

Experiences of a colonial civil servant

# Gangrene 1 - Black Venus

JEF GEERAERTS

In 'Gangrene - Black Venus', set in the Belgian Congo at the end of the 1950s, Geeraerts portrays a white colonial civil servant who wants to free himself from the oppression of Western bourgeois mentality. In an evocative style, he describes the protagonist's obsession for a black woman, leaving western civilisation behind and descending into an orgiastic, quasi-mystic way of life, combining ritual and instinct, violence and eroticism. His life consists of hunting, sleeping, eating, drinking and copulating: man in his most primitive state.

'Black Venus' is not just a colonial novel; it is also the story of a romantic ideal. It is about man's longing to find paradise in nature, a place where he can experience his freedom to the full. Yet, Geeraerts also demonstrates the consequences of this freedom in a most ruthless manner.

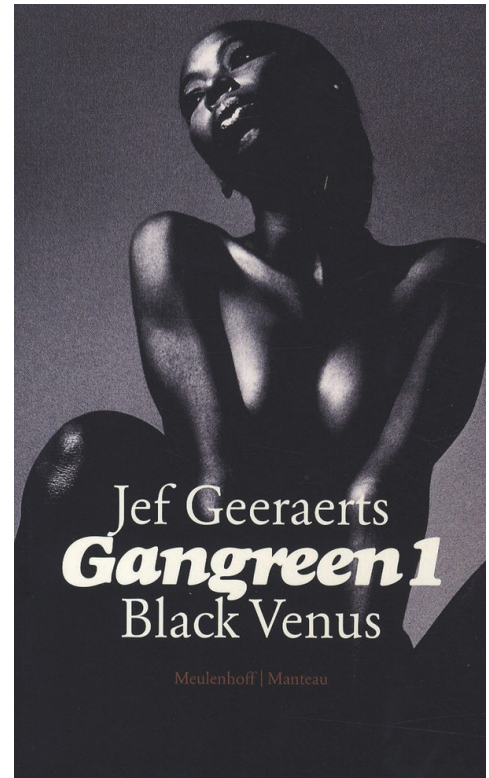
**Geeraerts' sentences twist and twine across the pages like lightning-speed lianas**

NRC HANDELSBLAD

'Black Venus' is one of the most talked-about novels from post-war Flanders. The controversy surrounding the publication was astounding. Applauded as brilliant, then decried for 'extolling of racism and pornography'; however shocked conformist Belgium might have been, no-one could really deny that seldom had a writer approached such a sensitive subject with such monumental daring.

**With his tornado prose, Geeraerts has broken the mould of the classical novel**

DE STANDAARD



## AUTHOR



**Jef Geeraerts** (1930-2015) was born in Antwerp. The bourgeois environment from which he originated and his experience as a civil servant in the Belgian Congo left their mark on his literary work. He published his debut in 1962 and built up an impressive body of works. From the 1980s, Geeraerts devoted himself to crime novels.

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