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| **Jonker, Ingrid (1933-1965)** |
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| Ingrid Jonker is one of the freshest voices to have emerged from Afrikaans literature since the 1950s. Through her daring use of metaphor and a poignant longing for the other expressed in her poetry, her precarious relationships with the men in her life, and especially through her tragic suicide by drowning, she became a cult figure in Afrikaans literature. After her death, an annual prize for the best debut collection of South African poetry was named after her.  Jonker was born on a farm near Douglas in the Northern Cape and had an unconventional upbringing with her grandmother, mother and sister in Gordon’s Bay – a place that signifies paradise in her poetry. The speech of the local people and the hymns of the church she attended were lasting influences on her work. |
| Ingrid Jonker is one of the freshest voices to have emerged from Afrikaans literature since the 1950s. Through her daring use of metaphor and a poignant longing for the other expressed in her poetry, her precarious relationships with the men in her life, and especially through her tragic suicide by drowning, she became a cult figure in Afrikaans literature. After her death, an annual prize for the best debut collection of South African poetry was named after her.  Jonker was born on a farm near Douglas in the Northern Cape and had an unconventional upbringing with her grandmother, mother and sister in Gordon’s Bay – a place that signifies paradise in her poetry. The speech of the local people and the hymns of the church she attended were lasting influences on her work.  Her first collection of poetry, *Ontvlugting* (*Escape*), was published in 1956. In December 1956, she married Piet Venter, also an aspiring poet, and on 1 December 1957 their daughter, Simone, was born. Jonker’s second volume of poetry, *Rook en oker* (*Smoke and Ochre*), appeared in 1963 in the midst of tumultuous love affairs with the South African writers André Brink and Jack Cope. After the formal couplets of *Ontvlugting*, the new volume – mostly in free verse and strongly under the influence of Uys Krige and his translations of Éluard and the Surrealists – surprised and shocked the reading public.  Jonker received the Afrikaanse Pers-Boekhandel-prys for *Rook en oker* in 1964 and she used the money to travel to England and Amsterdam. Brink joined her in Amsterdam. They travelled to Paris and Barcelona but fell out, and Jonker went back to Paris where she was treated for depression.  A key to Jonker's poetry is the play of repetition and deception (the ‘dubbelspel, kierang-speel’) expressed in the Afrikaans word ‘kierang’, which means to trick or to deceive. This is exemplified by the poem ‘Ek herhaal jou’ (Jonker, *Versamelde Werke*, 39). (‘I repeat you’ (Jonker, *Black Butterflies*, 54)).  When Brink announced his engagement to someone else and Jack Cope proved unwilling to continue their relationship, Jonker’s depression returned and on the night of 19 July 1965, after threatening suicide a number of times, she walked into the sea at Drieankerbaai and drowned.  Jonker's third collection, *Kantelson* (*Toppling Sun*), was published posthumously in 1966 and a selection of her poetry, translated into English by Jack Cope and William Plomer, appeared in 1968. *Black Butterflies* is the title of the new 2007 translation of most of her poetry (by André Brink and Antjie Krog), as well as the title of a film of her life, starring the Dutch actress Carice van Houten.  Jonker became well known for her poem ‘The Child’, which Nelson Mandela quoted in his opening address to the first South African parliament after the ANC came into power in 1994. Recommended Work *Black Butterflies: Selected Poems*tr. André Brink & Antjie Krog (2007)**.** |
| Further reading:  (Jonker)  (Metelerkamp)  (Viljoen) |