *Message to the Rat King*



By Harry Mulisch

### Hystericisation by TV

If anyone says that all those Amsterdam riots don't represent anything 'brand new', but are an expression of normal generational conflict, one may ask them how it was that twenty years ago young people did not bat an eyelid during the police action of the Dutch government against the Indonesian freedom fighters, whereas now the Amsterdam monument of the colonial general Van Heutsz is regularly defaced. Those who say that all those Amsterdam riots are 'a passing phenomenon', are of course right; but only because what they are directed at will pass. Flooding Amsterdam with riot police – like Vietnam with Americans – can only put an end to *these kinds* of riots. Those who say that it must be simply tackled firmly and eradicated root and branch, can be referred for information to the dismissed chief commissioner of police, the mayor with nervous exhaustion, the Internal Affairs minister drowning in derision and the politically undermined prime minister.

*If something is to be eradicated root and branch – I can summarise in this way the core of what I am saying – it is this 'root-and-branch eradication'.*

Anybody who has grown up in the 'affluent society', the white fatherland of the haves, thinks differently about things than his parents, who come from an earlier time and *acquired* it all – and if what is more he lives in a capital, he will when the opportunity arises make it clear that he has a different opinion. Affluence, or what passes for it, is natural for him. A car is for getting about in, or for having fun with, apart from that it doesn't represent a thing. When he realises that that same car represents a *triumph* for his parents, he shrugs his shoulders and thinks they are suckers, which they are. This young man plays with things. For him things really are *things*, not symbols. For him a car is a car, not a CAR; for him television is television, not TV. When a programme bores him, he turns it off – an action that gives his parents the holy terrors. Screeching and falling over each other they rush to the set to turn the TV on again.

The young man strolls into the street.



Harry Mulisch at a demonstration against the Vietnam war, Rokin, Amsterdam, 1967

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This is the way the rift between young and old has come about in the last ten years, and this rift is deeper than previous generational differences. In addition, it has become clear in the past five years that both groups have undergone radical changes, which have driven them even further apart. Let us first examine the change in the older section of the Dutch population. (The idem 'people' does not exist: that is what the fascists tried to make of it.)

Probably because they were cut adrift from their children, the older generation were hysterical step by step. That dispensed with the myth of 'Dutch sobriety' in particular, and in general again with the belief that 'national character' existed. If half a million people are murdered in Indonesia, as recently (little attention was paid to it in the press, they were after all not so much people as communists: imagine the consternation if conversely the communists had murdered even a fraction of that number of people), the ex-colonial can of course say that this is 'un-Indonesian', but in reality it has been shown that the Indonesians were never 'Indonesian', at most that they were forced for a century or so to behave like arse-licking lackeys. Neither has it now been shown that mass murder is 'Indonesian'. Apart from that of course all kinds of things have been shown, but we are not talking about them now. The Dutch 'national character' neither is nor was sober, because there are no national characters, since there are no characters. What does exist in the older section of the Dutch public is a hysterical condition.

From *Message to the Rat King* (Bericht aan de rattenkoning)

De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam, 1966

Translated by Paul Vincent

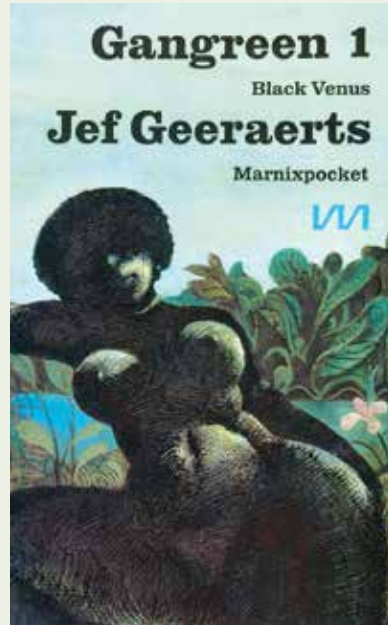
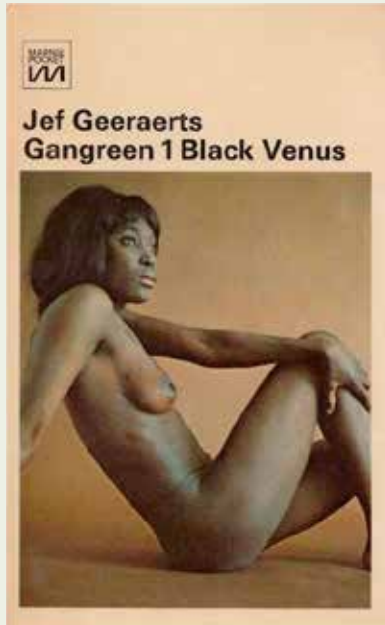
## An Extract from *Gangrene*



*By Jef Geeraerts*

GOD IN HEAVEN, here it is already 1967 and what I'm about to tell took place at the very start of the heathen holy age, in the year 1955, the year of the basalt virgin, ha, she had just turned thirteen and her nipples still jutted up and out and in warm lands such things don't last long, but all four of those goddamned months slid by in a daze of artful oriental pleasure even though, miracle of miracles, all we lay on was a cot, but then of course a cot's narrow and leaves you no choice but to be intimate, enormously intimate, and thus, although we played full many a game, we did not sleep together (in the ordinary euphemistic hypocritical sense of the word) and later - with others of her race - it naturally happened that frequently no sleeping at all was done (but then in the utterly literal sense of the word), and the place where this came to pass was called Bodedemoke, which is to say Little Bodede (population: 47), a cluster of slanting huts in the shadow of the impenetrable, nearly two-hundred-feet-high rim of the forest, an unwilling virgin through which I had to make my way for six miles with the help of three hundred somewhat less than wildly enthusiastic blacks whom I did my casual best to keep hard at work, and I had, luckily, an iron trunk full of hooks with me so that on days when I did not hunt or when it poured I lay on: my cot, naked, tense, unsure. Occasionally, when the wind suddenly sprang up, I rushed outside, sweating with terror, and gazed up at that black wall of lianas, dead limbs, leaves, mushrooms, snakes, spiders, all hooked up to something high, nearly two hundred feet high, above me and just waiting to fall and crush me as the whole thing came down in a storm while I lay by my woman as snug as a boa, and I smoked my way through entire days, drugged, amorphous, no man, and read and let myself be borne along by the sluggish hours of eating, sleeping, feeling evening coming on and thus starting to think of what games we would play when it was night. She was called Marie-Jeanne and she was very dear, playful as an antelope, and young and beautiful, oh so beautiful, and she laughed a lot and talked more and her teeth were like a flock of sheep that are evenly shorn and up from the washing and she bound her hair in pigtails that stuck straight out like the antennae of a weather satellite and she had thick curls on her Venus-mound and firm pubic lips and cool snug buttocks under her thin cotton dress and after the first long, slow, all-embracing, world-enveloping kiss, a single

greedy suck, her clitoris was a drop of quicksilver trying to elude the top of my middle finger and after three nights she, young as she was, was a skilled partner in practices which would astonish and delight most so-called experienced, older women, and her father, a cultured quiet carpenter (named not Joseph but Cyprien) rejoiced in this relationship and instead of working on the road, as was his duty, went off hunting for his new-found son-in-law as well as for himself on occasion, and my boy Mohongu - a sly scoundrel if ever there was one - also profited from this liaison since he too promptly found himself a girl and Marie-Jeanne and Martha got along remarkably well, a singular event since the Budja proverb says that no two women are ever truly fond of each other and proverbs never lie, and only rarely did the two young ladies have to be pulled apart; it never came to anything vicious or bloody, though there are always countless reasons for one woman's lighting into another, and daily the piercing screams of jealous women going at each other with their maniac scrapers echo through the Budja villages while the men watch grinning or urge the fighters on by shouting and clapping, and in the evening or around nine when the village, lit here and there by a still-glowing heap of ashes, lay still in the night, reabsorbed into the forest and its deafening sea of crickets, Marie-Jeanne, that warm weasel, slipped into the hut and I sprang out of bed and barely had time to flip my cigarette away before she embraced me passionately and '*bési,*' she said, and we kissed expertly while I pulled down the panties which, among other things, I had bought for her, and she smelled very nice, like kittens, like ground almonds and sugar, and she washed herself with expensive soap and I had also bought her a set of bathtowels, wine-red with a black ivy design, in which she often paraded through the village, and while, at the start and still standing, I had to finger her off, she gave me precise instructions because she was very demanding, and '*elengi, elengi, elengi,*' she said, time and again, which in all languages means delight, and when she came her knees buckled and her arms gripped me like branches and I had to lay the whimpering bundle in under the flung-open mosquito net on my cot, and while I undressed she lay staring up at me with wide eyes and when at last I lay beside her she bent over and skilfully began to lick my scrotum and to suck the tip of my penis, the Lybian slave of the Roman conqueror, and when, sometimes after an hour's pleasure and pain, I came, she came too, in shuddering waves, and afterward she was generally thirsty and I brought her white wine and she let me drink from her glass and tenderly, almost ashamedly, she asked me to do the same for her, and one night I knelt there, my hands on her buttocks, kissing, eating raw oysters, when suddenly I felt her whole body stiffen, she was no longer breathing, and I stopped and by the yellow gleam of the lantern I saw rising up steeply above me an Egyptian sculpture in dark-red basalt, cold, polished (and breathlessly I looked: the sources of Greece lie here, the Nile is the vein, I thought, and with ancient, sacred gestures I began to worship my origin), and as she - wormed close up against me, breathing like a glistening beast, clutching my penis, her weapon, in one hand - fell asleep, I lay relaxed, content-

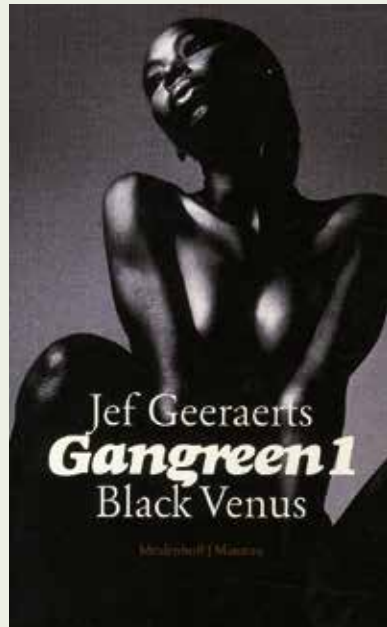


edly gazing at her, from time to time stroking her skin, which was fine as polished walnut, or sniffing her like a hound, and I was, at times overwhelmed by the thought that some day she would be, old and as wrinkled as all the other shapeless, snivelling, fat women in the world and then it was as if the hand of a corpse gripped my penis and would not let go and I felt cold and had to drink whisky in order to think again as unconcernedly and superficially as usual (as always, out in the sun, dreaming of fresh conquests) and to be able to fall asleep, to shudder or pant through strange dreams and in the morning, shortly before five, when the sun was just up, she woke me by pinching my nose shut and Mohongu could tell by our talk that we were awake and with downcast eyes he brought in first a kettle of hot water, then a cup of strong coffee to prevent the day from getting off to a bad start, wished me a ritual good-morning, and vanished, and then I was soaped from head to foot by my slave, carefully rinsed, dried off and powdered, and after that she left without a word so that I could breakfast all by myself as befits a man, and every two weeks I covered the hundred miles that lay between me and headquarters in Yandongi and each time I left I had to swear on an infallible charm - a bunch of leaves - that I would not sleep with my wife and if I broke my oath I would suffer an agonizing death, and I didn't either, which is to say, didn't sleep with my wife who was, moreover, very pregnant and in that state the act of procreation is spoiled by something unspeakably morbid, the all-too-obvious association between the powerful jet of

sperm and the soft fontanel of the infant's skull made me gag (Marie-Jeanne explained her own unshakeable conviction thus: white women *bazali na masoko na maimai*, a particularly cutting insult which, euphemistically translated, means that they ought to wash themselves a bit more carefully in certain places, after which she would spit on the ground, a sign of the utmost contempt) and oh, after roughly a hundred and twenty days of almost unbearable joy, the hour of departure arrived and Marie-Jeanne too had undergone various important changes, for now she wore lots of nail polish, used lipstick and mascara, wore minuscule panties, Maidenform bras, expensive sandals, blouses, flowery sarongs, sunglasses, and her movements were liquid and languid and her eyes slanted and around her mouth hovered the great inner calm of La Gioconda, that eternal wanton, and as a farewell present I gave her a shiny bike with drum brakes, gears, two lights, and ribbons all over the spokes and our farewell was formal and a bit breathtaking: my darling promptly jumped on the saddle of her brand-new bike and, dinging the bell, rode waving and shrieking with glee down the hill.

From *Gangrene* (Gangreen 1 – Black Venus, Manteau, Antwerpen, 1968),  
The Viking Press New York, 1974

*Translated by Jon Swan*





## Poems from *Breach IV*



*By Leonard Nolens*

### 11

Field preachers were turned on by hammers  
And sickles and jerked us off with their mouths.  
And dockers sang themselves hoarse in the choking tearjerker  
Of a pair of hands embracing the whole world.  
Priests cursed the church into factories  
And worked there on conveyor belts too.

We were the cowards. Only later did we see the daring  
Of our lonely gangway, no Trotsky whisks us away  
Through the rotten trick of international horseplay.  
Only our morning bodies had the impact  
Of natural slogans. We were rhetorically silent.  
We had no power but the force of our inertia.

We formed a huge throng of the absent  
In the public forum. We never signed  
Another's manifestos, we hid  
Our singular signal under a bushel.  
We measured our future by the daily suicide  
Of Chamfort and Jos de Haes, we reached out to each other

Over the grave of our children's children.  
We studied the active pride of boredom  
And swore by a conspiracy of the aloof.  
We would not be appeased, we were not being fucked over  
By a shit storm of luxury, we remained dirt poor,  
Like these poems, a scattering of ashes in letters.

## 16

I'll just write with your permission we,  
I can't say it differently.  
We were not simply born after May '45.  
We were not simply born.  
We were not simply.  
We were simply not.

We played a pioneering part in a mouth without men.  
We got worked up in a tongue with no mouth.  
We spread like viruses all over the screen.  
The word made flesh became an open secret  
Behind the locks and bolts of many tabernacles.  
We hanged ourselves in poems deprived of their poet.

We were not simply. We were simply not.  
We had no close family, that's why we were relations.  
We did not swim round in a letter of Darwin's.  
We did not pick a heart from the heart of the stone  
Rolled up the mountain by my father.  
We did not roll out of our mother, a mould for life.

We had no mirrors indoors  
And let our self-image lose itself in papers and pubs.  
We became troublemakers on the neighbourhood committee,  
Lyricism of bohemia and filth from the street.  
There we bought our bonds back from ourselves.  
Many sentences together produced no emotion.

I'll just write with your permission we,  
I can't say it differently.  
We were the silent ones after May '45  
We were the silent ones of May '68.  
We were not simply.  
We were simply not.



## 17

We were few.  
We were some.  
We were a few.  
We were others.

We played no part in a riot  
Of European proportions.  
We did not take to the streets.  
We did not take our place.

We put up a tent of books and canvas,  
We mugged up a modernity in libraries.  
We timed in sheet music the staggering effect  
Of silence – the echo still sounds.

We carved our sculptures from study and stone.  
They are still standing here in rows.  
They are going to read themselves aloud.  
They found their partners in crime only later.

We were not a poetic theme by Mao.  
We thought, we'll make our own poem.  
We thought, we'll make history here  
On the sly.

From *Bres IV*, a cycle in: *Derwisj*,  
Querido, Amsterdam, 2003

*Translated by Paul Vincent*

Che Guevara, Havana, 1960 © Alberto Korda