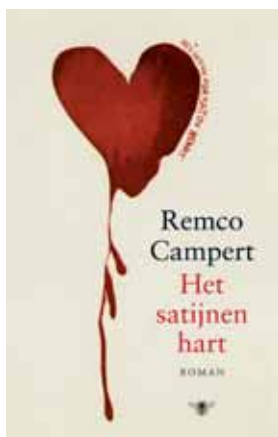


*An ode to art*

## Remco Campert

### The Satin Heart



**R**EMCO CAMPERT's apparent mildness and light ironic touch towards affairs of the heart have been altering gradually with the onset of old age and its infirmities, and the inevitable approach of death. The time comes for a reluctant final reckoning.

In *Het satijnen hart* ('The Satin Heart'), this is the prospect facing the well-known painter Hendrik van Otterloo, who bears some resemblance to Karel Appel. He has lived for art and enjoyed the fruits of fame, but he has never started a family or entered into any serious relationship with a woman. The one attempt he made, involving the hairdresser's daughter Cissy, ended in drama, and he painted his last major work: a self-portrait, on the night she left him.

It is only years later, when Hendrik sees Cissy's obituary in the newspaper, that his conscience starts to bother him. In conversations with his only friend, the equally renowned painter Jongerius Jr., he invariably calls Cissy a bitch, and yet she clearly left deep wounds in his soul. The only other person with whom Hendrik has a more or less normal relationship is his half-sister Babette, who regularly comes by to care for him. For all their grumbling and grouching, there is a strong bond between the two, dating back to an experience thirty years before.

Campert's style, which has become increasingly spare and unadorned, was made for the character of Van Otterloo, a man of few words. For a long time Van Otterloo has questioned the role that art has played in his life. Yet when his frustrations threaten to get the upper hand, his longing to return to art is all that keeps him going, and it even gives him new energy. This makes *The Satin Heart* intriguingly contrary, as settling scores with the artist becomes an ode to art.



photo Klaas Koppe

After a long career, Remco Campert (b. 1929) is still one of the most popular writers in the Netherlands. He started as a poet but from the sixties on, he also wrote novels, such as his highly successful debut *Het leven is vurrukkulluk* ('Life is Grrreat', 1961). His style is tinged with irony and his work is often autobiographical. In 1979 Campert was awarded the P.C. Hooft Prize for his poetry. 2006 saw the last of his popular newspaper columns in *de Volkskrant*: in the autumn of his life, Campert has found inspiration for new novels, including the warmly received *Een liefde in Parijs* ('A Love in Paris', 2004).

*This flawless book is proof that as he gets older, Campert's skill as a novelist is not waning but waxing. ELSEVIER*

*In the language of *Het satijnen hart* Campert manages to conjure up a terrifying fear of death which is ultimately conquered by a will to live. That will to live, or creative urge, is indistinguishable from the artistic calling.*

*NRC HANDELSBLAD*

*The gentle Sunday's child of Dutch literature is beginning to stick up for himself. DE VOLKSKRANT*

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*The gangster girl* (Het gangstermeisje).  
London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968. Also in  
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Sample Translation

*The Satin Heart*

(Het satijnen hart)

by Remco Campert

(Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2006)

Translated by S.J. Leinbach

I've finally settled on stupid cow. I prefer it to fucking cunt, which Jongerius Junior finds a tad vulgar. Besides, Cissy's cunt was the best thing she had, a precision instrument which she could switch on and off at will. The problem was not her cunt but her head, which was filled with thoughts of money and status and male attention. That diseased mind of hers ruled her defenceless cunt, a faithful handmaid, victim of her mistress's whims. Actually her cunt was a paragon of innocence.

I was raised not to refer to women as 'stupid cows', or even to think about them in those terms. But when the aforesaid stupid cow pulled up stakes and left me, I began to question the saintliness of the opposite sex. In Jongerius Junior's opinion, I've just gone over to the other extreme. He thinks I generalise.

'Oh, give me a break,' I snap back at him. 'They're incapable of doing or wanting anything. Their whole lives revolve around driving men crazy. If there weren't any men, women would be hopelessly lost. Women's lib is a crock, just a trick to attract our attention.'

'You're stuck back in the fifties with your ideas about women. Know what your problem is? She hurt you, and you want to hold onto that pain. That's your way of keeping a piece of her.'

I'd never thought of it that way. I start off denying it.

'That's ridiculous. I'm not a masochist.'

Jongerius Junior senses that he's touched a nerve.

'She wanted to have a child with you, you once told me. Could that have anything to do with love?'

'Love! Ha! To her, a child was a gold nugget, a bit of collateral. Something she could use to sink her claws into me and my money. Take that student of yours, Fiona. She talks of nothing but money too. If she gets her kit off – which I've yet to see happen – do you reckon she'll do it because she finds you attractive? No, she's

out for your money and your fame, take my word. And I'm sure she can see through that line of bull about wanting to paint her.'

'Maybe,' Jongerius Junior admits, 'but what of it? I'm realistic enough to accept that. The fact is, you're nothing but a dyed-in-the-wool idealist.'

That's news to me.

When Cissy and I lived together she went shopping a couple of times a week in the most fashionable and expensive street in Amsterdam. She'd rummage through the racks with the other women, aided by shop assistants who were, if possible, even more common than the clientele. I was sometimes allowed to go along on these excursions, and I would sit there, perched on a small, elegant chair while she picked out her clothes. She wanted to flaunt it, being the famous artist's woman, having even more money to spend than the TV stars who frequented this street. I revelled in it: the artist in the prime of his life with the beautiful young girlfriend that everyone envied. If there was an unusually costly purchase, my job was to frown disapprovingly.

When I walked down the street with Cissy, there was something in her step, the swaying of her handbag, that gave you the impression you could possess her, that she was for sale. And she knew it. 'They look at me like I'm a hooker.' Hidden in my shadow she ogled every man in well-tailored trousers. I noticed all right, but I looked on like a good-hearted uncle, blindly convinced that her devotion was unconditional, just as I lived under the delusion that the power of my art would never fail me.

When I met her she was seeing a racing-car driver. His milieu, in which women were regarded as necessary toys, had become too confining for her. Only in the world of art could she truly shine; artists knew what beauty was and what beauty was entitled to. She picked me up (as I later took to describing it) at a dinner following the private viewing of an exhibition in Brussels. She was sitting in the far corner of an immense table with her boyfriend the driver who owned a nightclub, where we wound up later that night. I was in the place of honour in the middle, wedged in between the wife of the Dutch ambassador (the ambassador himself was

unavoidably detained, as ambassadors often are), and my friend Monsanto, the art historian who discovered me and Jongerius Junior and wrote essays and articles that secured our position among the great artists of the twentieth century. After a time I started to have the feeling that, even from a distance, I was being stared at. I looked in Cissy's direction, vaguely at first, as if I were simply taking in the scene. I continued to feel the glow of her big brown eyes as I turned back to the ambassador's wife who painted watercolours of flowers that she would 'never dare show a living soul', a confession that turned into an invitation to visit the ambassador's residence. A moment or two later I could not resist sneaking another look at that face which stood out more and more from all the other faces. Her eyes drained me dry, the world around me fell away, my heart was in my throat, I saw before me a painting that I should never be able to paint, my fate was sealed, as was the racing-car driver's, but that was no tragedy, since Cissy was only one of his many paramours. It's my misfortune that I've only ever been able to keep one at a time.

The undertaking with Friso has disrupted my daily routine. The contact with the outside world, limited though it was, has made me uneasy. It's as if everything that had been anchored in place were suddenly set adrift. It's been a long time since I touched the outside world – or it touched me. The world of the artist is an inner one, fed by the outside world. First that of the imagination, then that of reality, which, 'once set in motion by the tempest of true, revolutionary zeal, will never be the same again. The forces unleashed by surrealism in the first half of the century find their ultimate synthesis and a fresh beginning in the work of Van Otterlo and Jongerius Junior,' as Monsanto writes in 'Towards a New Painting', the essay that put us on the artistic map once and for all.

It was not so much street life as such that knocked me for six, but a memory that came roaring back at me, a memory of the time I desired Cissy, with a naïve obsession that I had never known before she came into my life and which never returned once she was gone. Time that could not be recaptured and which left behind

only bitterness, until I read the news of her death. Every day I realise how old I am. I've resigned myself to that fact and play games with it to amuse myself. Her death scrambled up the game pieces. I am angry and unhappy. I didn't know I could still be unhappy, so close to the grave. I should see it as a sign of life, but it's about as welcome as toothache (nor that that's a problem I now have to worry about, since most of my teeth are gone). Old age brings its infirmities, but also its blessings.

This afternoon, when my friend Jongerius Junior emerges from the outside world, which I had a sniff of this morning, my uneasiness retreats, displaced by a not unpleasant fatigue. Things are as they are; nothing can be changed. I manage to rein in the memory of Cissy and, through her, of the life that somehow slipped through my fingers. One old man pours the other a drink. I down mine in two gulps. Jongerius Junior looks at me inquisitively as I refill my glass.

'What are you looking at?'

'Looks like you needed that. You usually don't drink that fast. Did something happen?'

'Too much fresh air, maybe. Friso wanted me to get out of the house for a bit.'

Jongerius nodded approvingly.

'I was saying that to Bettina only the other day.'

'Saying what?'

I detect a slight note of resentment in my voice. People aren't supposed to talk about me behind my back. Old people in particular ought to know better. After a lifetime of talking, they should keep their comments about one another to themselves. But Jongerius Junior has always been a busybody, and my half-sister is a woman, and to women, talking is as natural as breathing.

'That you should get out more.'

They're worrying about me behind my back, an intolerable thought. There's nothing the matter with me. Who put the idea in their heads? I've seen enough of the world outside my house to last a lifetime. Jongerius Junior is only feigning concern to seem more like someone with no problems himself, continuing to feast from life's

table – an old goat with his balls dangling between his knees. Fiona would be scared to death, if it ever came to that.

‘Mind your own business, Jongerius.’

‘What did Friso say about your health?’

‘He said it was sterling.’

He chuckled.

‘Sterling. There a word I haven’t heard in a while. “A sterling job” was my father’s standard opinion about his own paintings.

‘That Nazi?’

I finish my second drink, much too quickly. I feel like hurting Jongerius Junior. He’s always so sure of himself. Good painter, but much too confident. I know that his father’s his weak spot, even after all these years. The war and the postwar period are never far away, however old we’ve become.

‘You’re not in such a great mood,’ he said. ‘Should I come back another time?’

‘I couldn’t care less what you do.’

Have I gone too far? In silence I brace myself for what’s to come. I don’t want him to go at all. But he shows no signs of leaving, just sips his drink.

‘My father wasn’t a Nazi, as you damn well know.’

‘A member of the *Kultuurkamer*. What’s the difference?’

‘We can’t all while away our time in a concentration camp.’

He was referring to my father.

‘Prisoners in concentration camps didn’t while away anything.’

We’re bickering like two schoolboys. I’m starting to enjoy myself, it makes me feel alive.

‘My father chose art, not war.’

‘Don’t give me that, Jongerius. You father was just scared. Why don’t you admit it? You were downright ashamed of your parents after the war. You didn’t even go to your father’s funeral. Don’t start trying to make a saint of him now: crucified on the cross of art.’

War, art – we juggle those words, balls that we keep in the air and put away again once our private performance is over. Concepts that have been used so many times without thinking that they’ve been worn out, stripped of life and death.

Living through a war creates a sort of clarity that lasts the rest of your life. The difference between good and evil no longer holds any secrets for you. It makes you lazy. You don’t have to explain anything to your peers, who went through the same thing and feel the same way you do.

Jongerius Junior is arguing his point. He’s sitting on the edge of his seat and talking vehemently. His voice rumbles along, interrupted by the occasional high-pitched squeak. That’s right, granddad, just keep on talking, I thought, enveloped in a sudden warmth.

I am startled out of a muddy blackness. People should stay away, and not shout at me like that. Jongerius Junior is standing in front of me, shaking me by the shoulders.

‘I’m not asleep,’ I say guiltily.

‘For a minute I thought you were dead,’ said Jongerius Junior. ‘Promise me you’ll never do that again. Should I call Friso?’

‘I’ve seen enough of him for one day.’

I struggle out of the chair, stand up for a moment then sink back down.

‘Are you going to be all right?’

I drank too much, too fast. That’s what it was. And the morning walk didn’t do me any good either. You can’t expect to interrupt your routine with impunity. I feel sorry for my helpless body which prevents me from carrying on my argument with Jongerius till late in the evening, and then drowning any ill feelings in alcohol and working till the early morning.

‘I’m sorry if I hurt you,’ I say weakly.

‘You didn’t. I know you too well for that.’

Jongerius Junior sticks around until seven, by which time he’s convinced that I won’t do anyone any harm, for the time being.

‘Give me a call later to let me know how you’re doing. If I don’t hear anything, I’m going to phone Bettina. She’s got the key to your house, right?’

When I was laid up for a few days with the flu, I gave Bettina a copy of my house key. She never gave it back, even though I asked repeatedly for it once I was better.

‘What if something happened to you? I’d have to be able to get into the house.’

Usually she rings before coming, but sometimes when she ‘just happens to be in the neighbourhood’, she shows up unannounced. It burns me up every time she does it. I don’t like being checked on. My age is robbing me of my independence. I can admit to myself, but not to others, that I’m just a shadow of my former self, and, at the end of the day, helpless. But Bettina was the least of my troubles. After Jongerius Junior, I’ve known my half-sister longer than anyone else. All the others are dead, and now Cissy too.

As I get ready for bed, I remember what Jongerius Junior asked me. I call him but all I get is his answering machine. Either he’s asleep or not at home. In fact I’ve no idea how he spends his nights. Of course, it’s also possible that he’s died instead of me.

‘If you hear this, I’m still alive, so you don’t have to bother Bettina,’ I say. Maybe my words are falling on a dead man’s ears. Why should I go before my friend? I bet he’s never given his own death a moment’s thought. As long as I’m in worse shape than him, he thinks he’s sitting pretty.

I brush my few remaining teeth and cannot avoid catching a glimpse of my face in the mirror over the washbasin. My God, that yellowish white beard, those washed-out eyes, that ravaged mouth. How do I find the courage to show that disaster area to others? At this point I shouldn’t let anyone in to see me any more, but if I go down that road I might as well just end it all. It would take a certain amount of daring, as well as a level of despair that I simply don’t feel yet, despite my decrepitude and internal moaning. There’s life in me still; that’s for sure. Unsteady as they are, my legs still carry me, and weak as they are, my eyes can still see. It isn’t death which was banging on my door earlier as Jongerius believed, but life, which still expects something of me.

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There's a conspiracy afoot to get me out of the house. At the end of the morning, as I'm cleaning my brushes, I hear the front door open. It can only be Bettina.

'We're going for a drive,' she calls out from the hallway. 'It's a beautiful day.'

She comes inside, a bundle of energy.

I kiss her cheek, and she my beard, somewhere near my lips.

'We can go to the sea,' she says. True to form, I begin to grumble.

The sun falls in through the windows, and it is indeed a beautiful day, but that doesn't mean I have to go out and be a part of it.

'I'm not listening, Van Otterlo.'

'I haven't had lunch yet.'

'We'll stop off somewhere along the way,' she says, in a tone that doesn't brook contradiction.

As we drive down the street, she points out that we could also go to Weesp. 'Then you could see your studio again.'

'Don't want to see it. We'll go to the sea, like you said.'

'That'll give you an airing.'

Does this mean I smell musty?

We're only on the road a few minutes when Bettina starts on about Weesp again.

'If you want to keep that studio, Pieter says you'll need to do something about it yourself.'

'His lawyer's working on it. He's writing letters. What else can I do but drag my feet for as long as I can? If Bol does what he's paid to do, I'll be dead before they can take it away from me. And, frankly, I couldn't give a damn about what happens after that.'

'If that's the way you feel, you might as well give it up now. Why all the trouble?'

'It's not that much trouble. And as for why: I just like getting up people's noses.'

'I can't believe that's the only reason you're doing it.'

‘Maybe not.’

‘Pieter knows someone in Weesp who’s on a committee to protect the landscape there. They’re opposed to the construction of an industrial park on that site. They call themselves the Wasps of Weesp. Pieter came up with that. He thinks you should join the committee. With your name you’d have a chance of attracting the attention of the national press and, who knows, maybe television. But you’d have to make an effort. All you do now is sit at home and get yourself all worked up which doesn’t help anyone. You’d achieve more in a team.’

‘Spare me the clichés, please.’

‘I promised Pieter I’d tell you about it.’

‘Tell him I’ll think about it.’

He’s her husband, and I have to stay polite. I’ve never got on well with Pieter. We just aren’t each other’s type, and I still think that Bettina could have found someone better, a man with a sense of adventure who could have shown her something of the world. Instead of that she married this numbskull, an upstanding member of the community no doubt, but dull as dishwater. Every few years he secretes a respectable novel, always based on his memories of growing up in The Hague, which receives lukewarm reviews and vanishes into the mist a few months later. I’ve got to hand it to him though: he certainly manages to stay cheerful. Despite his limited talent, he’s become ‘important’. He sits on prize juries and on the boards of literary associations and writes conciliatory reviews of his fellow authors’ books. In his way, he works hard, though he doesn’t have to since he comes from a rich family whose money comes from oil. His true talent seems to be networking, as they call it nowadays. If I really want to keep that studio, I’d do well to follow his advice: he knows better than I how it works, and he’s bursting with connections, including a few in the upper echelons of government. But in my more megalomaniac moments I regard him as a minor Dutch scribbler not fit to stand in my shadow.

That’s what I sometimes think. I don’t say so, partly to spare Bettina, partly because people in Holland turn their noses up at their own fame. In that respect I’d be better off living abroad, in New York, Berlin or Paris. In those metropolises,

people are less petty-minded and nobody looks at you askance if you toot your own horn once in a while, provided your work's good and costs a lot, and I win on both those counts. But oh well, what does it matter, all this vanity in which I've lived as if it were my natural element. Like every man I'll die alone, acclaimed or shrouded in obscurity – it boils down to the same thing. All round the world there are people who think I died years ago. They stand before my paintings, admiring or puzzled that this work was once thought to be so fresh and innovative, but they daren't say it out loud, for fear of being seen as ignorant.

We drive through the outskirts of the city. Bettina peers out, hunched over the wheel. She's a little short-sighted but refuses to wear glasses, and her eyes won't tolerate contact lenses.

We pass a cemetery. No matter what direction you leave the city, you always pass a cemetery. The cemetery where I'll wind up one day is on the other side of town, at the place where the houses stop and the river flows under a bridge and out. I like the prospect of being buried in my native city, in that cemetery. I can't picture my death, though I can picture where I'll be buried. My thoughts skip over death. It's a word that will unfortunately acquire significance for a handful of my survivors (will there be any?); I shan't know it myself. There's a certain logic about being packed in the ground in the city where I was born. It's aesthetically pleasing. When I put up a canvas, I don't stop to think about where I'll sign it once it's finished; as I'm actually painting I don't let that concern me. Afterwards the spot just becomes obvious, it was there all the time.

On the way to the coast, Bettina says, 'You used to take me to the seashore, when I was a child. Do you remember?'

'Vaguely.'

'You came back from abroad, and all of a sudden you were there at the door, and we went to the beach. I thought it was wonderful.'

'And now you're taking me.'

She takes her hand off the wheel and squeezes my thigh.

'You don't remember, do you?'

I remember something that she remembers too, something we've kept secret all these years, but the trips to the sea are a blank. Yet they must have been important to me too, because I never did anything I didn't feel like doing. My time was too valuable. I followed what I thought was my instinct, and that was painting. All else was secondary or subordinate. There was a brief period in my career that I mixed sand in with the paint. Maybe I went to the sea with my half-sister to get fresh sand in her bucket. Later, I went through a stage of glueing everything I could find onto giant canvases: rope, empty tubes of paint, mops, squashed dolls, vests, plastic flowers. That didn't last long. The collectors who bought my work were unimpressed by these flights of fancy. So was I. I returned to pure paint, which contains more than a lifetime's worth of expressive possibilities.

'I'm afraid not.'

'You carried me into the sea. You bought me a plastic windmill on the promenade and we ate pancakes.'

I don't remember, but I can still picture it, with the sound of the wind and the waves.

'And you bought me a pair of sunglasses. They fascinated me. I wore them day and night.'

Her words don't jog any memories. It rings true, but the sunglasses and windmill could just as easily be replaced by other objects. And the sea become a forest, the beach a snow-covered slope, with me pulling her along on a sledge...I rack my brains, as we drive along in silence, the dunes starting around us, but I just can't call it to mind. Nothing of what made Bettina so happy has left any impression on me. To hear her tell it, with my sudden appearances in my half-sister's life, I played a role that was vaguely reminiscent of a father's. I can't imagine myself in that role but it's plausible all the same, because our common father was already dead by then – Bettina must have been six or seven at the time of those trips to the sea.

It bothers me that something that was important to Bettina – at any rate, something she can easily recall – didn't implant itself in my memory. Look at all the things I've lost or rejected, even though they belonged to me. I've neglected many things in my

life. The damage is done; it's too late to get sentimental about that now, but even so, regret flares up inside me like the flame of a Bunsen burner. I curse art, the idea that it's somehow more important than anything else, the vanity of it, the inner braggadocio, the egocentrism that even prevented me from having children and being a father. These thoughts overwhelm me as I sit beside Bettina in the car – I get the beginnings of an insight into myself that I'm yet not ready. Or maybe I *am* ready, and should have had such insight a long time ago. It's not especially convenient to start reconsidering my life now in my declining years. I can't redo or repair a thing. I don't have the time to start a new life, a life without art, the real life I never dared to live. Art is one big sham, a house of cards, rank self-deception. I did everything wrong.

'What did you say?' Bettina said, giving me a sidelong glance. Have I been talking to myself?

'I'm fine,' I say, as if she'd asked how I was. For a few seconds everything runs together in my head. Where am I, who am I with, where am I going? Whenever I wake up early in the morning, I need a minute to get my bearings. But now it's the middle of the day, you can tell from the sunlight, and I'm being driven somewhere. To the sea, I remember again, Bettina behind the wheel, it feels safe. My half-sister whom I don't remember as a child, though I do recall her as a woman when we ended up in each other's arms one night after a memorial service for our father. Who art in heaven or wherever.

The car stops and Bettina turns towards me.

'Are you feeling all right?'

'Yeah, I'm fine,' I say.

She has a handkerchief in her hand and uses it to wipe the skin under my eyes. Apparently tears are coming out of them, the tears of old age. When you're old you start leaking everywhere.

I push away the hand with the handkerchief.

'I'm not a child. Keep your hands on the wheel.'

'You're impossible, Van Otterlo.'

‘I feel like I’m trapped in a bad movie.’

‘Thanks.’

‘I think I need something to eat.’

‘That must be it.’

‘This car trip wasn’t my idea, Bettina.’

She drives on in silence. It isn’t hard to guess what I must have done to put her in a bad mood. She thinks I wanted to ridicule her comforting gesture. Just try explaining to her that that’s not the case. Yeah, right after I explain it to myself. A man was supposed to show weakness in the presence of a woman? A passé attitude, of course, but as a pose it’s never far from the surface. I’m not going to get rid of it this way. It’s not for nothing that the tears decided to make an appearance.

Crying has never played much of a role in my life. I’m sure I cried from time to time as a child, from anger because I didn’t get my way, or for no reason, simply because the days seemed so long. Youth is a prison sentence. As an adult, I didn’t allow this proof of weakness a place in my life, with two exceptions – that I can recall. Once, as in my childhood, from anger, when I heard, guardedly, from a member of the jury that it was unlikely that I’d get the Grand Prix for International Avant-Garde Art. Instead of awarding it to me (or possibly Jongerius Junior, though I wouldn’t have been happy about that either), they gave it to an Englishman, who made ‘installations’, like a life-sized showroom full of wrecked cars with battered garden gnomes at the wheel. It was all to do with market politics. I couldn’t sneer about it enough to Jongerius Junior, though he reacted more laconically.

‘You can’t win ’em all,’ he said, with a shrug. ‘It’s not as if you paint to win prizes, anyway? And how long did you think you’d stay avant-garde? We’ve been accepted, absorbed into the great body of art.’

The great body of art!

‘You must be referring to Giovanna,’ his girlfriend at the time, the widow of an Italian newspaper magnate. She had a large, voluptuous body, which would have accommodated Jongerius Junior three times over. Just as Cissy would later be

immortalised by me, she insisted on him painting her portrait, but at the time he was employing his art to come to terms with a bombing at a Bologna train station.

When Cissy hit the road and it gradually sank in that she wouldn't be coming back, I didn't cry. From that first moment I turned my sorrow to bitterness. I refused to honour her with my tears. Until today, it struck me again, as we passed the cemetery on the outskirts of the city on our way to the seaside town, and Bettina asked, 'Are you sad about Cissy?'

'Good riddance, I say. The stupid cow.'

'I disagree. She loved you. She cried on my shoulder more than once about you. She couldn't reach you.'

'Give me a break,' I said. 'It's all lies.'

'She felt you looked down on her.'

'That's what I should have done. I don't want to talk about it anymore.'

The second time I cried was when Mondrian's *Victory Boogie Woogie* was exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art, not long after the war. I don't mean I cried my eyes out or anything, but I did get a little misty. I saw all the power of painting compressed into a single canvas, just as I would many years later in Rome, this time without the tears, at the sight of a small self-portrait by Velázquez. Standing before Mondrian's masterpiece, a wave of emotion washed over me, and I sensed that power being transferred to me, an energy consisting of love, ambition and introverted bloody mindedness.