

**A close reading and comparison of
selected poems by Ingrid Jonker and
Sylvia Plath**

by

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Abstract

Following a close reading strategy, the research seeks to discover what the intratextual relations of each selected poem, three by Ingrid Jonker and three by Sylvia Plath, reveal. Flowing from the thematic overlaps that exist between the selected Jonker poems and Plath poems, it explores what similarities or differences in poetic form, the use of poetic devices and content, in other words intratextual relations, can be discovered via a comparison. Given that Jonker and Plath were contemporaries and shared biographical events, and after having considered and compared the intratextual relations of the selected poems, the research seeks to show what similarities or differences can be discovered in the exploration and comparison of the intertextual and extratextual relations of the selected poems. Thus, the thesis' critical approach includes the close investigation of the structure of each of the selected poems, in order to discover its communication first, before delving into biographical, historical, social, political, and thematic approaches and interpretations. The research reveals that exercises of close reading, with a few exceptions, have not been the main focus in the discussion of either poet's poetry. In other words, context has, for the most part, been favoured over text and over form. What the research reveals is that there are overlaps in the intratextual, intertextual, and extratextual relations of the selection of poems, but also differences. A comparison of intratextual relations reveals Plath's formal training in comparison to Jonker's largely informal training, for example, and that generally Plath was the more disciplined author of the two. The intertextual and extratextual relations of each poem (and how these relations compare) reveal and highlight that the selection of poems is a reflection or sampling of the poets' 'own' voices. It also reveals the development of their maturity as writers and the development of themes across their poetry and collections of poems.

Keywords

Close reading, Ingrid Jonker, Sylvia Plath, poetic device, poetic structure, content, context, comparison, intratextual, intertextual, extratextual

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Chapter 1 – Overview and Rationale

1.1 Introduction

My interest in the subject of this thesis followed an assignment that I had to do while completing my Honours studies. For the assignment, students were asked to analyse in detail and interpret a poem of their choice through the investigation of its structure. We were also asked to discuss the function of intertextual and extratextual relations in the interpretation of poetry, as well as to formulate, briefly, our own strategy for interpreting poetry.

I chose to analyse the poem “Balloons” by Sylvia Plath. I began by considering the structure of the poem, as this was the point of departure the assignment called for. I knew very few details of the poet’s life at that stage, but as my assignment called for the consideration of intratextual as well as intertextual and extratextual relations while examining the poem, I learned more about the context in which “Balloons” was written. I considered the interaction of the poem with other poems in the *Ariel* anthology (1965) in which it first appeared, as well as the influences of other poets’ works on the poem and its author’s poetry in general – Robert Lowell’s confessional style of poetry, for example, is considered to be one of the influences on Plath’s work. Finally, I also considered certain biographical facts about the author’s life. I learned, for example, that “Balloons” was written six days before the author’s suicide on the 11th of February 1963. This knowledge in particular, I felt, coloured my interpretation of the poem, as it would have in any critical analysis, because a consideration of any person, situation or, in this case, the context of the artwork brings about new angles and new perspectives – it is the nature of contextualisation. I then found myself looking for evidence of her coming act of suicide in the lines of poetry and this, I felt, did an injustice to the poem, as well as diminished the author’s life and work to a single act.

This is not an attempt to say that a consideration of an artwork’s context is negative or unnecessary, but rather that I realised the possible ‘colouring’ that may occur as a result of interpretations that favour context exclusively over the attempt to explore an artwork’s material in an unbiased manner, as much as it is possible to be unbiased – in this case, the make-up of the text. I formed the opinion on completion of the assignment that the reader has to keep a firm grasp on both the text and its context in interpretations, as favouring the one exclusively over the other may cause misinterpretations of the communication. For example, reading “Balloons” exclusively in

the light of Plath's approaching suicide may close the reader off from other possible interpretations, and the complexities of the use of poetic devices and how these work together in "Balloons".

This answers the question of my interest in the subject matter, but why the comparison of selected poems (titles listed on p. 13) by Ingrid Jonker and Sylvia Plath? One reason, as John Lagan (2011: 301) points out in explaining the function of comparison or contrast, is that, "The purpose of comparing or contrasting is to understand each of the two things more clearly and, at times, to make judgments about them." Thus, I hope to gain a greater understanding of the selected poems by comparing the Jonker poems to the Plath poems. Another reason, very simply, is that I appreciate and enjoy both poets' poems. The final reason for my desire to consider Ingrid Jonker's and Sylvia Plath's work together is biographical in nature and rests on the remarkable commonalities that became evident as I gained more information about these two poets' lives. An overview of their lives follows, illustrating some of the biographical overlap that exists between the two poets' lives.

1.1.1 A Concise Overview of Ingrid Jonker's and Sylvia Plath's Lives

Although Jonker and Plath were contemporaries, it does not appear that either one of them was aware of the other's existence or work during their writing careers.

Plath was born in the United States, Boston, Massachusetts on the 27th of October 1932 (Gill, 2008: 2). Jonker, a year younger than Plath, was born in South Africa, in the then Cape Province, on the 19th of September 1933 (Viljoen, 2012: 16). Plath and Jonker are best known for their poetry, but they both also wrote prose. Plath wrote a semi-autobiographical novel called *The Bell Jar*, while Jonker wrote the drama, *in Seun na My Hart (A Son just like Me)*, along with various short stories.

These two poets shared the experience of being raised by a single parent. When Sylvia Plath was eight years old, her father died of diabetes, because of an incorrect self-diagnosis on Otto Plath's part, who feared he had cancer and therefore did not consult a doctor until it was too late to effectively treat his diabetes (Gill, 2008: 3). Plath's loss of her father at such an early age meant that she was not able to develop much of a relationship with him. Despite her not having had much of a relationship with him, the event of loss was great, and it greatly impacted Plath's life. It is rather difficult to construct an accurate picture of her relationship with her father other than to note that it seems clear that the loss of her dad at such a young age left a lasting emotional scar on

her life. As Jo Gill (2008: 1), author of *The Cambridge Introduction to Sylvia Plath*, notes: "Biographical accounts of Plath's life have... been bitterly contested." Other than the biographical accounts, which are not entirely trustworthy, evidence of this complicated relationship with her father, before and after his death, can be traced in poems such as "Daddy", "The Colossus", and "Full Fathom Five". These poems, however, are not reliable biographical sources in and of themselves.

Ingrid Jonker's mother was separated from her husband before Ingrid's birth. Viljoen (2012: 16) describes the events around Jonker's birth as follows: "Beatrice had left her husband Abraham Jonker when he accused her of carrying a child that was not his. Neighbours in the Cape Town suburb of Vredehoek where the Jonkers lived told of marital tensions and frequent arguments between Abraham and his wife, after which she often fled the house with her firstborn, Anna. Beatrice's hurt at her husband's accusations must have run deep. A letter, dated 16 November 1933, shows her firmly rejecting Abraham's plea that she return to him." Jonker had little to no contact with her father until her mother's death. Jonker was 11 years old at the time, and she and her sister then went to stay with their father and his family.

The relationship between Jonker and her father, already complicated by his rejection of her as his legitimate daughter and the estrangement during her first years of life, was aggravated in later years as a result of Ingrid Jonker's political sympathies. Abraham Jonker was a National Party Member of Parliament – the National Party being instrumental in the institution of Apartheid in South Africa. During the early sixties, certain South African artists and National Party members came into confrontation with each other regarding censorship laws, and Ingrid and her father found themselves on opposing sides of the censorship issue. Ingrid was quite vocal in her opposition to censorship and was often quoted in various newspapers at the time. An example follows from a letter that she addressed to the *Sunday Times* (August, 1963):

A new enemy seems to have emerged against our writers. It is now possible that they can be tarred, feathered and silenced even before censorship. This was the case with André Brink whose novel *Orgie* was withdrawn by the publishers after the page proofs had been passed.

We are and have been fighting for freedom of expression in our country and we, as writers, will never come to terms with the enemy.

The 'enemy' in this case included, whether she intended it to or not, her father and his political views. Jonker's outspokenness placed Abraham Jonker and their differences in the spotlight, and the press often exploited the differing viewpoints of father and daughter (there were more instances of disagreement than the censorship issue). One may very well imagine the strain that such a situation may have caused in any father-daughter relationship and the strain that it did cause between Ingrid and Abraham Jonker.

As is evident from the facts of their lives, neither poet enjoyed a very stable emotional existence; both seemed to have struggled with depression. Jonker's mother, Beatrice Cilliers Jonker, suffered from depression – she died, as previously stated, in 1943 during a stay at Valkenburg Psychiatric Hospital, located in Observatory, Cape Town. Ingrid was to receive treatment, also for depression, at this same hospital in the 1960s, as reported by Viljoen (2012: 78):

When [Ingrid Jonker] had herself admitted to Valkenburg from 21 to 28 April 1962 she wrote on the admission form: 'My reason for seeking admission is nervous disorder, anxiety and depression'. Over the years she would be treated in psychiatric hospitals like Valkenburg and the Gardens Nursing Home. Doctors would use anti-depressive medication as well as shock therapy to treat her.

Plath, too, received electroconvulsive therapy after her first suicide attempt in college, and it is also possible, based on evidence from her personal journals, that she suffered from an undiagnosed bipolar disorder. At least, this is the opinion of Marie Griffin ((2007) About.com).

As Gill (2008: 6) writes: "Sylvia was hospitalised at McLean Hospital on the edge of Boston... Beam explains that she was under the care of Dr Ruth Beuscher... who, after conventional therapies such as the prescription of Thorazine failed to make any improvement, proposed ECT (electroconvulsive or 'shock' therapy)."

As far as romantic relationships and their married lives are concerned, Sylvia Plath married Ted Hughes, the English poet, on 16 June 1956. She was separated from him, but not divorced, in 1962, after she found out about his affair with Assia Wevill. Ingrid Jonker married Pieter Venter, also in 1956, on the 15th of December. The main reason for this marriage, it appears, was Jonker's desire for independence and escape from her father's home. The marriage was mostly an unhappy one and ended in divorce.

Jonker's other significant romances include her affairs with Jack Cope and André P. Brink (both well-known South African writers).

Another shared experience between the two poets is that of becoming mothers. Jonker had one child, a girl called Simone; Plath had two children, a girl named Frieda and a boy named Nicholas. The experience of becoming mothers and motherhood are themes that appear in both women's poetry.

Both poets died by their own hand – Plath by gassing herself on the 11th of February 1963, while residing in London, England, and Jonker by walking into the sea at Three Anchor Bay, Cape Town, and drowning herself, on the 19th of July 1965. Nevertheless, their legacies remained and arguably increased in influence after their deaths. In recognition of her work, Plath was the first person to be awarded posthumously with a Pulitzer Prize in 1982 for her anthology, *The Collected Poems*, also published posthumously. At the National Orders awards of 29 October 2004, Jonker was posthumously awarded the Order of Ikhamanga in silver by the South African government (2008) “[f]or her excellent contribution to literature and a commitment to the struggle for human rights and democracy in South Africa.”

1.1.2 Rationale

I wondered whether or not the original work and poetic voice of poets such as Sylvia Plath and Ingrid Jonker, in the light of their iconic status and well-known and researched lives, is diminished in value by that very research. This might sound like a contradiction in terms, but what I mean to convey by it is that what is well known and already written regarding the artist may become exclusively the glasses through which all her work is viewed, and this is what I consider to be diminishing. It may end up unfairly informing her entire oeuvre. I am reluctant to support critical approaches that do not take into consideration the close investigation of the structure of a literary work, in order to discover its communication first, before delving into biographical, historical, social, political, and thematic approaches and interpretations. Approaches in literary criticism that do not make use of a close reading strategy cannot, I believe, adequately explain the significance and quality of any work of art, nor of Plath's and Jonker's poetry or its continued popularity to those who appreciate and study poetry today. The fact that both poets' lives have been sensationalised to a certain extent does not help in keeping the reader unbiased or open-minded, conceding the point that this is not ever truly possible for any reader or critic when attempting interpretations of a work. I felt, however, that

it would be a worthy undertaking to attempt an investigation of their poetry and the structure of their poems that is as unbiased and open-minded as possible.

The New Criticism is a literary theory that upholds the practice of close reading, and close reading best suits one of my purposes in this thesis of first exploring the structure of the selected poetic texts. It is important to note that I do not hold to all aspects of the New Critic theory in this thesis – I hold to it only so far as it encourages the exercise of close reading. For example, unlike the New Critics, I aim to explore the context of each of the selected texts as well, after I have thoroughly explored the texts themselves.

In literary theory, there is no mode of interpretation available that is flawless, but poetry does require interpretation as any work of art does (for the sake of understanding, enjoyment, criticism, etc.). On p. 17, I seek to show my reasons for choosing the New Criticism's practice of close reading as a frame of interpretation for the analysis of each of the selected poems (titles listed on p. 13) by Jonker and Plath. As part of my reasoning I point out some of the criticisms raised against the New Critic movement, but I hopefully also show the valuable contribution the New Critics made to the discipline of literary theory, especially in the form of close reading, which remains relevant and useful up to the present.

Why is a close investigation of these selected poems worthy of academic research? The answer is that it contributes to the ongoing discussion surrounding both Jonker's and Plath's poetry in the field of literary studies and literary criticism. I feel that it is also worthy of investigation because I was unable to acquire much academic research and literature that focussed on interpreting their poetry via close reading strategies, as I further highlight in the Literature Review (Chapter 2). As far as I am aware, Jonker's and Plath's works have thus far not been compared in the way that I aim to do. The investigation of the selected poems' structures and a comparison of these may also bring new information or new perspectives to light, and suggest further means of interpretation for these poets' work. This thesis hopefully contributes to the ongoing conversation in the academic community around Jonker's and Plath's works and may assist current and future students, as well as other researchers, who seek to study these two poets' lives and works.

The significance of this research project lies in the investigation of the selected poems and their form for their own sake, and in first gaining insights into the text itself of each poem. It also lies in listening to what the structure of the poem communicates and listening to the narrator's voice before listening to, and considering, the author's voice,

that is, the biographical voice, or the context in which she wrote. Its significance lies in the knowledge that an artist's creation/s communicates/communicate, whether the communication is intentional or unintentional, and an attempt at discovering this communication should, I believe, start with an investigation of the work of art itself.

Further significance is to be found in the objective of comparing these two contemporaneous artists' selected works, and determining what the similarities or disparities in structure and content reveal. Lastly, the significance of this research project lies, for me personally, in the development of my critical and reasoning skills in the study and appreciation of poetry, and in my development as a critical reader in the theory of literature tradition.

I aim to contribute to the existing knowledge of Jonker's and Plath's work with this thesis in a way that underscores the substance and significance of their work, and the reasons for its continued popularity, by means of investigating their poetry for its own sake and for its own unique voice. I will hopefully reveal the intratextual relations in the selected poems, thereby pointing to the uniqueness of their form and communication, and in so doing, show that these have great poetic form and significance in and of themselves that, in turn, relate to the substance and significance of the poems. I feel that these poems, which are currently highlighted in literary circles, would have been highlighted even if the intriguing, and in some ways similar, biographical facts of Plath's and Jonker's lives were different from what they are.

I noted that one of the reasons for comparing selected works by Plath and Jonker is the surprising biographic overlap in their lives, but why attempt a comparison at all? A comparison, I feel, would help to highlight both the similarities and differences in Jonker's and Plath's selected works. I also feel that a comparison would allow me to see aspects of the poets' work which I would not have seen outside of a comparison. In comparing the selected Jonker poems to the selected Plath poems, I aim to discover things about these poems that can only be seen in the light of a comparison. I see the role of a comparison, in short, as helping the reader to see one work more clearly in the light of another work. A comparison can help the reader with considering different angles, similarities, and differences, which the reader may not have noticed or considered when working with a single text or a single author's texts.

1.2 Research Question

- Following a close reading strategy, what can be discovered about the intratextual relations of each selected poem?
- Flowing from the thematic overlaps that exist between the selected Jonker poems and Plath poems, what similarities or differences in poetic form, the use of poetic devices and content, in other words intratextual relations, can be discovered via a comparison?
- Given that Jonker and Plath were contemporaries and shared biographical events, and having considered and compared the intratextual relations of the selected Jonker poems to the selected Plath poems, what similarities or differences can be discovered in the exploration and comparison of the intertextual and extratextual relations of the selected poems?

1.3 Aim of the Research

As the research question hopefully illustrates, the aim of the research is to try to give equal attention to both the text and context of the selected poems; the aim is to try to engage with the text first, and not more with the text than with the context, or more with the context than with the text. Thus, the research aims to first explore, through a close reading strategy, selected poems written by the poets Ingrid Jonker and Sylvia Plath. These two contemporaneous poets were chosen based on this fact and the surprising biographical overlap evident in their lives. Following the intratextual analysis of each poem, the research then aims to compare the intratextual aspects of the chosen sets of poems, three by Jonker and three by Plath, based on an overlap of themes in the poems, in order to determine if similarities or disparities can be found in the two poets' selected works beyond the similarities and differences that exist in their biographies. The outcome of this comparison should aid greater insight into the selected poems.

The close reading and exploration of the structure of the selected poems is informed by the New Criticism. An investigation of the intratextual relations in the following poems: "Bitterbessie dagbreek" ("Bitter-berry daybreak", 1963), "Swanger vrou" ("Pregnant woman", 1957), and "Met hulle is ek" ("I am with those", 1965), by Jonker and the following poems: "You're" (1960), "Lady Lazarus" (1962), and "Balloons" (1963) by Plath is undertaken. This is done in order to explore the way that each poet arranged the substance of the communication of each poem in the poetic texts, and how each poet made use of poetic devices. (Please note that, for ease of reference, the Afrikaans

poems are henceforth mentioned by their Afrikaans title only, and the English title does not follow them, unless the English title is specifically discussed as part of the analysis.)

After completing a close reading of the selected poems, and comparing the intratextual aspects of Plath's selected poems and Jonker's selected poems, this research then seeks to explore the intertextual and extratextual relations of the selected poems, reflecting on these as a possible confirmation or extension of the selected poems' explored form and content. The exploration of extratextual relations include the biographical information available regarding both poets, as well as takes into consideration, to some extent, the differing cultural contexts in which Jonker and Plath wrote.

In summary then, my purposes are to explore the make-up of these poems via a close reading strategy – allowing each poem to speak for itself. A move outside the strictly New Critic frame of reference, as it pertains to close reading, is then undertaken in order to determine whether or not an overlap exists in the form, content, and themes of the chosen poems by means of a comparison between Jonker's and Plath's poems, which includes the consideration of all three textual relations mentioned. Thus, I will compare the intratextual, intertextual, and extratextual aspects of Plath's poems to Jonker's poems, or vice versa, in order to trace similarities or disparities in their work and contexts. Again, my intention behind the use of comparison in this thesis is to see the work of each poet more clearly in the light of the other poet's work, as the comparison highlights differences, similarities, or even brings unconsidered or unexpected relations to the fore.

1.4 The Selection of Poems

As far as the selection of poems is concerned, I note the poems that were chosen, when the poems first appeared or were published, and my reasons for choosing the poems.

"Bitterbessie dagbreek" as well as "Swanger vrou" by Jonker are from her collection of poems titled *Rook en Oker (Smoke and Ochre, 1963)* while "Met hulle is ek" is from *Kantelson (Tilting sun, 1966)*, published posthumously. All the English translations of the poems mentioned here were done by André Brink and Antjie Krog, and were sourced from the *Black Butterflies (2007)* collection of poems. All the mentioned poems can also be found in Jonker's *Versamelde Werke (2012)*, first published in 1975.

"You're", "Lady Lazarus", and "Balloons" by Plath are all poems from the 1965 version of the *Ariel* collection of poetry. The poems in this collection were, for the most part,

selected by Sylvia Plath before her death while certain poems were added, or left out, by Ted Hughes for the collection's publication after her death. "Balloons" falls in the category of being added and was written during the time just before the poet's suicide. In *Ariel: The Restored Edition* (2004), "Balloons" was left out of the collection. As Frieda Hughes (Plath, 2004: xi), Plath's daughter, puts it, this was in order to "exactly [follow] the arrangement of her [Plath's] last manuscript as she left it."

Some of the general reasons for choosing these specific poems are that they reflect certain of the poets' recurring sympathies, modes of identification, and themes. In Sylvia Plath's case, the selected poems reflect aspects of death and rebirth, otherworldliness, motherhood, and social awareness. The selection of Ingrid Jonker poems reflects a search for love and security, motherhood, political convictions and sympathies, and also social awareness or justice.

"Lady Lazarus" was not only specifically chosen for its controversial use of holocaust imagery, but also for the exquisite richness in structure and content which this poem by Plath displays. "Balloons" was chosen because it serves to illustrate the wide range of life experiences and emotion that Plath was able to express in poetic form when compared to a poem such as "Lady Lazarus". Plath's "You're" and Jonker's "Swanger vrou" are poems that relate in subject matter to the experience of expecting a child. I believe that the poets' treatments of this particular experience in their poetry will be useful when it comes to a comparison of their work.

Jonker's "Bitterbessie dagbreek" was chosen based on a sense that it displays her admirable command of the use of the Afrikaans language in her poems, as well as her use of irony in this specific poem. Lastly, "Met hulle is ek" was chosen because of the South African context in which Jonker lived and wrote, and because a discussion of Jonker's poems cannot ignore this aspect of her life and the occurrence of it in some pieces of her work.

The poems were written around the same time (the late 1950s and early 1960s) and for both poets, these reflect some of the final additions to their complete oeuvre. I am of the opinion that the selected poems underscore the poets' creative abilities and that they serve to illustrate, for one thing, the range of emotion that both Jonker and Plath were capable of expressing in their poetry. I also found during the course of my preliminary research that various scholars and critics (some of whom I mention below) consider the poems I chose to be among those poems that display both women's maturity as poets. The total number of poems written by Plath is impressive, but it is the *Ariel* collection of

poetry that reflects Plath's own, unique poetic voice, her 'Ariel' voice' as her daughter Frieda Hughes (2004: xi) refers to it in the introduction to the restored edition of *Ariel*, and it is this voice that I also desire to explore in the selected poems. *Ariel* underscores her growth as a poet and I join John F. Nims (1985: 46) in his declaration that it is a triumph, and in his acknowledgement that the poet came into her own with the poems published in *Ariel*.

In *Perspektief en Profiel: 'n Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Letterkunde*, Ernst Lindenberg (1982: 584) refers to Jonker's second volume of poetry as follows,

Groter volwassenheid en 'n verrassende verstegnieuse vooruitgang is bespeurbaar in *Rook en Oker*, asook 'n wye emosionele register.

(A greater maturity and a surprising progress in verse technique are to be seen in *Smoke and Ochre*, as well as a wide emotional register.)

And to particular poems, Lindenburg refers as follows:

Ingrid Jonker se waardevolle bydrae tot die Afrikaanse letterkunde berus uiteindelik op enkele gedigte uit *Rook en Oker*: ten eerste die viertal "Swanger vrou", "Bitterbessie dagbreek", "Die kind" en "Verlore stad"; ... (1982: 585)

(Ingrid Jonker's valuable contribution to the Afrikaans literature ultimately rests on certain individual poems from *Smoke and Ochre*: firstly the four poems "Pregnant woman", "Bitter-berry daybreak", "The child" and "Forlorn city"; ...)

In a later edition of *Perspektief en Profiel*, S. W. van Zuydam (1998: 517) mentions two reviews of *Rook en Oker* (*Smoke and Ochre*), one written by F.E.J. Malherbe in *Die Huisgenoot* (1964) and the other written by E. van Heerden in *Kriterium* (1964). These reviews are mostly positive regarding the collection of poetry, and Van Zuydam highlights the fact that both critics also acknowledged that the poems in *Rook en Oker* reflect Jonker's own voice, which they viewed as an encouraging development in the poet's work. The selection of Jonker poems, therefore, also serves to demonstrate the acknowledged growth and maturity of the poet.

All of the abovementioned reasons make the selection of poems worthy of a close reading and I believe that a comparison of these specific poems, reflecting the authors' capabilities as poets, might complement and bring about more of an understanding as to

how they structured their poems, and why and how they succeeded in communicating by means of their art in such a relevant manner to their immediate audiences and to successive generations of readers.

1.5 Theoretical Perspective

Close reading, as mentioned, is an aspect of New Criticism and, though the entire school of thought is not embraced in my research, the theory is still critically considered here. New Criticism is a movement which began after World War I with the critical work of modern poets and critics, in particular T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, and then later on, John Crowe Ransom, reaching its full expression almost 30 years later in the work of academic critics, such as Rene Wellek, W.K. Wimsatt, and Cleanth Brooks.

Within the history of literary theory, New Criticism shares some similarities with Russian Formalism. Abrams and Harpham (2012: 140) explain the influence of Russian Formalism on the New Criticism as follows:

American New Criticism ... is sometimes called "formalist" because, like European formalism it stresses the analysis of the literary work as a self-sufficient verbal entity, constituted by internal relations and independent of reference either to the state of mind of the author or to the actualities of the 'external' world. It also, like European formalism, conceives poetry as a special mode of language whose distinctive features are defined in terms of their systematic opposition to practical or scientific language. Unlike European formalism, however, the New Critics did not apply the science of linguistics to poetry, and their emphasis was not on a work as constituted by linguistic devices for achieving specifically literary effects, but on the complex interplay within a work of ironic, paradoxical, and metaphoric meanings around a humanly important "theme."

There are two lasting contributions of New Criticism to the theory of literature. Firstly, and I cannot stress the importance of it enough, because it asks the reader to interact with the text itself, the New Criticism encouraged and framed the practice of close reading. As Leroy Searle states (2005: 610), "The enduring importance of the New Criticism in this regard lies in its institutional importance and its insistence on the practice of close reading, whatever conceptual justifications may be involved in putting it to use." Secondly, New Criticism emphasised irony in poetic texts. The New Critic definition of irony in poetry is as follows:

An ironical statement indicates a meaning contrary to the one it professes to give; an ironical event or situation is one in which there is a contrast between expectation and fulfilment or desert and reward. In the irony of both statement and event there is an element of contrast. Either form of irony, or both, may appear in a poem... But the irony of statement, and of tone and attitude, are [sic] more important for poetry [than the irony of event or situation]. The successful management of ironical effects is one of the most difficult problems of a poet... irony, along with understatement (in which there is a discrepancy, great or small, between what is actually said and what might be said), is a device of indirection; that is, the poet does not present his meaning directly, but depends on the reader's capacity to develop implications imaginatively. (Brooks and Warren, 1960: 557)

Or, as Baldick (1996:80) states in *Criticism and Literary Theory 1890 to the Present* with regards to the New Criticism's definition of irony:

[T]he most valuable kind of poetry embodies irony by incorporating opposed attitudes within itself, and is thus immunized against further ironic challenge. It is to this ironic inclusion of opposed attitudes that the New Critic generally refers in speaking of a literary work's 'maturity'.

Continuing with a definition of New Critic terms, another quote by Cleanth Brooks (1947: 194) from *The Well Wrought Urn* follows, which clarifies the New Critic use of the word 'structure':

One means by it [structure] something far more internal than the metrical pattern, say, or than the sequence of images. The structure meant is certainly not 'form' in the conventional sense in which we think of form as a kind of envelope which 'contains' the 'content'. The structure obviously is everywhere conditioned by the nature of the material which goes into the poem. The nature of the material sets the problem to be solved, and the solution is the ordering of the material.

What I propose to do is to explore the ordered material (or intratextual relations) of the selected poems and, in so doing, discover their communication to the reader. In exploring the said poems, I will consider poetic devices such as rhythm, metre, typography, metaphor, tension, irony, and sound, and determine how all of these convey the communication of each poem, as it is the interaction of poetic devices that forms an organic whole, according to the New Critics.

Rene Wellek, in the article "The New Criticism: Pro and Contra" (1978: 611-624), discusses four recurring objections to New Criticism – objections which are in evidence in Leroy Searle's discussion too. The first objection is that it is an arcane aestheticism interested only in art for art's sake, which excludes the consideration of human experience and the social impact of literature. The second recurring objection to New Criticism is that it is unhistorical because of its apparent ignorance of the context in which a work of art was/is produced. Thirdly, New Criticism's approach to criticism is seen as wanting to achieve a scientific state of explanation when it comes to interpreting art. Lastly, New Criticism is viewed merely as a theory of instructive or educational value to those learning to read works of art and specifically poetry, which by implication diminishes its value in theoretical/intellectual circles.

Wellek (1978: 617) makes the following statement in reference to the first objection against New Criticism, that it is an arcane aestheticism interested only in art for art's sake: "One may raise doubts (as Wimsatt has) about the metaphor of organism if it is pushed too far in application to a work of art, but there seems to me a simple truth in the old view that a successful work of art is a whole in which the parts collaborate and modify one another." Wellek continued by stating that "[b]oth Brooks and Ransom uphold a version of imitation, of mimesis. Brooks asserts that the poem, if it is a true poem, is a 'simulacrum of reality' (*Well Wrought Urn* [New York, 1947], p. 194) or 'a portion of reality as viewed and valued by a human being. It is rendered coherent through a perspective of valuing' ("Literary Criticism" [New York, 1957], pp. 737-38)." Brooks, then, did not ignore reality or human experience in poetry, but acknowledged that the poem communicates something of reality, something of human experience – this may also be referred to as the context in which it was written and which it reveals. The context in which the poem was written, then, forms one part of the interpretation and the exploration of the parts that work together to form a specific organic whole in art. It is not simply interested in art for art's sake, but also very much interested in what art communicates about the human experience.

In terms of this first objection to New Criticism, a well-known phrase by Cleanth Brooks, the 'heresy of paraphrase' has received much criticism as well. 'Heresy of paraphrase' is the phrase that Brooks used to express his disagreement with the reduction of a work of art to a simple statement of abstract suggestions, or to an ethical message, or even to any literal truth that can be confirmed. It is important to note, however, that his intentions with this phrase were not to say that the paraphrase itself is pointless or unhelpful; rather, he asserted that the paraphrase or interpretation should not take

precedence over the work of art itself. The paraphrase should not be the final say on the work of art.

This is a view with which I agree. For him, such an approach would detract from the work of art and its communication – simplify it unfairly. Asserting, for example, that everything which Jonker or Plath ever wrote was feminist in nature would be an unreasonable and untruthful simplification of their work. By underscoring the seemingly fictional aspect of art via the exploration of its parts in order to gain a greater understanding of the whole, it does not follow automatically that one does not acknowledge art's relationship to reality or to its specific context, but rather that one acknowledges that each work of art has its own voice worthy of exploration.

As already indicated, the New Critic is not completely ignorant of history or context. Tying in with this, and as a contradiction to the second objection raised against New Criticism, that New Criticism is unhistorical because of its apparent ignorance of the context in which a work of art was/is produced, I would like to refer to Wellek's (1978: 617) statement that "[t]he very nature of words points to the outside world." I believe that the New Critic is aware of this and that the aim of New Criticism, or any person associated with the theory, is not to disprove such a statement. My intentions, in regard to my subject matter, are certainly not to ignore the 'outside world' in which the selected poems were written. Indeed, with my biographical comparison of the lives of Jonker and Plath, I acknowledge that a poem is written in a certain context and not in a vacuum. What I propose, however, is that when it comes to the interpretation of poetry (or any artwork) the poem (artwork) itself should in all cases be the critic's point of departure. In regard to this, I am aligned with the New Critic approach that seeks to interpret the structure of the poem and to explore all the parts of the poem – all the devices used in order to form the specific whole. I quote from Wellek's article (1978: 617-618) again as he underscores the tension of text and context that exists in works of art, and of which he, as a New Critic, was aware:

It points to or may point to an object in the outside world and at the same time is part of a sentence, of a phonemic and syntactical system, of a language code. The parallel to painting is obvious: a painting is enclosed in a frame, is organized by a relation of colors and lines, but simultaneously may represent a landscape, a scene, or the portrait of a real man or woman.

The implication here is that art, or a poem, represents something of the outside world, and so it would be impossible for the reader or critic to completely ignore that outside world in exploring the work of art, or poem.

In addressing the third objection to New Criticism, that it is seen as wanting to achieve a scientific state of explanation when it comes to interpreting art, Wellek states, “[c]riticism cannot be neutral scientism: it must respond to the work with the same totality of mind with which the work is created.” This perhaps illustrates the single-mindedness (or commitment) with which the New Critic seeks to engage and explore a poem. At the same time, the New Critic – and this is a point that Brooks underscores in *The Well Wrought Urn* – is always aware of the fact that the interpretation is not as good as the poem/work of art, as I stated; it cannot replace it when it comes to declaring meaning. This view is one that is very different from the way that science is viewed. Wellek (1978: 619) continues to make the point that “[n]one of the New Critics would have thought that their methods of close reading were ‘scientific’ nor would they have identified criticism with close reading. Ransom, Tate, Blackmur, Winters, and Burke had developed their theories of poetry and their general point of view long before they engaged in anything like close reading.” Chris Baldick (1996: 82) puts it as follows:

For Ransom and Tate, the truths of science are in fact only half-truths, abstractions made for the purposes of instrumental control and thus showing us their objects in only one dimension; poetry gives us knowledge, and of a fuller three-dimensional kind that preserves the particularity of its objects.

Poetry is often rather complex and the point of using a New Critic approach is not to reduce a poem to its various parts, although an analysis may appear to do so, but rather to acknowledge the complexities of a poem via the exploration of the various parts that make up its whole, and how they work together to form the whole. In doing so, the beauty of the work of art is acknowledged, and the artwork is perhaps understood a little better. During my analysis of each poem, I explore the parts of the poem that make up the whole, which may appear to be a reduction to its various parts, but I seek to continually, throughout each analysis, show how the parts work together to form the whole.

Some would argue that applying one analytical formula to all poems will result in the interpretation of the communication of the poems being the same with every analysis. The various interpretations of a single poem that do exist, however, contradict this notion. For my part, what I find valuable in the New Critic approach is the disciplined

manner in which a poem is approached, and the open-mindedness which it seeks to attain before reducing a poem to an interpretation only, while being fully aware that no single interpretation is correct or ever the final word.

If art reflects life's complexity, then art's complexity in its communication cannot be ignored, and this is something which all the New Critics seem to have kept firmly in mind. The desire to understand the artwork's meaning, and the meaning itself, should not be undermined by simplifying it when it comes to interpretation by the reader. Nor should the critic's aim be to fit the artwork's communication into her/his frame of reference or interpretation, but rather to attempt to be as unbiased as is possible – acknowledging the fact that this is not a hundred per cent possible, but nevertheless attempting to negotiate the tension that does exist as best as the critic can.

In response to the last objection consistently raised against New Critic interpretation, that it is merely a theory of instructive or educational value to those learning to read poetry, Wellek (1978: 620) says that close reading as practised by Brooks “[offers] critical standards, leading to discrimination between good and bad poems, ... The aim is understanding, ‘interpretation’[.]” The instructive or educational value to those learning to read poetry does not diminish its value.

In Wellek's (1978: 624) words:

The New Critics have also persuasively described the function of literature in not yielding abstract knowledge or information, message or stated ideology, and they have devised a technique of interpretation which often succeeded in illuminating not so much the form of a poem as the implied attitudes of the author, the resolved or unresolved tensions and contradictions: a technique that yields a standard of judgment that cannot be easily dismissed in favour of the currently popular, sentimental, and simple.

This extract by David Robey (1982: 65-62) highlights the New Criticism's continued relevance:

Yet there are good reasons for continuing to read the New Critics' work. At the very least they are interesting because they formulated a number of assumptions about literature and literary study that still play a significant part in the academic world today. More importantly, their work still has considerable validity as a theoretical alternative to Formalism and structuralism, an alternative which may

seem a great deal closer to many readers' and critics' feelings about literature and life. For while they always emphasized the special qualities of literature, and in particular the idea that the meaning or effect of literature cannot be explained by a process of reduction to ordinary modes of expression, the New Critics also insisted on its connections with the 'real' world, and on the contribution it can make to coping with the problems of everyday human existence. In contrast to Formalism and structuralism, the New Criticism was empiricist and humanistic.

Its relevance is more recently expressed by Peck and Coyle (2002: 197) too:

New Criticism is regarded as having made moves in an interesting direction in indicating the extreme complexity of any piece of writing, but the objection raised against it is that the New Critics ultimately interpreted everything in the light of their own coherent religious view of life. Yet an approach that rejects all notions of order in a text, which is characteristic of some deconstructive criticism, is likely to prove unappealing to many readers. For this reason, a much modified form of New Criticism, not making all that much of paradox and less transcendental in its approach, but looking at how a poem confronts and attempts to order a complex world, is bound to remain influential in the criticism of literature.

Thus, though the New Criticism is certainly a theory of instructive and educational value, it is hardly a theory of less theoretical and intellectual value to the field of Literary Theory.

1.6 Limitation of Study and Definition of Terms

This thesis does not seek to either uphold or discredit the New Criticism. It should not be read as an endorsement or rejection of the literary theory. This thesis benefits from New Criticism as far as it promotes the practice of close reading when it comes to the exploration of poetic texts.

The aim of this thesis is to ultimately compare the selected poems written by Plath to those written by Jonker, or vice versa. The comparison, based on biographical overlap in the lives of the poets and thematic overlap in the selection of poems, looks at similarities and differences in the intratextual, intertextual, and extratextual relations of the chosen poems. This comparison may, at times, appear to be too narrowly focussed, and as not taking enough, in particular, intertextual or extratextual relations into consideration. There is, however, only so much that one can reasonably explore or say in a Masters

thesis without it becoming too cumbersome in scope, or undermining the essence of the research question.

The definition of terms may be viewed on pp. 34-35 and pp. 152-153 of this thesis.

1.7 Overview of Research Design and Method

A significant part of the thesis relies on an application of close reading strategies, as propagated by the New Criticism, in the intratextual analyses of the selected poems. Departing from a strictly New Critic approach, an intratextual, intertextual, and extratextual comparison of the selected poems is conducted, for the purpose of gaining greater insight into both poets' work, and in order to discover if structural and subject connections exist between Jonker's and Plath's poems. The kinds of sources consulted include selected original works of poetry written by Ingrid Jonker and Sylvia Plath, as well as journal articles, academic books, reviews of their collections of poetry and website references.

Primary sources: I engage with the selected poems by Jonker and Plath by means of analysing the texts with a foremost focus on intratextual relations within each selected poem. I also depend on and draw from my literary textbooks, used during the course of my graduate and postgraduate studies: The 2002, *Theory of Literature: Text and Workbook* by I. Gräbe and M. Keuris and the 2001, *Advanced Theory of Poetry* by I. Bierman.

Secondary sources: The journal articles and academic books written by literary critics, as well as other works by the authors, and biographical information about them, enjoy a secondary consideration and are considered for the purpose of comparing the poems and taking intertextual and extratextual aspects into consideration, in order to discover what similarities or difference are in evidence. Silvianna Blosser's text, *A Poetics on Edge: The Poetry and Prose of Sylvia Plath*, may be mentioned in particular as she is one academic I discovered, during the course of the Literature Review, who did employ a close reading strategy in exploring Plath's whole body of work.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

The Literature Review for this thesis reveals that there is an abundant amount of academic conversation that has happened and continues to happen around the works of Sylvia Plath. In reviewing the literature available on Ingrid Jonker's works, the academic conversations become a little more muted. The recently published *Ingrid Jonker: Poet under Apartheid*, written by Louise Viljoen is, then, an encouraging development in the ongoing conversation around Jonker's works and life.

The Literature Review hopefully also reveals the very varied approaches that have been undertaken in analysing both poets' works. It should reveal too that exercises of close reading have, until more recently, not been the main focus in the discussion of either poet's poetry. It is here, as the ongoing academic discussion pertains to close reading or a lack of close reading, that this thesis joins the conversation. The thesis also joins in academic conversations that have already highlighted the overlap that exists between these two poets' lives and works, such as I. Gertenbach's article in *Literator*, Vol. 29, in 2008 and also Viljoen (2012).

1.2 Ingrid Jonker – Critical Review of Literature

In regard to Jonker, I discovered no text in which a close reading strategy for her work as a whole is explored and discussed, or in which the development of her poetics over her lifetime is systematically investigated as Blosser does with Plath's works. That being said, there are instances of close reading strategies to be found in application to certain of her works. Most are done, as far as I could determine, in the course of postgraduate studies or for the purpose of instructing high school students in the analyses of Jonker's work, as in *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* (Volume 29: 3, 1991: 123-126), which contains a close reading and analysis of the structure of the poem "Bitterbessie dagbreek" by C. van der Merwe, for example.

In her M.A. Afrikaans thesis entitled *Die Problematiek van Intertekstualiteit (The Study of Problems of Intertextuality)*, Susanna Breytenbach discusses and explores the intertextual aspects between Elisabeth Eybers' poem "Middeljarige" and Jonker's poem "Ou man op reis".

The purpose of the comparison is to highlight the intertextual connection between these two poems in regard to their communications about death. In her (1991: 65) own words,

Beide "Middeljarige" (Eybers) en "Ou man op reis" (Ingrid Jonker) handel oor die ervaring van ouderdom en die naderende dood. In "Middeljarige" (Eybers) word 'n vrou en in "Ou man op reis" 'n man se ervaring van ouderdom en die naderende dood weergegee. Die tekste se moontlike wêreld van referensies versterk en vul mekaar aan.

(Both "Middeljarige" (Eybers) and "Ou man op reis" (Ingrid Jonker) deal with experiences regarding ageing and approaching death. In "Middeljarige" (Eybers), a woman's, and in "Ou man op reis", a man's experience of ageing and approaching death is presented. The texts' possible worlds of referential meaning strengthen and complement each other.)

In terms of biographical approaches to interpreting poetry, there is a remarkable overlap in the way that Jonker's and Plath's poetry has been approached. Similarly to Plath, Jonker's work has been handled in a psychoanalytical manner too, as is evidenced by L.M. Van der Merwe's work titled, *Ingrid Jonker: 'n Psigologiese analise* (1978) and Johan van Wyk's doctoral thesis, *Die dood, die minnaar en die Oedipale struktuur in die Jonker-tekste* (Rhodes University, 1986). In addition to being psychoanalytically analysed, Jonker's poetry has been analysed using the following points of departure: feminism, political protest, reconciliatory poet, and the exploration of the use of imagery in her poems, such as mirror and ocean imagery, all of which will be shown by the further discussion of these specific themes below.

Emphasis is placed on Jonker's voice as female writer in a time dominated by male poet voices in South Africa (both in English and Afrikaans) as shown in the article "South African Women's Poetry: A Gynocritical Perspective" (1992) by author Cecily Lockett – this approach aligns with feminist readings of Plath's work. Tying in to this approach, Jonker's work is reflected upon in the context of other female African poets, who experienced marginalisation during colonisation, and even beyond the era of colonisation, in Africa.

As mentioned, there are remarkable similarities in some of the approaches applied in analysing Jonker's and Plath's poetry. There are certain approaches, however, that seem to be applied to Jonker alone. These are as follows: in the article "Remembering

Forgotten Singers: Reassembling Voices of Contemporary African Women" (1994) by Frank M. Chipasula, Jonker's poetry is read as a voice of protest against Apartheid ideology and violence, seeking instead freedom and justice. The exploration of themes of loneliness and disconnectedness from a South African, or rather Afrikaner, identity in her poems may relate to this kind of approach.

Ingrid Jonker, a white Afrikaner, is also seen as a reconciliatory poet in South Africa because of President Nelson Mandela's reading of her poem "Die kind wat doodgeskiet is deur soldate by Nyanga" ("The child who was shot dead by soldiers in Nyanga") at the opening of democratic South Africa's new parliament in 1994. As a Xhosa, oppressed and imprisoned in the Apartheid era, his public reading of her poem is seen as an act of reconciliation as he acknowledged her Afrikaner voice that dissented against Apartheid, just as his voice dissented against it. The seemingly opposed Afrikaner and Xhosa voices were thus reconciled in their dissent against Apartheid and its results in South Africa.

This specific poem, read by the President, has received much attention in particular, and at times has been the glasses through which the rest of Jonker's work is read. Jonker herself, it is recorded, was surprised when the political voice of her poems was pointed out to her. The following quote, provided by Brink (2007: 15) in his introduction to *Black Butterflies*, is in reference to "Die kind wat doodgeskiet is deur soldate by Nyanga":

'I am surprised when people call it political,' Ingrid wrote in an article in *Drum* (May, 1963). 'It grew out of my own experiences and sense of bereavement. It rests on a foundation of philosophy, a certain belief in "life eternal", a belief that nothing is ever wholly lost.'

Similarly to Plath, Jonker's poetry contains mirror imagery, and this has been the point of departure for analysing her poetry, more recently, by I. Gertenbach (2008) in an article titled "Spieëlbeelde in die werk van Ingrid Jonker en Sylvia Plath" ("Mirror Images in the work of Ingrid Jonker and Sylvia Plath"). It explored the use of mirror imagery in both poets' poems and asserts that it highlights both of their searches for the self. As Gertenbach (2008: 89) states in her abstract:

Writing poetry has an element of healing in it, but how does it work? Plath and Jonker continually wrote about mirror images, eyes and questions of identity. Different psychological theories surrounding this issue, including those of

Winnicott, Jung and Lacan, are discussed. Plath's "Mirror" and "Words" as well as Jonker's "Op alle gesigte" are specifically examined. Concluding remarks reveal that a mental block, or crypt, will always force a poet to reword his/her trauma.

The poems discussed by Gertenbach in the article are not the same as those selected for this thesis, nor does it explore or analyse the whole of the structure of the mentioned poems. Nevertheless, the article is insightful and a valid exploration as it focuses on a psychological and thematic approach when discussing and comparing the poets' work. The article does make clear something more of who the poets were and what some of their own approaches to their work may include.

The abovementioned article, and another by Gertenbach (2008), titled "Die aantrekkingskrag van die see" ("The magnetism of the ocean"), serve as an example of these two poets being grouped together in critical discussion and that an overlap, not only in their lives, but also in their work does seem to exist. The second article by Gertenbach, as the abstract elucidates, "...compares the use of oceanic symbolism in the poetry of Karin Boye, Ingrid Jonker and Sylvia Plath" and does make reference to Jonker's "Swanger vrou". This raises the question: if connections in their use of imagery and symbolism do exist, as explored by Gertenbach, are there other connections in Plath's and Jonker's works and if so, what may these be? This is what I aim to explore further by means of a comparison relating to the structure of their poetry.

Apart from the works mentioned above, there are other noteworthy works related to Jonker and her writings, with which I did not closely engage, but which I still briefly mention here. The first is *Gesig van die liefde*, published by Johan van Wyk (1999); *Literêre vertaling en 'ekwivalensie' na aanleiding van Ingrid Jonker se digkuns: 'n dekonstruksionistiese benadering*, a masters thesis by Elizabeth J. Van der Berg; *Ik herhaal je*, which is a biographical essay on Jonker written by Henk van Woerden and compiled by Gerrit Komrij; *Ingrid Jonker – 'n monografie*, a doctoral thesis by Erna Sadie (University of Natal, 1978), which makes use of a close reading approach amongst other approaches; and last, *Die Feministiese biografie toegespits op die Afrikaanse digter Ingrid Jonker*, a masters thesis by Elkarien Fourie (University of Pretoria, 2003).

1.3 Sylvia Plath – Critical Review of Literature

During the course of the Literature Review, and in an attempt to discover close reading strategies applied to Plath's poetry, I came across Silvianna Blosser's (2001) text, *A Poetics on Edge: The Poetry and Prose of Sylvia Plath*. Blosser is a critic I encountered

whose criticism of Plath's poems is exclusively informed by such a strategy. In her text, she explores, in depth, the development of Plath as a poet via her work instead of her life – the focus is, as Blosser makes explicit on page 34 of her book, on Plath's poetry, prose and non-fictional texts.

Her exploration and findings are not discussed in detail in this thesis. Briefly, Blosser divides Plath's poems into three categories and asserts that she believes, as a result of her study, that Plath was on the brink of crossing over into a fourth category at the time of her suicide. The three categories, as Blosser divides these, are the early poems (1956-59/60), the monological poems of 1961, and Plath's late poems (1960/61-63). The selection of Plath's poems for this thesis falls in this third category, as defined by Blosser. In each category, Blosser looks at the phonological level, the morphological level, the syntactic level, and the semantic level of the poems, and via these levels, she traces Plath's development and maturation as poet and writer. In summary, after a discussion of the monological poems Blosser (2001: 99) states the following to reveal one aspect of Plath's maturation as a poet, and this maturation can also be traced in her late poems:

I tried to show that there is increasing subtlety at the phonological, morpho-syntactical and semantic levels. Sounds, rhymes, metaphors, deviant and equivalent patterns are used more sparingly and they interact with one another in the poems, they no longer undermine it.

As I mentioned, I came across Blosser's text during the course of the Literature Review as it related to Plath, and discovered that she had drawn some of the same conclusions about the approaches employed in interpreting Plath's works. I found, for example, that most approaches to Plath's poetry contain, such as the biographical approach, aspects of biographical information about her life, either seeking it or using it as a confirmation for analysis. As stated, there are many similarities in how Plath's and Jonker's poetry has been approached for analysis. These become evident as one reviews the approaches that follow. Then there are the discussions of Plath's writing, which Blosser terms as creating a self not herself, as a mythical or mystical approach – this serves as a counter argument for seeking biographical information in her poetry. For this approach I would point in particular to Jacqueline Rose's text, *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath* (1992) as an example of this kind of approach to Plath's body of work.

Blosser very succinctly summarises some of the other critical approaches to Plath's work, which confirmed my own review, as follows:

On the whole, Sylvia Plath's work is mainly discussed in terms of a sick and entrapped self (psychoanalytical approach) or in terms of an expansion of the self (mythical and mystical approaches). She is also treated according to the social and cultural significance attributed to her (feminist views, Sylvia Plath's position in literary tradition). These main tendencies in the criticism outnumber the ones that focus on the problem of the creative process or on formal and technical aspects of her work. (Blosser, 2001: 18 – (Emphasis mine))

Along with the abovementioned methods of analysis or interpretation, her poetry has been viewed and analysed from the following points of departure: racism, her being an admirer of Dylan Thomas, confessional style of writing, perfect 1950s housewife imagery, Holocaust imagery, psychoanalysis, and feminism.

In an article titled "Be(e)ing and 'Truth': Tar Baby's Signifying on Sylvia Plath's Bee Poems" Malin Walther Pereira explores the highlighted racist dimensions in Plath's Bee poem series via a rereading/interpretation by Tony Morrison in her novel, *Tar Baby*. Pereira (1996: 527) points to the fact that Plath's bee-queen in the poems has been viewed as a symbol of the female self, inspiring feminist readings of these poems. Morrison's rereading of the poems, however, shows this female self to be a white self, partially made up of "the fear and repression of blackness".

Sylvia Plath seems to have been, by various accounts, an admirer of Dylan Thomas and his work. The influence of Thomas's work on her poetry, in *The Colossus* collection in particular, is looked at critically by, amongst others, John Gordon (2003) in his article "Being Sylvia Being Ted Being Dylan: Plath's 'The Snowman on the Moor'". As he (2003: 192) states, "'Dylan Thomas is the vocal colossus of *The Colossus*,' writes Gary Lane of the book first produced after Plath's marriage to Hughes. 'Plath knew it.' More than that, she proclaimed it and acted it out."

This admiration of Dylan Thomas is another interesting touch point in a comparison of Plath's and Jonker's life. In Jonker's life her admiration of Dylan Thomas's work is highlighted, for example, by the poem "25 Desember 1960" ("25 December 1960"), which she wrote in October of 1959, on his death.

Another influence on Plath's work that is often considered as an analytical approach is Robert Lowell and others' confessional style of poetry, especially in regard to the poems in the *Ariel* volume of poetry. What is meant by confessional style poetry is poetry that

reveals private, and at times unflattering, information regarding details of the poet's personal life, such as poems about mental illness, sexuality, and despair.

The Literature Review also revealed that Plath is discussed a great deal in the context of the 1950s era in relation to magazines and advertising that focussed on women as perfect housewives, and how this relates to and is reflected in Plath's work. The article titled "Plath, Domesticity, and the Art of Advertising" by Marsha Bryant (2002) takes this approach to Plath's work. Below are two of Bryant's observations regarding Plath's poetry and its reflection of 1950s sensibilities and advertising campaigns:

Plath's most famous volume, *Ariel*, mixes the magical properties and hyperbolic situations of advertising with her own brand of kitchen craziness. From the hissing potatoes in "Lesbos" to the mutating thumb in "Cut", Plath's volatile domestic scenes were as attuned to American consumer culture as they were to her disintegrating relationship with Ted Hughes. Like ads, these poems give the sense that the housewife in her kitchen is never really alone. (Bryant, 2002: 21)

And,

Like ads, Plath explores performative, as well as, mechanical dimensions of domesticity. She draws the reader into the intimate spaces of the home (kitchen, bedroom, nursery), only to reveal a stage. (Bryant, 2002: 22)

Articles such as "The Imaginary Jew and the American Poet" by Hilene Flanzbaum and "'The Boot in the Face': The Problem of the Holocaust in the Poetry of Sylvia Plath" by Al Strangeways, highlight the holocaust imagery and metaphors used in Plath's poems and the controversies and criticisms surrounding this aspect of her work. These articles also present certain defences for Plath's use of Holocaust imagery. Strangeways (1996: 375-376) is of the opinion that "Plath's personalised treatment of the Holocaust stems, then, from a combination of two motives: her very 'real' sense of connection (for whatever reasons) with the events, and her desire to combine the public and the personal in order to shock and cut through the distancing 'doubletalk' she saw in contemporary conformist, cold war America." (Please see pp. 98-102 for a further discussion on this topic, in light of the analysis of the "Lady Lazarus" poem.)

Flanzbaum (1998: 273) discusses Plath's use of the Holocaust in her work along with other writers' use of it, and points to the criticism that Plath, as a Gentile, received for using Holocaust metaphor and imagery in her poetry at all. Plath's use of Holocaust

imagery, however, along with others, helped break a long-held silence regarding this subject in literature and it encouraged others, especially American Jews, to incorporate the subject in their work as well. As with the feminist interpretations of her poems, the examples of critics who discuss this aspect of her work are numerous.

As the abovementioned excerpt from Blosser's text reveals, Plath's work has also been handled in a psychoanalytical way – the cause for and evidence of her troubles and precarious emotional state are sought out in the poems she wrote. Blosser cites David Holbrook's "Sylvia Plath: Poetry and Existence" (1988) as well as Murray M. Schwartz and Christopher Bollas's essay "Absence at the Centre: Sylvia Plath and Suicide" as examples. As my overview of Plath's life highlights, the poet did not experience a stable emotional life. Holbrook, Schwartz, Bollas, and others attempt to get at both Plath's conscious and unconscious levels of being via her writings. In some instances they attempt to trace in her writing the relation of childhood events and how these had a powerful psychological influence throughout her life (Blosser, 2001: 22).

Lastly, in accordance with what Blosser asserts, feminist readings of her work are done, and Plath is considered as a feminist, either conscious or unconscious, in these approaches – I mention the following as but one instance of feminist readings, from Blosser's (2001: 28) summary:

Erica Jong, for example, says that Sylvia Plath was very important for a whole generation of readers and poets in the 1950's [sic] because she was the first poet "to fully explore female rage" and because she did so "with exquisite artistry" (Wagner, 1988: 204).

In terms of relatively more recent findings, Blosser (2001: 18), in her investigation of various criticisms around Plath's work, states the following: "It came as a surprise to see that no significant changes seem to have occurred in the critics' response to her work since her death and that most of what is written on Sylvia Plath remains thematically oriented." She does add, however, that in more recent times criticism on Plath has developed in a way that seeks to highlight the constructive and life sustaining fibre, instead of the deeply pessimistic, dark side of her work. I view this as a positive development and advancement in the criticism regarding her work and I hope that my own participation in the conversation around Plath's work contributes in this positive manner.

As stated, Blosser followed a close reading strategy of Plath's entire body of work and this is what I want to do as well, but instead of focussing on Plath's and Jonker's entire bodies of work, I focus on three of the poems by each poet and read these closely to determine what the poems are conveying to the reader and how the message is conveyed. Afterwards, I compare what I have discovered in terms of the use of poetic devices, structure, and content of each poet's poems in order to find out if further connections exist between Plath's and Jonker's work.

1.4 Summary

It is my personal observation, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, that many of the abovementioned approaches to Plath's and Jonker's poetry are favoured over approaches that first pay attention to the poetic structure of their work. One of the reasons the artist creates a work of art is for it to communicate (an experience, meaning, beauty, truth, etc.); this communication will inevitably contain something of the artist too, but it is not able to convey a complete picture of the artist. Ultimately, the only reliable voice that can be heard, according to the New Criticism in following a close reading exercise, is the voice of the artwork itself. The reader's role is to interpret the communication when it is received.

Exploring the structure of a poem is a means by which this communication (content) can be discovered and, I would assert, should be the literary critic's point of departure at all times. Intertextual and extratextual relations should then serve to confirm or enrich the communication but should preferably not shape it, otherwise there is the risk that the artwork's communication may be distorted or interpreted as the artist's voice. It is my opinion that the numerous explorations that emphasise context over text may have clouded the communication of Jonker's and Plath's poems to a certain extent, and it may cause the well-read reader to approach these texts with certain preconceived ideas already well formed. Thus, I suggest that more attention needs to be paid in literary criticism to the analysis of the use of specific styles and poetic form, the use of poetic devices in the poem, and the poems' structure as it were, when it comes to Plath's and Jonker's poetry.

Chapter 3 – Intratextual Analysis of Selected Poems via Close Reading

1.1 Introduction

This part of the thesis looks closely at the intratextual relations of the selected poems. What is meant by the term intratextual relations is the examining of relations within each poetic text: within “Swanger Vrou”, “Bitterbessie dagbreek”, and “Met hulle is ek”, and within “You’re”, “Lady Lazarus”, and “Balloons”. In large part, this process is undertaken and completed with the analysis of each of the selected poems, as seen in Chapter 3. The examination of the intratextual relations is the way through which the text is allowed to speak for itself, as it were. One may expand the intratextual examination by considering the intratextual elements of a poem as they relate to the intratextual elements of another poem, noting any similarities in the way that poetic devices are used, or discrepancies in the use of poetic devices. Undertaking an examination between poetic works, however, even if those works are written by the same author, already indicates a departure from the exploration of intratextual relations, towards an intertextual comparison of relations and, as such, is discussed in Chapter 4.

The analysis of each poem takes into consideration the relations formed with the aid of poetic devices within each individual poetic text. In other words, the form of the poem is explored in how it orders the content of the poem, and what the relationships formed via poetic devices mean in terms of the communication of the poem. I draw mostly on the *Theory of Literature: Study Guide 1* by Gräbe and Keuris, for an understanding of the following terms. The poetic devices that are explored are:

Metaphorical constructions: This refers to the interaction of the tenor and vehicle (see Glossary of Terms, pp. 152-153) in each metaphorical construction, the interaction of all metaphorical constructions within each poem, and finally, the global tenor(s) and vehicles in each poem. As Bierman (2001: 26) states, “The reconstruction of a global tenor-vehicle relation in a poetic text is extremely important because it often paraphrases the central theme of the poem. The global tenor in a poem may be defined as the actual point at issue, while the corresponding vehicle (or vehicles) serves to specify it metaphorically.”

Syntactic and typographic organisation: Syntactic deviance as a foregrounding device is noted and explored. Typography as a foregrounding device is also explored, as well as any tension that is created via typography in a specific poem through the establishment of relationships, accentuation, the creation of hierarchies, shifts of accent, ambiguity or semanticisation.

Sound: The patterns of sound repetition are examined – in other words, the organising and expressive principles of sound in each poem, as well as the semantic function of sounds and how it establishes relationships in a poem.

Rhythm and metre: Wainwright (2011: 64) makes the following distinction between rhythm and metre: “*Rhythm* refers to the way the sound of a poem moves in a general sense either in part or through its whole length. *Metre* is more specific and refers to a set pattern which recurs line by line[.]” Via scansion, the aim is to establish the fixed metrical pattern, or lack thereof, in each poem for the purpose of determining its rhythmical effect on the poem. The metrical-rhythmical structure of poetic texts, according to Gräbe (2002: 80), can serve as a foregrounding device either as a result of conformation to traditional metrical patterns, which establishes extra patterning, or as a result of ignoring traditional metrical patterns, which results in foregrounding by means of deviation.

Irony: The conflicts of meaning in each poetic text is explored, and whether or not these conflicts are resolved, remain in tension or break down completely. (Please see the Glossary of Terms on pp. 152-153 for a fuller explanation of the New Critic use of the term by Peck and Coyle (2002).)

Throughout the discussion of the use of poetic devices in each poem, I aim to show the interaction between the poetic devices and how these work together to form the whole of the poem. Of course, the chosen approach is not the final word on poetic analysis. Close reading strategies do vary, but it is the framework in which I have chosen to work for this thesis.

1.2 "Swanger vrou" ("Pregnant woman")

Swanger vrou

Ek lê onder die kors van die nag singend,
opgekrul in die riool, singend,
en my nageslag lê in die water.

Ek speel ek is kind:
5 appelliefies, appelliefies en heide,
koekmakrankas, anys,
en die paddavis gly
in die slym in die stroom,
in my liggaam
10 my skuimwit gestalte;
maar riool o riool
my nageslag lê in die water.

Nóg singend vliesrooi ons bloedlied,
ek en my gister,
15 my gister hang onder my hart,
my kalkoentjie, my wiegende wêreld,
en my hart wat sing soos 'n besie
my besie-hart sing soos 'n besie;
maar riool o riool,
20 my nageslag lê in die water.

Ek speel ek is bly:
kyk wáár spat die vuurvlieg!
die maanskyf, 'n nat snoet wat beef –
maar met die môre, die hinkende vroedvrou
25 koulík en grys op die skuiwende heuwels
stoot ek jou uit deur die kors in die daglig,
o treurende uil, groot uil van die daglig,
los van my skoot maar besmeer
met my trane besmeer
30 en besmet met verdriet.

Riool o riool,
ek lê bewend singend,
hoe anders as bewend
met my nageslag onder jou water...?

Pregnant woman

Translated by André Brink and Antjie Krog

Under the crust of night I lie singing,
curled up in the sewer, singing,
and my offspring lies in the water.

I play I'm a child:
5 gooseberries, gooseberries and heather,
kukumakrankas, aniseed,
and the tadpole slides
in the slime in the stream,
in my body
10 my foamwhite figure;
but sewer o sewer,
my offspring lies in the water.

Membrane red of bloodsong still singing,
I and my yesterday,
15 my yesterday suspended under my heart,
my kalkoentjie, my swaying world,
and my heart that sings like a cicada
my cicada heart sings like a cicada;
but sewer o sewer
20 my offspring lies in the water.

I play I'm happy:
look how far the firefly splashes!
the moonslice, a wet snout that quivers –
but with the morning, the limping midwife
25 chilly and grey on the shifting hills,
I push you out through the crust into daylight,
o grieving owl, great owl of daylight,

freed from my womb but soiled
 soiled with my tears
 30 and infected with sadness.

Sewer o sewer,
 I lie shivering singing,
 how else but shivering
 with my offspring submerged in your water...?

1.2.1 Metaphorical Constructions

“Swanger vrou” contains few metaphorical constructions, but all are quite complex, as shown in this discussion. The first metaphorical construction occurs in line 1:

“Ek lê onder die kors van die nag singend,” (“Under the crust of night I lie singing,”)

vehicle

tenor

vehicle tenor

Put another way, the line may read: Ek lê onder die nag se kors singend (I lie singing under the night’s crust).

The reader may infer here that the night is almost over, that the speaker is lying under the outer part of the night, just as a crust is the outer layer of a loaf or a roll of bread. This inference is further strengthened when reading line 26: “stoot ek jou uit deur die kors in die daglig” (“I push you out through the crust into daylight”). Read in relation to line 1, the mother gives birth to her baby at the breaking of a new day “through the crust (outer part of the night) into daylight”, which may be interpreted as hopeful, but the hopefulness is soon undermined in the following lines. This is a regular occurrence in “Swanger vrou” that should be noted here, and which is highlighted throughout the discussion of this poem.

The next metaphorical constructions only occur in lines 15 and 16:

“my gister hang onder my hart,” (“my yesterday suspended under my heart,”)
 “my kalkoentjie, my wiegende wêreld,” (“my kalkoentjie, my swaying world,”)

Put another way, these lines may read:

my gister is my kalkoentjie (my yesterday is my kalkoentjie)

tenor vehicle tenor vehicle

my gister is my wiegende wêreld (my yesterday is my swaying world)

tenor ground vehicle tenor ground vehicle

In order to interpret the metaphors in lines 15 and 16, one has to carefully read over the preceding three lines of stanza 3 to understand the context in which the metaphor occurs. Lines 13-15: "Nóg singend vliesrooi ons bloedlied,/ ek en my gister,/ my gister hang onder my hart" ("Membrane red of bloodsong still singing,/ I and my yesterday,/ my yesterday suspended under my heart").

"Gister" ("yesterday") may be read as representing a person from the past as the speaker refers first to "ons bloedlied" (our "bloodsong") and then to "ek en my gister" ("I and my yesterday"). This word may then be read as a metaphor for both the expected child and the father – the act of conception is inferred by the words "Nóg singend vliesrooi ons bloedlied" ("Membrane red of bloodsong still singing"). "Gister" ("yesterday") is a person in the past tense, who formed part of the conception of the present reality in the form of the expected child. So, the speaker's "gister" ("yesterday") is presently suspended under her heart in the form of a child. Line 15, "my yesterday suspended under my heart", may be read as more hopeful, as it conveys tenderness towards the expected child, and even protectiveness.

Returning to the metaphors in line 16, "my kalkoentjie, my wiegende wêreld" ("my kalkoentjie, my swaying world"): saying to someone that you are "my kalkoentjie" is a term of endearment in Afrikaans. In a sense, this is a case of compounded metaphor as, apart from "gister" ("yesterday") being read as the father, there is also the metaphor of "my gister is 'n baba" ("my yesterday is a baby") in which "gister" ("yesterday") is the vehicle and the baby is the tenor. It is not explicitly stated but it can reasonably be inferred.

Then the metaphor "my gister ... [is] my wiegende wêreld" ("my yesterday ... [is] my swaying world" conveys how both the act of conception and the resulting pregnancy has influenced the speaker's world. Her world has been rocked by her "yesterday"; the speaker's world has changed and is not as stable as it perhaps was before. At the same time "wiegende" ("swaying") may also refer to rocking a baby to sleep. The main thing to note is that the speaker's world has fundamentally been changed by her "yesterday" and by the expected infant. Furthermore, the change in her world is foregrounded by the repetition of the "w"-sound as in "wiegende wêreld" ("swaying world"). This

repetition of sound is not reproduced in the English version of the poem, but creates a closer association between "wiegende" and "wêreld".

The metaphors reveal that the infant has brought about deep and even conflicting emotion in the life of the speaker. A strange mixture of excitement and uncertainty is present in the metaphors in lines 15 and 16, and this mixture of excitement and nervousness continues to be present in the next couple of lines:

Line 17: "en my hart sing soos 'n besie" ("and my heart sings like a cicada")

tenor vehicle tenor vehicle

Line 18: "my besie-hart sing soos 'n besie;" ("My cicada heart sings like a cicada;")

tenor vehicle tenor vehicle

A cicada is an insect that, on a hot day, makes a shrill, piercing sound that is referred to as its song. The metaphor here, which can be said to be the central metaphor of "Swanger vrou", conveys two different things. First, it may positively be meant to recall the happiness of a summer's day, associated with singing cicadas; singing is generally associated with happiness or contentment. Second, it may negatively be meant to convey the beating of a heart, likening it to the more annoying and distracting characteristics of the cicada's unrelenting, shrill noise on a hot summer's day. The metaphor may, of course, also be meant to convey both these emotions at once: both the happiness of the speaker and her distraction. In the context of "Swanger vrou", this last possibility seems more likely.

The intensity of the emotions of excitement and/or distraction is further increased in line 18. The first part of line 18 can be written as follows:

"my hart is 'n besie" ("my heart is a cicada")

tenor vehicle tenor vehicle

At first, in line 17, the speaker's heart sings like a cicada, but then in line 18, her heart is a cicada and it sings like a cicada. The image is thus intensified, and along with it, the level of emotion conveyed by the image of the speaker's singing, cicada heart.

The metaphor in line 23 of the poem can be described as the only truly playful and light-hearted metaphor of the poem:

"die maanskyf, 'n nat snoet wat beef—" ("the moonslice, a wet snout that quivers—")

Or, written as follows:

die maanskyf is 'n nat snoet wat beef (the moonslice is a wet snout that quivers)

tenor vehicle ground tenor vehicle ground

This metaphor conveys imagery an adult might use to explain something to a child, to comfort or entertain. The playfulness of lines 21 to 23 is swiftly undermined again, however, by line 24: "maar met die môre, die hinkende vroedvrou/ koulik en grys op die skuiwende heuwels" ("but with the morning, the limping midwife/ chilly and grey on the shifting hills"), and by lines 28 to 30: "los van my skoot maar besmeer/ met my trane besmeer/ en besmet met verdriet" ("freed from my womb but soiled/ soiled with my tears/ and infected with sadness").

The "hinkende vroedvrou" ("limping midwife") is possibly a metaphor for the morning in the abovementioned lines:

môre is die hinkende vroedvrou (morning is the limping midwife)

tenor ground vehicle tenor ground vehicle

This metaphor ties in then with line 26, which seems to indicate that the baby is born at the break of day. It is noteworthy, as it succeeds in further highlighting the reticence of the pregnant woman at giving birth, that the midwife is "limping" and that the morning is "chilly and grey on the shifting hills".

As mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, "Swanger vrou" contains few, but rich metaphorical constructions, which, taken together, highlight the vacillation of the speaker between emotions of sadness and joy, hopefulness and agitation, or apprehension.

1.2.2 Syntactic and Typographic Organisation

"Swanger Vrou" is a free verse poem: lines varying in length are arranged typographically across five stanzas, which also vary in length. Stanza 1 consists of three lines, stanza 2 of nine lines, stanza 3 of eight lines, stanza 4 of ten lines, and the final stanza of four lines. Thus, there is no regularity to the length of the stanzas.

Some words and phrases are repeated throughout the poem and the first repetitive syntactic construction to take note of, and which creates parallelism in the poem, is: "my nageslag lê in die water" ("my offspring lies in the water"). It is repeated at the end of

stanzas 1, 2, and 3, creating parallelism across the stanzas. At the end of stanza 5 it appears with a deviation from the established pattern: "met my nageslag onder jou water...?" ("with my offspring submerged in your water...?"). The phrase, accentuated typographically by being repeated and by appearing at the end of these stanzas, hits a discordant note in the poem every time the reader reads it, as it reveals or emphasises the ambiguous feelings of the expectant mother, already highlighted through metaphor. Line 34, with its deviation from the preceding lines 3, 12, and 20, indicates that the "offspring" is no longer (only) "in" the water, but "onder jou water" ("submerged in your water").

Each occurrence of the phrase serves as a counterweight to the rest of the stanza and highlights the discordant, and perhaps in the end overriding, notes of uncertainty, sadness, and apprehension in the poem. Stanza 1, for example, begins with the line "Ek lê onder die kors van die nag singend" ("Under the crust of night I lie singing") and singing, generally, conveys the idea of joy, or happiness, or contentment. This image is quickly disturbed by the reference to the singer lying in sewage, however, and her "offspring", which lies in the water. The final image conveyed by each stanza, as in the case of stanza 1, is unsettling, and though the stanzas illustrate instances of joy, happiness, and excitement, it is the final line of each stanza, by reason of its highlighted typographic position, that has the final say each time.

In line 2, the reader notes the mention of the word "riool" ("sewer") for the first time and as the word is oft repeated throughout the poem, special attention needs to be paid to it. The speaker may be referring to a literal sewer, but it is more likely that the word "riool" ("sewer") is used in order to convey connotations of waste, decay, and stench. It becomes an image of the speaker's world or circumstances, and at times in the poem, even the 'person' to whom the speaker may be directing her addresses. As water is closely associated with sewers, each reference to the offspring of the speaker creates a connection between the sewage and the water in the womb, in which the infant lies.

Stanza 4, which does not end with the phrase "my nageslag lê in die water" ("my offspring lies in the water") concludes with the lines: "met my tranes besmeer/ en besmet met verdriet" ("soiled with my tears/ and infected with sadness"), while the stanza starts out with the lines: "Ek speel ek is bly:/ kyk wáár spat die vuurvlieg!" ("I play I'm happy:/ look how far the firefly splashes!"), which are lighter in tone. Thus, though stanza 4 is the only stanza that ends with a different line, the typographic arrangement of lines again allows for the final thought of the stanza to be in stark contrast to the beginning lines of it.

Line 4 begins: "Ek speel ek is kind" ("I play I'm a child") and is later echoed by line 21: "Ek speel ek is bly" ("I play I'm happy"). Both these lines are then elaborated upon. In the first instance, it is elaborated upon by describing a child at play, which may be a reference to the mother herself, and in the second instance one can almost hear a parent talking to a child, trying to cheer up or entertain the child, or in this instance, herself. Both lines reflect something of a pretending act. The speaker is pretending to be a child again, pretending to be happy. Typographically foregrounded and repeated, it reinforces once more the reluctance of the mother or her ambiguity about becoming a mother and about having a child. Neither of these stanzas, as already pointed out, concludes on an unequivocally happy note.

Lines 24 and 25 should also be noted for their word choice: "maar met die môre, die hinkende vroedvrouw/ koulik en grys op die skuiwende heuwels" ("but with the morning, the limping midwife/ chilly and grey on the shifting hills"). In the context of the poem, the breaking of the new day brings little new hope. The midwife (which may be read as a metaphor for the morning, see p. 41) not only arrives "hinkende" ("limping") but on the "skuiwende heuwels" ("shifting hills") to deliver the baby. These are not very reassuring lines and, again, underscore the trepidation of the speaker at giving birth. The reader gets the sense that the midwife, who is instrumental in submerging the baby in the sewage via her help in the delivery, is another expression of the sewer in the poem.

The recurrence of other words further strengthens the vacillation between emotions in the poem. The first repetition is reflected in words related to singing or a song:

Line 1: "singend" ("singing"); line 2: "singend"; line 13: "bloedlied" ("bloodsong"); line 17: "sing" ("sings"); line 18: "sing"; line 32: "singend".

In contrast to this repetition of "singend" or "sing", the reader detects the apostrophe of the "riool" ("sewer"), which it appears, at times, is being addressed. (Please see the Glossary of Terms on pp. 152-153 for a definition of the term 'apostrophe' as it is used in the thesis.) It can be noted in:

Line 2: "riool" ("sewer"); line 11: "riool o riool"; line 19: "riool o riool"; line 31: "Riool o riool" (all "sewer o sewer").

As already mentioned, the image of the "riool" carries with it associations of waste, decay, stench, and also water. Thus, the concrete "riool" image conveys abstract

images of the world or situation in which the speaker finds herself. Because of the nature of the “riool” (“sewer”), the question at the end of stanza 5 may be read as rhetorical. How can the speaker not lie shivering and unsure in the context of the “riool” (“sewer”) world? It highlights the lack of comfort, and the level of uncertainty and ambiguity of feeling in the poem. In the end, the woman’s baby is submerged in the sewage water.

Generally, one would perhaps expect more joy to be in evidence from a pregnant woman, but in this poem, joy is not the only, or the final, word on the matter and the typographic arrangement of the lines as well as the syntactic construction of the lines, some repeated, underscore this.

1.2.3 Sound

It is worthwhile noting that the poetic device of sound loses some of its impact in the translation, thus only the Afrikaans version is analysed in terms of this device. Accordingly, the Afrikaans verse lines quoted are not accompanied by their English translation. Consistent with this, the same approach is taken in the analysis of “Bitterbessie dagbreek” and “Met hulle is ek”.

“Swanger vrou” cannot be described as containing plentiful sound patterns, however, as in all poems, sound does play a role. In this poem, for example, it plays a role by strengthening the central metaphor of the poem:

Line 17: “en my hart wat sing soos ‘n besie”

Line 18: “my besie-hart sing soos ‘n besie;”

These lines, which evoke the central ambiguous feelings of the poem, are further strengthened by identical end rhyme and by means of the use of sound via the repetition of the “s”-sound. The “s”-sound imitates the sound that a cicada makes, and via repetition, provides a frenetic, almost annoying sense of sound. The reader therefore not only reads about the speaker’s heart singing like a cicada, but can also hear it through the repetition of sound.

The speaker is singing, her heart sings like a cicada and the act of conception is referred to as “ons bloedlied” (“bloodsong”). In fact, as highlighted under the typographic discussion, there are many references to song or singing in the poem, which also ties in with the central metaphor and which strengthens its communication.

“Swanger vrou” is written in free verse and there are only scattered instances of end rhyme in the poem. The end rhyme of lines 17 and 18 has been mentioned, but another occurrence of this scattered end rhyme can be found in lines 1 (“singend” (“singing”)), 2 (“singend”), 32 (“singend”). Line 33, which ends with “bewend” (“shivering”), cannot technically be said to tie in with the scattered end rhyme pattern, however, it does convey a repetition of sound in the form of the “end”-sound, also occurring in “singend”. This scattered end rhyme is another instance in the poem of the ultimate subversion of the song and happiness. Look at the following verse lines:

Lines 1 to 2:

“Ek lê onder die kors van die nag singend,” (“Under the crust of night I lie singing”)
“opgekrul in die riool, singend,” (“curled up in the sewer, singing,”)

Lines 32 to 33:

“ek lê bewend singend,” (“I lie shivering singing”)
“hoe anders as bewend” (“how else but shivering”)

Lines 1 and 2, ending with “singend” (“singing”), are hopeful, then in line 32 “bewend” (“shivering”) occurs before “singend”, while line 33 ends with “bewend”. Thus, although three of the lines end with “singend” in the scattered end rhyme pattern, the fourth and final line, which is repetitive in sound, ends with “bewend”. It is a gradual build-up to the uncertainty of the speaker triumphing in the poem.

1.2.4 Rhythm and Metre

As with the poetic device of sound, rhythm and metre is intended to be, and is best, analysed in the original language in which the poem was written. Thus, only the Afrikaans version is analysed in terms of this device, and Afrikaans verse lines quoted here are not accompanied by their English translation. Consistent with this, the same approach is taken in the analysis of “Bitterbessie dagbreek” and “Met hulle is ek”.

Here, and throughout the thesis, under the rhythm and metre sections of the explored poems, only the stressed, or accented, syllables are indicated. It should be noted too that a syllable, indicated as stressed, does not convey the degree of stress on the particular syllable.

In accordance with a free verse poem, "Swanger vrou" does not have a fixed metrical pattern. A sampling of the metrical-rhythmical structuring is provided to illustrate this:

/ / / /
 1 Ek lê onder die kors van die nag singend,
 / / /
 Opgekrul in die riool, singend,
 / / /
 En my nageslag lê in die water.

 / /
 Ek speel ek is kind:

With lines 5 and 6, the metrical pattern is more regular, as one stressed syllable is followed by one unstressed syllable, creating the most regularity in the metrical pattern. It also makes the reader think of the regular metrical patterns of a nursery rhyme, which the lines may be attempting to recall or imitate:

 / / /
 5 appelliefies, appelliefies en heide,
 / /
 koekmakrankas, anys,

This pattern is repeated in line 16, strengthening the endearing tone of the line:

 / / /
 my kalkoentjie, my wiegende wêreld,

The central metaphor of the poem follows the following rhythm: a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables, except in line 18 where two stressed syllables follow an unstressed syllable in "besie-hart". This deviation in rhythm when discussing the "cicada heart" adds to the intensity of the metaphor and the speaker's heart not just singing like a cicada, but actually being a cicada:

 / / /
 17 en my hart wat sing soos 'n besie
 / / / /
 my besie-hart sing soos 'n besie;

1.2.5 Irony

The poem, as observed in the discussion hitherto, is very contradictory in tone in terms of highlighting joy versus sadness and/or apprehension and/or uncertainty. What is ironic is that the event of childbirth is mostly seen as a joyous occasion, but the speaker in "Swanger vrou" highlights the sadness of the event, and also feelings of reservation or agitation.

The fact that it is hard to determine which emotion truly triumphs over the others makes "Swanger vrou" a very ambiguous poem in tone. One could make a good case for stating that it is apprehension and uncertainty that ultimately triumphs, as shown throughout the analysis, but there is not an ultimate sense of closure when the poem ends.

The essence of this thought is captured in the line: "los van my skoot maar besmeer" ("freed from my womb but soiled"). Although the baby is born and has been provided with its freedom, it is also soiled at the occasion of birth. The speaker does not see the birthing event as ultimately happy or joyous in nature.

Looking for a moment at Baldick's (1996: 80) summary of the New Critic definition of irony:

[T]he most valuable kind of poetry embodies irony by incorporating opposed attitudes within itself, and is thus immunized against further ironic challenge. It is to this ironic inclusion of opposed attitudes that the New Critic generally refers in speaking of a literary work's 'maturity'.

Jonker's "Swanger vrou" certainly contains "opposed attitudes within itself" and it is also widely recognised, as pointed out in the Literature Review, as one of the poems that illustrate her maturity as a poet.

Something else that adds to the ambiguous tone of "Swanger Vrou" is that it conveys abortion imagery. The poem has quite an ominous tone to it. It is not clear whether the poet intended it, but the poem evokes images of abortion or the possibility of a miscarriage in it, especially with the lines: "maar riool o riool/ My nageslag lê in die water" ("but sewer o sewer/ my offspring lies in the water"). These lines are oft repeated throughout the poem, and do not give the reader the sense of a happy, expectant woman, but rather one who feels ambiguous about the prospect of giving

birth. She possibly also feels fearful of the entire process, almost expecting things to go wrong, or the baby to be lost through natural or unnatural means.

1.2.6 Conclusion

“Swanger vrou” contains within it a strange mixture of happiness, excitement, agitation, and sadness. It is perhaps the ambiguous aspects of “Swanger vrou” that highlight it as one of Jonker’s most noteworthy poems. It has an ironic weight to it, which is not easily, if indeed at all, resolved towards the end of the poem.

As early as line 4, the poem hits a discordant note and associates emotions with the expectant mother that the reader may not traditionally or generally expect to associate with an expectant mother. Line 21 reads: “I play I’m happy”. In other words, her happiness is an act – an act which she cannot maintain, as line 24 indicates: “but with the morning, the limping midwife/ chilly and grey on the shifting hills,/ I push you out through the crust into daylight”. As the speaker states, her child is “freed from [her] womb but soiled” with her tears and “infected with sadness”. The reader might assume that she refers to the sadness of the “sewer” here.

In the last stanza of the poem, there are notes of joy once more: “I lie shivering singing”. The speaker has, however, brought a child into a world that she does not seem convinced is safe or kind. As the last two lines testify: “how else but shivering/ with my offspring submerged in your water...?”. The final thought that the poem leaves with the reader is a rhetorical question; the answer is obvious and inevitable. The child has become part of life in the sewer, “submerged in your water” – “your” here seems to refer to the sewer, which the speaker has been addressing at certain intervals throughout the poem. These unexpected emotions of sadness and apprehension associated with the pregnant speaker, and the opposing emotions of joy and sadness, or despair, make “Swanger vrou” a deeply complex poem.

1.3 "*Bitterbessie dagbreek*" ("*Bitter-berry daybreak*")

Bitterbessie dagbreek

Bitterbessie dagbreek
bitterbessie son
'n spieël het gebreek
tussen my en hom

5 Soek ek na die groot pad
om daarlangs te draf
oral draai die paadjies
van sy woorde af

Dennebos herinnering
10 dennebos vergeet
het ek ook verdwaal
trap ek in my leed

Papegaaï-bont eggo
kierang kierang my
15 totdat ek bedroë
weer die koggel kry

Eggo is geen antwoord
antwoord hy alom
bitterbessie dagbreek
20 bitterbessie son

Bitter-berry daybreak

Translated by André Brink and Antjie Krog

Bitter-berry daybreak
bitter-berry sun
a mirror has broken
between me and him

5 I try to find the highway
perhaps to run away
but everywhere the footpaths
of his words lead me astray

Pinewood remember
10 pinewood forget
however much I lose my way
I step on my regret

Parrot-coloured echo
tricks me on
15 until I turn beguiled
to retrieve the mocking song

Echo gives no answer
he answers everyone
bitter-berry daybreak
20 bitter-berry sun

1.3.1 A Note on the Translation of "Bitterbessie dagbreek"

The English translation of "Bitterbessie dagbreek" has been sourced from *Black Butterflies*. The translation work for this selection of poems was, as referenced in section 1.4 of Chapter 1, done by André Brink and Antjie Krog. Though the translation of poems from Afrikaans to English has been thoughtfully and well done, it is impossible to transfer, for example, the sounds of one language to another. It is clear, from a reading of the English "Bitter-berry daybreak" poem, that sacrifices had to be made in terms of sound, repetition, and word choice, in order to adequately convey the sense of the Afrikaans poem in English. As the sound patterns and syntactic arrangement come clearly to the fore in the original Afrikaans version of the poem, and as much of the of the sound patterns and syntactic repetition is lost in the translation from Afrikaans to English, this thesis concentrates on an explanation of the Afrikaans version of the poem with references to the English version of the poem throughout.

1.3.1 Metaphorical Constructions

Sound, syntax, and typography play very prominent roles in “Bitterbessie dagbreek”, but its analysis starts, as all the analyses in this thesis do, by looking at the metaphorical constructions of the poem.

The first and last stanzas of the poem contain the following metaphors; the first metaphorical construction also functions as the title of the poem:

“Bitterbessie dagbreek/ bitterbessie son” (Bitter-berry daybreak/ bitter-berry sun”)

Put another way:

Die dagbreek is ’n bitterbessie (The daybreak is a bitter-berry)

tenor vehicle tenor vehicle

Die son is ’n bitterbessie (The sun is a bitter-berry)

tenor vehicle tenor vehicle

In the above metaphorical constructions, a noun, “bitterbessie”, fulfils the function of an adjective to describe the daybreak and the sun. The metaphorical constructions then doubly convey the bitterness of the daybreak and the bitterness in the sun. The day breaks in bitterness and the sun shines down in bitterness. Lines 3 and 4 reveal the reason for this as the broken relationship between the speaker and her inferred lover in the poem.

The poet’s choice of the word “bitterbessie” (“bitter-berry”) to describe the daybreak and the sun, instead of just saying “bitter dagbreek, bitter son” (“bitter daybreak, bitter sun”) is noteworthy as it is used in a syntactically deviant manner in the metaphorical construction. It may have to do with the word “bitterbessie” being easier to grasp as it is more tangible, more visual. A “bitterbessie” can be tasted and experienced, unlike bitterness, which is an abstract emotion. The concrete noun, used to fulfil the function of an adjective, more forcefully then highlights the bitter experience of the speaker, and the use of the word “bitterbessie”, if nothing else, adds to the rich sound quality of the poem.

The repetition of these metaphorical constructions at the end of “Bitterbessie dagbreek” reinforces the echo motif in the poem (which is explored in depth later in the discussion). It also conveys the sense that another day begins in the same manner as

the last and that the speaker is caught in the repetition, or echo, of it. It conveys an inescapable monotony brought about by the broken relationship and it is bitter, from beginning to end, in its repetition.

The next metaphorical constructions occur in lines 9 and 10: "Dennebos herinnering/ dennebos vergeet" ("Pinewood remember/ pinewood forget"). A couple of things should be noted here: first, this metaphorical construction syntactically echoes (a noun again fulfils the function of an adjective) the first and last metaphorical constructions of the poem, reinforcing the echo motif in the poem. Second, the word "herinnering" ("remember") versus the word "vergeet" ("forget") should be noted. These two contrasting words may be read as revealing the expectations of the speaker in the poem versus the fulfilment of her expectations. The speaker is trying to find her way by remembering, perhaps trying to reconstruct the image of the lover or her own image, but she has forgotten her way, or more accurately, it is being denied her because the relationship has ended. Her expectations remain unfulfilled and are even thwarted.

Put another way, the lines may read:

Herinnering is 'n dennebos (Remembering is a pinewood)

tenor vehicle tenor vehicle

Vergeet is 'n dennebos (Forgetting is a pinewood)

tenor vehicle tenor vehicle

The above metaphorical constructions convey, in a particularly apt manner, the way in which one can get lost in one's memories, in remembering, and also how one can get lost in forgetting. Ferber (2001: 78) puts the traditional symbolism of a wood or a forest forward as follows: "Forests are traditionally dark, labyrinthine, and filled with dangerous beasts." Memories are likened to a wood (specifically a pinewood in "Bitterbessie dagbreek") in which a person can get lost, and the experience can be either pleasant or painful. Pleasant, because old, familiar and beautiful memories may lead to an enjoyable wandering in remembering, but in the case of this poem, the memories of the speaker are causing her to be only further disorientated, as the syntactic discussions of lines 11 and 12 in the next section further underscore. The expectations of the speaker remain unfulfilled; she remains lost in her attempts to find her way and continues to "step on [her] regret".

The final metaphor of the poem is to be found in line 13: "Papegai-bont eggo" ("Parrot-coloured echo"). Written differently, or how one would expect it to be written:

Die eggo is soos 'n bont papegaaï (The echo is as (many-)coloured as a parrot)

tenor ground vehicle tenor ground vehicle

The speaker in this poem feels that she has lost her way and that her attempts to find her way, or to find her lover, lead to her getting more lost or coming upon emptiness, a voice without a person behind it. The above metaphor further succeeds in strengthening the disorientation of the speaker and her sense of being led astray by a voice that is pretending to be the voice of her lover. Not only is the echo disorientating, but it is "parrot-coloured". The significance here is that certain species of parrot are known for both their variety of colours and their habit of mimicking sounds and people's voices. This underscores the multiplicity (both via sound and colour) of the echo or the deception of the lover, just as the shards of the broken mirror convey the distortion caused by the broken relationship.

The metaphorical constructions in "Bitterbessie dagbreek" all succeed in highlighting the speaker's distress, disorientation, utter weariness that results from the broken relationship, her unfulfilled expectations, and her ensuing attempts to make sense of it or to find something solid and truthful again.

1.3.2 Syntactic and Typographic Organisation

"Bitterbessie dagbreek" is typographically arranged into five stanzas of four lines each, and all the verse lines are approximately of equal length – no marked deviations in typography occur. Further, possibly to underscore the sense of feeling lost, disorientated or unfulfilled in the poem, no punctuation is used at all.

As already mentioned under the discussion of the metaphorical constructions in the poem, the first two lines of the poem read: "Bitterbessie dagbreek/ Bitterbessie son" ("Bitter-berry daybreak/ bitter-berry sun") and these two lines are repeated at the end of the poem, thus reinforcing the echo of sound and the imagery of the echo via typographic arrangement, adding to the sense of the speaker feeling lost and repeatedly deceived by her lover. "Bitterbessie dagbreek" is also the title of this poem.

Lines 3 and 4 read: "n spieël het gebreek/ tussen my en hom" ("a mirror has broken/ between me and him"). These two verse lines provide the reader with the first insight into the broken relationship between the speaker and somebody she refers to as "hom" ("him"). The broken mirror can be read as an indication of the distorted (broken) image and relationship between these two people. A broken mirror fragments the person

looking into it into many parts and it is not possible any longer to know which fragment represents the real person. There is a sense that both the speaker and the lover have become fragmented; the broken mirror does not just affect the relationship with the "hom" ("him") but also the relationship with the self, the "my" ("me"). Thus, the image of the broken mirror between the two people heightens the sense of disorientation in "Bitterbessie dagbreek".

Over and over, the verse lines emphasise that the speaker is lost and unable to find her way, no matter how hard she tries. Stanza 2 conveys the attempts of the speaker to find her way and her successive failures very well: "Soek ek na die groot pad/ om daarlangs te draf/ oral draai die paadjies/ van sy woorde af" ("I try to find the highway/ perhaps to run away/ but everywhere the footpaths/ of his words lead me astray"). In her every attempt to find the main road that may lead her to something familiar, known or truthful, her lover's words, or empty promises, or lies, lead her astray and cause her to become only more disorientated and lost than before.

Stanza 2 also conveys the expectation of the speaker versus the fulfilment of it. The reader can note the use of the word "pad" ("highway") versus the word "paadjies" ("footpaths"). She is looking for the highway but all she finds are the footpaths of the lover's words that lead her astray. One can also note the use of the singular "pad" versus the plural "paadjies" – the speaker is expecting to find one, solid "pad" ("highway"), but instead she is led astray by a number of "paadjies" ("footpaths"), and her expectations remain unfulfilled.

The last two verse lines of stanza 3 should be noted for their syntactic arrangement. Instead of reading "ek het ook verdwaal" and "ek trap in my leed", the lines read: "het ek ook verdwaal/ trap ek in my leed" ("however much I lose my way/ I step on my regret"). The unexpected syntactic arrangement in these verse lines succeeds in foregrounding it and highlighting the speaker's experience of having lost her way, "verdwaal" and "leed" also being typographically foregrounded at the end of the verse lines. Line 12 also echoes line 11 in syntactic structure and therefore creates parallelism between the lines. It is as if insult is added to injury with line 12: it is not enough that the speaker is lost, but in her disorientation she also keeps running into her regrets, and finding her way appears to be impossible. She is unable to escape to emotional, or perhaps even physical, safety.

The words "verdwaal" ("I lose my way") and "leed" ("regret"), at the end of lines 11 and 12, are, as mentioned, emphasised because of their positions. Being underscored, the

words then also tie in with the general sense of being, or feeling, lost and hurt; the speaker cannot find her way out of the brokenness or distortion that lines 3 and 4 reflect via the image of the broken mirror. This image of the broken mirror between the two lovers can also be significantly read in relation to the fact that a broken mirror is traditionally considered to be a symbol of bad luck.

In stanza 4, the repetition of "kierang" in "kierang kierang my" ("tricks me on") in line 14 effectively underscores the "parrot-coloured echo" of line 13. The speaker is taken in by the echo, tricked or deceived, until she realises that it is actually a mocking song. She is perhaps hoping to hear the voice of her lover, but in following the voice she discovers that it was not his voice to begin with, and she feels mocked when she makes the discovery. The word "weer" (again), which is not reflected in the English translation, is important to note as it makes the reader aware of a repetition of the described event in stanza 4, and "weer" (again) ties in too with the echo motif in the poem. The speaker is beguiled again and again by a voice that she perceives to be the voice of her lover, but which it turns out not to be, and this results in her feeling mocked over and over again in her efforts.

Another repetition of a word, "antwoord" ("answer"), occurs in the final stanza and ties in with the repetition or echo motif in the poem: "Eggo is geen antwoord/ antwoord hy alom" ("Echo gives no answer/ he answers everyone"). Again, the English translation here does not quite convey the Afrikaans meaning of the word "alom", which can mean 'everywhere at once', or it can mean 'on all sides.' Thus the echo is no answer and answers on all sides, like shouting your name into a canyon and hearing the echo come back to you from all directions. The answer is echoed everywhere, but it is not an answer because it is empty and void of substance.

1.3.3 Sound

Of the selection of poems chosen for the application of close reading for this thesis, "Bitterbessie dagbreek" is the richest in sound by far. It is also my opinion that sound plays a foremost role in the communication of this poem.

As already stated, sound is often, but not always, a differentiating quality of poetry when compared to drama or narrative. In "Bitterbessie dagbreek", this differentiating quality of sound is very noticeable as, apart from the repetition of whole words in the poem, a lot of sound repetition occurs, both vertically and horizontally across the poem. Below, I

seek to illustrate how the repetition of sound creates an echo in the text, through which the communication of the poem is further strengthened.

Assonance occurs with the repetition of the Afrikaans "ee"-sound, the "aa"-sound and the "oo"-sound.

The "ee"-sound:

Line 1 and 19: "dagbreek"; line 3: "gebreek"; line 10: "vergeet"; line 12: "leed"; line 16: "weer"; line 17: "geen".

The sound repetition occurs vertically throughout the poem and in the case of "dagbreek" and "gebreek" (lines 1 and 3), as well as "vergeet" and "leed" (lines 10 and 11), the sound repetition is accompanied by end rhyme.

The "aa"-sound:

Line 6: "daarlangs"; line 11: "verdwaal".

The "aai"-sound:

Line 7: "draai", "paadjies"; line 13: "Papegaai-bont".

The sound repetition occurs horizontally in line 7, and vertically across lines 6 and 11.

The "oo"-sound:

Line 5: "groot"; line 8: "woorode"; line 11: "oook"; line 17 and 18: "antwoord".

The sound repetition only occurs vertically across these lines.

There are several occurrences of alliteration and diffuse repetition (see Glossary of Terms on pp. 152-153) in "Bitterbessie dagbreek". The "b"-sound, for example:

Line 1: "Bitterbessie dagbreek"

Line 2: "bitterbessie son"

Line 3: "n spieël het gebreek"

Line 9: "Dennebos herinnering"

Line 10: "dennebos vergeet"

Line 13: "Papegaai-bont eggo"

Line 15: "totdat ek bedroë"

Line 19: "bitterbessie dagbreek"

Line 20: "bitterbessie son"

As can be observed from these lines, alliteration as well as diffuse repetition occurs vertically and horizontally throughout the poem.

The use of the "k"-sound is another example:

Line 14: "kierang kierang my" and line 16: "koggel kry".

It is also seen in the following instances, but perhaps less conspicuously so, as the repetition occurs at the end of these words:

Line 1: "dagbreekk"; line 3: "gebreekk"; line 11: "ookk"; line 15: "ekk"; line 19: "dagbreekk".

The sound repetition in the case of the "k"-sound occurs both vertically and horizontally. Diffuse repetition is present, as well as alliteration in lines 14 and 16 specifically.

There are many more instances of alliteration, assonance and diffuse repetition in "Bitterbessie dagbreek", however, the abovementioned examples should serve as a sufficient sample of the richness and echo of sound in the text. The use of sound in the poem creates an almost hypnotic effect, which underscores the feeling of disorientation in the poem, as well as the sense of the speaker being powerless: she continues to follow the echo of her lover's voice even though, time and again, she is deceived and comes upon emptiness.

The repetition of sound in this poem creates coherence and also causes the poem to fall beautifully, and eerily, on the ear. I say eerily because the repetition of the various sounds form an echo of sound in the poem, which ties in with and underscores line 13: "Pappegaai-bont eggo" ("Parrot-coloured echo"), as well as line 17: "Eggo is geen antwoord" ("Echo gives no answer"), and line 16: "weer die koggel kry" ("to retrieve the mocking song") – the empty, eerie and mocking quality of an echo.

An alternating "abab, cdcd" end rhyme pattern can be detected throughout "Bitterbessie dagbreek". The set end rhyme pattern adds to the very formal structure of this poem, but stands in stark contrast to the disorientating emotions of the speaker and the fact that she is experiencing no ordering, or order. In spite of the set and certain structure of the poem, the content conveys a lot of uncertainty and irregularity. This ties in with

contrasting words such as “herinnering” versus “vergeet”, and the singular and plural forms of “pad” versus “paadjies”, as even the formal structure of the poem also highlights the unfulfilled expectations of the speaker. The very well-ordered poem does not convey ordered emotions, or a resolution, or a way out.

1.3.4 Rhythm and Metre

Instances of a regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables occur throughout “Bitterbessie dagbreek” and are reinforced by the use of sound, end rhyme, assonance, alliteration, diffuse repetition, and the repetition of whole words. (As mentioned, only the stressed, or accented, syllables are indicated, and it should be noted too that a syllable, indicated as stressed, does not convey the degree of stress on the syllable.)

The ordered rhythm and metre of the poem adds to its hypnotic effect, emphasising the fact that there is no escape, that the speaker is lost. In reading this poem, one almost has the sense of getting onto a merry-go-round. The speaker continually ends up in the same place from which she set out, and the rhythmical structure of the poem underscores this:

/ /
 Bitterbessie dagbreek
 / /
 bitterbessie son
 / /
 ’n spieël het gebreek
 / / /
 tussen my en hom

/ / /
 5 Soek ek na die groot pad
 / /
 om daarlangs te draf
 / / /
 oral draai die paadjies
 / /
 van sy woorde af

/ /
Dennebos herinnering
 / /
10 dennebos vergeet
 / /
 het ek ook verdwaal
 / /
 trap ek in my leed

1.3.5 Irony

As already mentioned, though “Bitterbessie dagbreek” is a very well-ordered poem, its content can be described as very disorientating – and there is something very ironic about the well-structured poem in contrast to the deep and ever-increasing disorientation of the speaker as she is being repeatedly deceived. The speaker tries to find her way by locating something familiar, like the “groot pad” (“highway”) and the true image, or undistorted image, of her lover, but all her attempts lead her further astray and only deepen the deception.

Ironically, the speaker is lost in trying to find her way. It is no wonder, then, that the daybreak is a bitter-berry and that the sun is a bitter-berry. Neither the new day, generally regarded as hopeful, nor the light from the sun, which is supposed to bring clarity after a dark night, affords the speaker any means of finding her way. Even as the poem concludes, there is no resolution, as the same two verse lines from the beginning of the poem are repeated at the end of it.

Another ironic aspect to “Bitterbessie dagbreek” mentioned throughout this discussion is the expectations of the speaker versus the fulfilment of her expectations. In fact, her expectations remain unfilled throughout the poem and the speaker’s very attempts to gain fulfilment thwart her expectations; they cause her to be only more unfulfilled. In a sense, then, the speaker is caught up in a rather vicious cycle of “bitterbessie dae” (“bitter-berry days”), with fresh expectations every day that remain unfulfilled. The ironic tension in “Bitterbessie dagbreek” remains perfectly intact throughout the poem.

1.3.6 Conclusion

In one sense, the image of the broken mirror reflecting distorted images is central to “Bitterbessie dagbreek”, just as the ‘forest’ of memories are, both forgotten and

remembered, (lines 9 and 10). Both images heighten the disorientation felt by the speaker in the poem. The speaker's and the inferred lover's images are distorted as a result of the broken relationship. Where before there was love, certainty, and truth, there is now disappointment, uncertainty, and deception. The speaker is no longer sure of her true image (and relationship with herself) or the image of her lover (and the relationship with him), and the result is the disorientation described in the rest of the poem. The speaker is lost and unable to find her way. At times she believes that she has found the "groot pad" ("highway") or that she hears the sound of her lover's voice, leading her on. In the end, however, she is led further astray by following various footpaths leading off the main road, and the voice perceived to be the voice of her lover turns into a "koggel" ("mocking song").

A broken mirror cannot be glued together again as the reflection in it will remain fragmented. In the same manner, the structure and the use of poetic devices in "Bitterbessie dagbreek" highlights that the broken relationship between the speaker and the "hom" ("him") is irreparable. The very formal ordering of the poem does not bring order to its content. In the same way, by trying to restore the relationship, or in looking for restoration, the consequent effect is only more fragmentation of the speaker and of the lover. The speaker remains caught up in a cycle of unfulfilled expectations.

1.4 "Met hulle is ek" ("I am with those")

Met hulle is ek

Met hulle is ek
wat seks misbruik
omdat die individu nie tel nie
met hulle wat dronk word
5 teen die afgrond van die brein
teen die illusie dat die lewe
eenmaal goed of mooi of betekenisvol was
teen die tuinpartytjies van die valsheid
teen die stilte wat slaan teen die slape
10 met hulle wat oud en arm
meeding met die dood die atoombom van die dae
met hulle verdwaas in inrigtings
geskok met elektriese strome
deur die katarakte van die sintuie
15 met hulle van wie die hart hul ontnem is
soos die lig uit die robot van veiligheid
met hulle kleurling african ontroof
met hulle wat moor
omdat elke sterfte opnuut bevestig
20 die leuen van die lewe
en vergeet asseblief
van geregtigheid dit bestaan nie
van broederskap dis bedrog
van liefde dit het geen reg nie

I am with those

Translated by André Brink and Antjie Krog

I am with those
who abuse sex
because the individual doesn't count
with those who get drunk
5 against the abyss of the brain
against the illusion that life

once was beautiful or good or significant
against the garden parties of pretence
against the silence beating at the temples
10 with those who poor and old
compete against death the atom bomb of days
with those numbed in institutions
shocked with electric currents
through the cataracts of nerves
15 with those who have been deprived of their hearts
like colour from the traffic light of safety
with those coloureds africans dispossessed
with those who kill
because every death confirms anew
20 the lie of life
and please forget
about justice it doesn't exist
about brotherhood it's a fraud
about love it has no right

1.4.1 A Note on the Translation of "Met hulle is ek"

As previously stated, the English translations of the selection of Jonker poems have been sourced from *Black Butterflies*, and the translation work for it was done by André Brink and Antjie Krog. As Jonker herself also attempted a translation of "Met hulle is ek", though the quality of her translation is certainly lacking in comparison to Brink and Krog's, it should be pointed out that Jonker's more direct translation of the Afrikaans words in English does help one to get closer to the intent behind the Afrikaans words she chose for her poem.

Jonker translated "betekenisvol" (line 7) as "sacred", for example, while Brink and Krog used "significant" for their translation. Furthermore, Jonker translated "valsheid" (line 8) as "falseness" (instead of "pretence"); "meeding" (line 11) as "race" (instead of "compete"); "verdwaas" (line 12) as "stupefied" (instead of "numbed"); "sintuie" (line 14) as "senses" (instead of "nerves"); "ontneem" (line 15) as "removed" (instead of "deprived"); "lig" (line 16) as "light" (instead of "colour"); "ontroof" (line 17) as "deprived" (instead of "dispossessed"); "bedrog" (line 23) as "deceit" (instead of "fraud").

I find the translation of "sintuie" into "nerves" in the *Black Butterflies* version of the poem, and the translation of "ontroof" into "dispossessed" particularly problematic. I have no intention to discuss the choice of English words in depth; I simply wish to highlight the difference in translation, as it bears upon the analysis of the poem here. The definitions of certain of the English words do not quite convey the definitions of certain of the Afrikaans words, specifically "nerves" and "dispossessed". Translating "senses" into "nerves" excludes four of the five senses meant to be conveyed by the Afrikaans word. Translating "ontroof" into "dispossessed" causes an association, for example, with the possession or occupation of somebody else's property, which gives the English translation a more obvious political colouring, compared to what may have been intended with the Afrikaans word choice.

1.4.2 Metaphorical Constructions

It may be a generalisation to say so, but I would say the poetry of Sylvia Plath is extraordinarily rich in metaphor, and often complex metaphor at that, while Jonker's poems are most often not, and "Met hulle is ek" particularly so. The beauty of Jonker's poems is often found in their clear syntactic construction, use of sound, and the raw expression of emotion, but more about this later.

The first indication of a metaphorical construction can be found in line 11 of the poem. This verse line could have been expressed across two verse lines, but its arrangement in a single line stylistically emphasises one of the few metaphors of the poem. It reads as follows:

"meeding met die dood die atoombom van die dae" ("compete against death the atom bomb of days")

Put another way:

dood is die atoombom van die dae (death is the atom bomb of days)
tenor vehicle ground (tenor vehicle ground)

Death is personified in the line "meeding met die dood" ("compete against death") in that the old and the poor are in a competition with death, as though they are all in a race together, trying to see who will win. It is also, of course, ironic, as the competition between the old, and the poor, and death is no competition at all; death is the ultimate winner in this earthly race.

The metaphorical construction likens death to the “atom bomb of days”. As an atom bomb wreaks incredible destruction, with long-term fallout, death is the atom bomb that obliterates the days of the old and poor. Death is thus not just a passing on, but a destructive force capable of completely destroying a life. As the threat of nuclear war is constant and real, so too is the threat of death to the poor and old: in disadvantaged circumstances, death becomes a more pertinent threat than in situations where wealth is able to stave it off for longer. It is a constant presence, which does, in a certain sense, compete with the living.

The next metaphor of the poem, which is a simile, can be found in lines 15 to 16:

“met hulle van wie die hart hul ontnem is/ soos die lig uit die robot van veiligheid”
 (“with those who have been deprived of their hearts/ like colour from the traffic light of safety”)

The phrase “those who have been deprived of their hearts” functions as the tenor and the phrase “traffic light”, without any light, functions as the vehicle for the simile.

These lines convey that, for those who have been deprived of their hearts, there is no longer any regulation in society. A traffic light provides the flow of traffic with signals, which safely usher all vehicles on the road to their destinations and back. When a traffic light does not work, vehicles are likely to crash into one another. In the same manner, those who have been deprived of their hearts have become unregulated and out of control. This thought, of people living without their hearts, is further underscored towards the end of the poem in line 24, which refers to the fact that the society, to which the poem refers, affords love no right.

Another metaphor in “Met hulle is ek” occurs in line 20: “die leuen van die lewe” (“the lie of life”), which is also a key sentence in this poem as it succinctly expresses the disillusionment of the speaker with what was once considered just, humane, and lovely. This line can be expressed as metaphor in the following way:

die lewe is ’n leuen (life is a lie)
tenor vehicle (tenor vehicle)

Another instance of possible metaphor occurs in line 14:

“deur die katarakte van die sintuie” (“through the cataracts of nerves”)

vehicle

tenor

(vehicle

tenor)

This may be read as a metaphor for the blunting of the senses in the poem. It can be extended to mean that apart from a sensory insensitivity there is also a moral insensitivity: blindness, deafness, muteness, callousness, etc. as a result of the denial of justice, brotherhood, and love, equally for all in society.

This is the sum total of local metaphorical expressions in this poem and the reader will have to further explore the use of other poetic devices to discover more about “Met hulle is ek”.

1.4.3 Syntactic and Typographic Organisation

“Met hulle is ek” consists of 24 lines arranged in a single stanza. The poem contains no punctuation marks and only one capitalised word at the beginning of the first line of the poem. Apart from the fact that, stylistically, the reader can recognise “Met hulle is ek” as a poem because of the verse line arrangement, for one, it could also easily be called stream of consciousness writing, because of the continuous and uninterrupted flow of thought and feeling in the poem.

The title of the poem, “Met hulle is ek” (“I am with those”), should be noted for its syntactic deviance in Afrikaans, which places emphasis on the “met hulle” (“with those”), which appears first, instead of the “ek” (“I”) which is the way in which the reader would have expected the line to be written in Afrikaans: ek is met hulle. The title is repeated in line 1 and then again in lines 4, 10, 12, 15, 17, and 18. It is further highlighted typographically by appearing at the beginning of each of these lines. In line 1, the words match the title of the poem exactly but the other lines specify the identification of the speaker with the “those” simply as “met hulle” (“with those”). The repetition creates parallelism across these verse lines:

Lines 1 to 2: “Met hulle is ek/ wat seks misbruik” (“I am with those/ who abuse sex”)

Line 4: “met hulle wat dronk word” (“with those who get drunk”)

Line 10: “met hulle wat oud en arm” (“with those poor and old”)

Line 12: “met hulle verdwaas in inrigtings” (“with those numbed in institutions”)

Line 15: “met hulle van wie die hart hul ontnem is” (“with those who have been deprived of their hearts”)

Line 17: "met hulle kleurling african ontroof" ("with those coloureds africans dispossessed")

Line 18: "met hulle wat moor" ("with those who kill")

In short, the "hulle" ("those") that the speaker identifies or sides with in the poem are prostitutes and/or adulterers, drunkards, the mentally unstable, murderers, and the socially unacceptable, which include the old and the poor, as well as Coloureds (from mixed racial descent) and Africans. The repeated phrase "met hulle" ("with those") throughout the poem highlights the strong identification of the speaker with the socially disenfranchised and outcast around her. It can also be inferred that the speaker sides with the outcasts of society against the socially acceptable, those who have turned a blind eye to the injustice happening around them – those whose senses have been dulled.

This repeated "met hulle" phrase is cast in contrast to the repeated "teen die" ("against the") phrase, highlighting the specific things that the speaker is against. The repeated "teen die" phrase is also typographically highlighted by appearing at the beginning of lines 5, 6, 8, and 9, underlining the antagonism of the speaker towards the following:

Line 5: "teen die afgrond van die brein" ("against the abyss of the brain")

Line 6: "teen die illusie dat die lewe" ("against the illusion that life")

Line 8: "teen die tuinpartytjies van die valsheid" ("against the garden parties of pretence")

Line 9: "teen die stilte wat slaan teen die slape" ("against the silence beating at the temples")

Lines 5 and 6 may be read in two different ways: either the speaker is "with those" and "against the" abyss of the brain and the illusion that life was once beautiful, etc., or the speaker is "with those" who get drunk, in line 3, in order to ward off the abyss of the brain and the illusion that life was once beautiful, etc. In the context of the poem, the latter reading appears more likely: those that get drunk do so in order to avoid the truth that things have gone wrong, because soberly facing the truth may send the mind over the edge. The inebriated are able to avoid losing their minds over the fact that life was once beautiful, and good, and significant, as in drunkenness the perception of this state of affairs may be chemically altered for a time.

It is also, of course, an ironic state of affairs, as getting drunk means that one allows one's mind to be impaired by alcohol. It is, then, a double illusion: first, getting drunk

against the illusion that life once was beautiful, good, or significant and second, believing that being drunk will somehow permanently change the first illusion.

Both sex and alcohol, and specifically the abusive use of both, are used as a buffer against the abyss of the brain, against illusions of a beautiful life, against pretentious social activities (the garden parties of line 8), and most of all, against the silence (line 9): "teen die stilte wat slaan teen die slape" ("against the silence beating at the temples"). The reader is made aware that a silence is being maintained, one that refuses to acknowledge the existing illusions referred to in the text. The use of sound further highlights line 9, but is discussed in a more in-depth way under section 1.4.4 below.

Close attention should be paid to the syntactic deviance in line 7: "eenmaal goed of mooi of betekenisvol was" ("once was beautiful or good or significant"). Instead of using a comma as follows: "goed, mooi of betekenisvol" ("beautiful, good or significant") the "of" ("or") is used, making the listing of the three words: "goed", "mooi", and "betekenisvol", more measured, while at the same time emphasising each word.

This calculated form of expression is repeated, or echoed, in the last three verse lines (22 to 24) of the poem, accomplished via the use of exaggerated white space between phrases. The exaggerated use of white space also serves to typographically emphasise these lines:

"van geregtigheid	dit bestaan nie	("about justice	it doesn't exist
van broederskap	dis bedrog	about brotherhood	it's fraud
van liefde	dit het geen reg nie"	about love	it has no right")

The last three verse lines of the poem express the culmination of the speaker's disillusionment with life and expose "the lie of life". The poem builds up from the first line to the final expression in these last three lines. The reader would also assert that the exaggerated white space reflects the measured way in which the speaker is making these final statements, leaving no room for counterstatements. In the last three lines of the poem there is a sense of finality, of calmness, as though the speaker's emotion has been spent. The emotional tone of the final words of the poem is somewhat more rational and calculated, and because of this, quite powerful in concluding the poem.

The speaker sees no justice in how those with whom she is siding are treated. She sees no brotherhood either, because if fellow human beings can be unjustly treated as social

outcasts, then claiming brotherhood with them is fraud – and as line 15 expresses (discussed under metaphorical constructions), because the “those” have been deprived of their hearts, love has no right.

As pointed out earlier, line 20 is a key line in the poem. Illusion and disillusionment is first expressed in lines 6 to 7: “teen die illusie dat die lewe/ eenmaal goed of mooi of betekenisvol was” (“against the illusion that life/ once was beautiful or good or significant”), and then later reinforced in line 20: “die leuen van die lewe” (“the lie of life”). The speaker in “Met hulle is ek” seems to have believed something very specific about life and society but it is clear that she has been deeply disillusioned, though no specific event that set off this disillusionment is mentioned in the poem.

Note the choice of the following words in the poem: line 8: “valsheid” (“pretence”), line 17: “ontroof” (“dispossessed”), line 20: “leuen” (“lie”), line 23: “bedrog” (“fraud”). These four words, spread throughout the poem, establish a relationship across verse lines that reinforces the lack of justice finally expressed in line 22: “van geregtigheid dit bestaan nie” (“about justice it doesn’t exist”), as well as reinforces the “lie of life” (line 20).

The poet’s choice of the word “ontroof” (“dispossessed”) in line 17 instead of “berooft” should be taken note of in particular. One obvious reason why the poet may have chosen to use “ontroof” instead of “berooft” is that it can be syntactically and semantically linked with “ontneem” (“deprived”) in line 15. Though “ontroof” and “berooft” are very close in meaning, there are slight differences: “ontroof” can be translated as bereave, deprive, defraud or ravish, while “berooft” can be translated as rob, deprive or dispossess (the last word being the English translation used in the poem). The word “berooft” conveys, which “ontroof” does not, that the act of stealing was accompanied by violence. I would assert that the word choice highlights the subtlety of the deception that the poem talks about.

A disillusioned speaker comes across in the poem, set on making her disillusionment known and set on breaking the silence referred to in line 9 of the poem. Though emotions of anger, frustration, and even bitterness can be detected throughout the verse lines, it is the measured typographic arrangement of the final three verse lines that powerfully and finally brings the communication of this poem home.

1.4.4 Sound

The function of sound in poetry is not necessarily to convey meaning, however, sound can be used as a foregrounding device and can make the reader aware of certain relationships between thoughts and words because of its repetition. Just as a painter carefully selects which brush to use, the poet carefully selects each word that eventually forms part of the poem and contributes to its diction. In poetry, as in painting, no word (or brush stroke) can be read as a coincidence.

This being said, there are not many instances of patterns of sound repetition in “Met hulle is ek” and, therefore, its occurrence is all the more noteworthy, as in line 9:

“teen die stilte wat slaan teen die slape” (“against the silence beating at the temples”)

From the context of the poem, one can reasonably infer that the “silence” is being kept by the society in which the speaker lives. Her society is silent about acts of injustice and the inhumane treatment of those who are outcast and marginalised. This silence beats at the “temples” of the speaker, the privileged in society, as well as at the temples of those who are at a disadvantage as a result of the injustice.

The foregrounding via sound here is significant and, in effect, also underscores the speaker’s act of breaking the silence. “Met hulle is ek” is not a quiet or silent poem – it shouts. The repetition of the “s”-sound serves to reinforce the quality of the silence, which is not a quiet silence. This silence beats at the temples – thus it is not peaceful, but is ultimately a pervasive, deliberate indictment against those who are keeping silent.

The silence is active as it beats at the temples and it has the potential to kill. If not in a literal sense, then in a figurative manner it kills the senses – the conscience and the willingness to speak up against injustice. Alternatively, the silence can be read as being malevolent, in that, because the silence is actively being maintained, it serves as a condonation of acts of injustice and, therefore, is responsible for others losing their lives or being treated as social outcasts.

Other instances of sound repetition occur horizontally in lines 8 and 11, and create some coherence via the repetition. The “t”-sound and “v”-sound are seen as follows:

Line 8: “teen die tuinpartytjies van die valsheid” (“against the garden parties of pretence”)

And the “m”-sound and “d”-sound are seen in line 11:

“meeding met die dood die atoombom van die dae” (“compete against death the atom bomb of days”)

In the key line of the poem, the association of life with a lie is further strengthened by the repetition of the “l”-sound, closely linking “leuen” (“lie”) and “lewe” (“life”) via sound repetition:

Line 20: “die leuen van die lewe” (“the lie of life”)

In concluding the discussion of sound in “Met hulle is ek”, the reader can note that the poem is written in free verse and contains lines of varying length with no discernable end rhyme pattern. The repetition of “met hulle” (“with those”) and “teen die” (“against the”) at the beginning of some of the verse lines does help with creating some sound coherence, but overall, the use of this poetic device is restrained, especially when one considers the poet’s liberal use of sound in a poem such as “Bitterbessie dagbreek” (“Bitter-berry daybreak”).

1.4.5 Rhythm and Metre

Wainwright (2011: 65) states that a free verse poem does not have a fixed metrical pattern which repeats line by line, since it is one of the things a free verse poem “seeks to be free of.” He continues by saying, “But, unless it is to be quite inert it will have rhythm[.]” In keeping with this explanation of Wainwright, “Met hulle is ek”, a free verse poem, does not have a regular metrical pattern which repeats line by line. A sample of the metrical arrangement follows:

/ /
 Met hulle is ek
 / /
 wat seks misbruik
 / / /
 omdat die individu nie tel nie
 / / /
 met hulle wat dronk word
 / / /
 5 teen die afgrond van die brein

/ / /
 teen die illusie dat die lewe
 / / / /
 eenmaal goed of mooi of betekenisvol was
 / / / /
 omdat elke sterfte opnuut bevestig
 / /
 20 die leuen van die lewe
 / /
 en vergeet asseblief
 / /
 van geregtigheid dit bestaan nie
 / /
 van broederskap dis bedrog
 / / /
 van liefde dit het geen reg nie

It is perhaps a subjective observation, but it seems to me, as can be discerned from this metrical arrangement, that “Met hulle is ek” has a rather irregular metrical pattern, and without the repetition of certain phrases, such as “met hulle” and “teen die”, and the typographic arrangement of the verse lines, there would be very little left in the way of cohesive elements in the poem.

1.4.6 Irony

The social status of the speaker in this poem is not clear, although it seems likely that she is, or used to be, part of a social setting in which it appeared that justice, brotherhood, and love was being upheld, however, it was significantly upheld to the exclusion of some, such as the “kleurling african” (“coloureds africans”) of line 17. It is this unjust exclusion which seems to be the pivotal point of the disillusionment of the speaker and her realisation that life is a lie.

Ironically, the speaker reacts to the silence and the things that appear wrong and broken to her by throwing in her lot with those who are broken and compromised as a result of their behaviour in abusing sex and alcohol, and in killing others. The speaker identifies with those who are, at best, morally ambiguous by being morally ambiguous herself. This does not leave her in a position to fundamentally change the unjust state of affairs,

or to be taken seriously, as she sacrifices moral ground in speaking out against immorality.

Line 9: “teen die stilte wat slaan teen die slape” (“against the silence beating at the temples”) in the context of “Met hulle is ek” is also rather ironic as this poem does everything except keep the silence or maintain the status quo. The irony is that, in acknowledging the silence, the speaker is also breaking the silence that is beating at the temples. The last three lines of the poem are anything but silent. These three lines very deliberately break the silence, and convey quite a hostile distancing between the speaker and her social or political setting.

1.4.7 Conclusion

“Met hulle is ek” is a poem with a strong emotional tone, but the use of poetic devices in this poem is not perhaps altogether cohesive. As a result, the poem, at times, reads like a rant rather than a poem. The speaker does not succeed in forming an intimacy with the reader, and so the communication of the poem is perhaps weakened.

Of the chosen Jonker poems, “Met hulle is ek” is probably the least well-constructed poem. Its disregard of poetic devices in favour of a free verse structure may perhaps be read as a type of rebellion, however; as a distancing technique from more structured poetic formulations. As the speaker is distancing herself from certain things, and is “with those” marginalised in society, the less formal nature of the poem succeeds in underscoring this distancing.

The fact that the speaker speaks with a socially and politically aware voice in “Met hulle is ek”, conveyed in line 17, for example, with the reference to “kleurling african” (“coloureds africans”) helps the reader to understand the use of free verse better. Free verse, of itself, then becomes a foregrounding device, meant to jar and shake perceived complacency so that the attention of the reader is fixed on the things that are jarring in society and policy, in the context of the poem. In this light, the lack of structure and lack of cohesive use of poetic devices make more sense and serve as reinforcement for the communication of the poem.

1.5 "You're"

You're

- Clownlike, happiest on your hands,
Feet to the stars, and moon-skulled,
Gilled like a fish. A common-sense
Thumbs-down on the dodo's mode.
- 5 Wrapped up in yourself like a spool,
Trawling your dark as owls do.
Mute as a turnip from the Fourth
Of July to All Fools' Day,
O high-riser, my little loaf.
- 10 Vague as fog and looked for like mail.
Farther off than Australia.
Bent-backed Atlas, our travelled prawn.
Snug as a bud and at home
Like a sprat in a pickle jug.
- 15 A creel of eels, all ripples.
Jumpy as a Mexican bean.
Right, like a well-done sum.
A clean slate, with your own face on.

1.5.1 Metaphorical Constructions

"You're" is densely filled with metaphorical constructions and similes, all of which serve to describe, as one finds after a first reading of the poem, an eagerly expected infant. In this section, the local tenors and vehicles are firstly explored and then, in conclusion, the global tenors and vehicles are mentioned.

The title of the poem, "You're", is not just the subject matter of the poem but both the local and global tenor of the poem, as is shown below. In each local tenor occurrence of "You're", the local vehicle gives expression to "You" so that the reader may eventually establish a global tenor and vehicle relationship for "You" in the poem.

You're Clownlike, happiest on your hands,

tenor vehicle ground

This first metaphor of the poem serves to convey the funny acrobatics of "You". Significantly, "You" is not called a clown, as in "You are a clown", but rather "clownlike". The concept of "You" in this first line of the poem is very vague, but continues to be developed throughout the poem.

You're moon-skulled
tenor vehicle

The word "moon-skulled", particularly in reading the "skulled" part of it, conveys something of the fragility of "You's" head, as it pertains to the ethereal and delicate characteristics of the moon. It also highlights other characteristics of the moon, from the vantage point of earth at least, such as that it can be described as round and smooth, and by means of the metaphor, these are qualities shared by "You".

You're Gilled like a fish.
tenor ground vehicle

"You" is submerged in water (or placental fluid, rather) and therefore in need of gills or something like it, in order to breathe. Line 3 of the poem is the first of a number of lines to bring this image of the ocean, and living underwater, to mind.

You're Wrapped up in yourself like a spool,
tenor ground vehicle

The image of an expected infant is now slowly starting to come into focus. It can be reasonably inferred that the thread of "You's" life is wrapped up in itself like thread on a spool. As "You" is still expected, the spool of its life has not been unwound yet. The thread of its life is still wound up and so "You" is still wrapped up in itself like a spool to be unwound after birth.

You're Trawling your dark as owls do.
tenor ground vehicle

The metaphor here is not very clear, however, owls make use of the dark to hunt for and to catch prey, which is necessary to their survival. The poet may mean that "You" uses its dark in the same manner to grow and to stay alive – it is in the relative darkness of the womb that "You" survives and grows.

You're Mute as a turnip from the Fourth
tenor ground vehicle

Of July to All Fools' Day

Finally, the reader is able to say with a fair amount of certainty that the poem is about an expected infant. The period from the fourth of July (American Independence Day) to All Fools' Day, which traditionally falls on the 1st of April, covers nine months, the normal maturation period of human babies in the womb. The phrase "Mute as a turnip" can then be said to reflect this growth "underground", or in darkness and in silence. Though there is movement, "You" does not, and cannot, make a sound yet.

O high-riser, my little loaf.
vehicle

Again, this line refers to growth or expansion and can also be read in reference to the idiom "having a bun in the oven", meaning that a woman is pregnant, further confirming that the "You" being referred to is an infant in the womb.

You're Vague as fog and looked for like mail.
tenor ground vehicle ground vehicle

The phrase "Vague as fog" indicates that the parents do not know what the baby looks like, even though there is an awareness of its presence. The sense of excited expectation is highlighted by the phrase "looked for like mail", and the next line, which reads "Farther off than Australia" shows that the "mail" will not arrive quickly but is nevertheless steadily anticipated.

Bent-backed Atlas, our travelled prawn.
ground vehicle vehicle

The phrase "Bent-backed Atlas" calls to mind the foetal position of a baby in the womb, just as Atlas is doubled-over in carrying the world. The words "travelled prawn" recall the "gilled like a fish" phrase of line 3, again subtly referring to the baby living in placental fluid for nine months of its life.

Snug as a bud and at home
ground vehicle ground

Like a sprat in a pickle jug.

vehicle

The abovementioned lines indicate the secure fit of the baby – warm, cosy, and at home. The word “sprat” again causes the reader to think of the ocean and of the baby floating in its own ‘ocean’.

A creel of eels, all ripples.

vehicle ground

The reference to eels continues to convey the ocean/water imagery, while at the same time conveying the baby’s movements in the womb. This is also true of the next line:

Jumpy as a Mexican bean.

ground vehicle

The final lines of the poem succeed in expressing both the innocence of the baby and its uniqueness.

Right, like a well-done sum.

ground vehicle

A clean slate, with your own face on.

vehicle

Line 17 may be meant to convey that, just like getting a complicated mathematics problem or sum right, “You” has been done right; the ‘answer’ in the form of “You” is complete. Innocence is expressed by means of the phrase “A clean slate” and the uniqueness of the infant underscored with the words “with your own face on”. This is in contrast to the first word of the poem: “Clownlike”. A clown does not have its “own face on” and the narrator may be underscoring the fact that the parents do not know what the face of the baby will look like until it is born, “A clean slate, with your own face on”.

All the expectant mother knows of the infant is its clownlike, funny, acrobatic movements and its steady growth for the nine month period until the infant is finally delivered. So the delivery of the infant is a ‘first’ meeting in a sense as the parents get to see what the baby looks like for the first time. The baby is, then, the opened letter after having been eagerly expected.

In conclusion, as stated at the start of this section, "You" remains the local tenor throughout the poem carried by the local vehicles. "You" is also the global tenor of the poem carried by the global vehicles that express an existence in placental fluid for nine months (water/ocean/dark/invisible: line 3, line 7, line 10, line 12, lines 14-15), movement and growth (line 9, line 12, lines 14-16), and finally innocence and uniqueness (line 5, line 10, line 18).

The abovementioned metaphors do not reflect anything that has not been said about expected infants before, but Plath succeeds in saying it in a whole new way, in a manner that acutely focuses the attention of the reader on the excited expectation of the parent/s. She manages to capture the infant's movement and growth very believably and in a lively fashion, which at the same time heightens the sense of the parent's/parents' expectation.

1.5.2 Syntactic and Typographic Organisation

The poem never explicitly refers to the experience of expecting, or to the expected baby, however, all poetic devices employed by the poet continually fix the attention of the reader on the infant. The typographic and syntactic arrangements of the poem are no exception.

"You're" consists of 11 syntactic units, each concluded by a full stop, arranged across 18 lines. The poem has two stanzas of nine lines each and this arrangement may have been done deliberately by Plath in reference to the normal nine month period of human pregnancy. The nine month period is also highlighted by lines 7 and 8 of the poem, as pointed out in the section dealing with metaphor: "...from the Fourth/ Of July to All Fools' Day".

"You" is also described as having "A common-sense/ Thumbs-down on the dodo's mode" (line 4). The widely known fact that dodos have been extinct since the 17th century helps the reader to conclude that "You" is moving in exactly the opposite direction as the famous dodo bird; "You" is rejecting extinction, and is in fact growing all the time, giving a thumbs-up to living.

The typographic arrangement of the verse lines highlights and emphasises words such as "Clownlike" (more about this later), "Gilled" (living and 'breathing' in placental fluid), "Wrapped" (a brand new life), "Mute" (no sound can be heard), and "Vague" (ties in with "Clownlike", because one has only a vague notion of a clown's face. It also highlights

and emphasises "Farther off" (again, with something being far off, the form or time of arrival is vague), "Bent-backed" (refers to the foetal position), "Snug" (the tight fit in the womb), "Jumpy" (the movement of the baby, kicking for example), and "Right" (ties in once more with the sense of expectancy in the poem), which all appear at the beginning of verse lines in the poem. These words are descriptive of "You" and capture the essence of the anticipated infant.

The title "You're", which is never repeated again throughout the whole poem, is an essential part of the typographic arrangement of this poem as the reader would feel quite lost without this clue to the focus of the poem. It is important, too, to notice the casual and contracted "You're" instead of a more formal "You are", which I believe is the first hint, expressed via syntax, to alert the reader to the informal, light-hearted kind of relationship between the mother and infant.

In poetry, the reader should always be alert to syntactic deviance or to words not necessarily found in a dictionary. "Moon-skulled" is such a word and is probably a word of the poet's own making, and an apt description for a baby's smooth, round and hairless head.

The word "Clownlike", with the "-like" inflection added to "clown", is also accentuated as a result of its placement in the poem and ascribes the characteristics of a clown to the infant. The rest of the poem is read in light of this first word as the reader is made aware of the funny acrobatics of the baby in the womb. The word "Clownlike" also alerts the reader to a lighter subject matter, possibly even to a bit of silliness within the poem.

In contrast to "Clownlike", the last line of the poem "A clean slate, with your own face on" is more thoughtful in tone, and again the line is accentuated, this time because it appears as the last line of the poem. This last line allows the reader to reconsider lines such as "Wrapped up in yourself like a spool" or "our travelled prawn", and to reflect on them more earnestly, while considering the life that has been set in motion.

"Clownlike" also brings to mind the layers of make-up that clowns usually wear that make them unrecognisable. Clowns are often seen as being only one-dimensional in that one expects them to be funny and to make one laugh. The word "Vague" at the beginning of the second stanza is also typographically accentuated, as already mentioned, and ties in with "Clownlike" in that the baby is not yet a known entity. It does not yet have its "own face on".

In the same manner as clowns, and the universal association that they are supposed to make their audience laugh, the expected baby is experienced in an almost one-dimensional way throughout the poem until the reader gets to the last line. The last line alerts one to the fact that a new life is waiting to be written, once born. All the expectation and the funny acrobatics by the baby in the womb, experienced by the mother, culminate in a real person "with your own face on" – no longer an unknown entity. Thus, "Clownlike" and "with your own face on" serve as perfect polar opposites at the typographically placed beginning and end of "You're".

1.5.3 Sound

"You're" is a beautiful poem read out loud because of the use of sound in it. This poem of Plath's is very tightly woven, and another reason for this, other than the plentiful use of metaphor and the syntactic and typographic arrangement, is the way that sound is applied in the poem. Sound repetition forms a type of sound equivalence in "You're". What is meant by sound equivalence is repetition for effect, in this case, the deliberate repetition of sounds for poetic effect (Gräbe, 2003: 66).

There are occurrences of assonance in lines 2, 5, 8, and 10 with the repetition of the "oo"-sound. Line 2: moon-skulled, line 5: spool, line 8: Fools', line 10: looked. I would suggest that, as the assonance starts with the word "moon-skulled", all the other words in the poem, with the same sound, serve not only to repeat the sound, which knits the poem together more tightly, but also to emphasise and call to mind the shape of the baby's head throughout.

Lines 3-6 deserve careful attention for the dense sound repetition found in these: "A common-sense/ Thumbs-down on the dodo's mode./ Wrapped up in yourself like a spool,/ Trawling your dark as owls do".

In line 12: "our travelled prawn" creates sound equivalence between stanzas 1 and 2 respectively with "trawling" (line 6) and "prawn", and "wrapped" (line 5) and "travelled". There is also an especially close sound relationship between the words and syllables of the phrase "dodo's mode".

Instances of alliteration occur with the repetition of the "l"-sound throughout: lines 3, 5, 10, 14, and 17 with the repetition of the word "like" and then in line 9, one finds the phrase "my little loaf". And as already pointed out, this phrase is probably a play on the familiar saying: 'having a bun in the oven'.

Another sound that is oft-repeated throughout "You're" is the "u"-sound as in line 5: "up", line 13: "snug as a bud", line 14: "jug". The "u"-sound is also repeated in line 4: "Thumbus-down", line 16: "jumpy" and line 17: "sum".

In discussing the sound of this poem, the following lines in "You're" should be noted in conclusion:

Line 4: "dodo's mode"

Line 9: "my little loaf"

Line 11: "Bent-backed Atlas"

Line 13: "Snug as a bud"

Line 15: "A creel of eels"

These short phrases do not share the same phonetic sounds, but are rich in repetitive sound in each separate occurrence. Apart from describing characteristics of the baby in the womb, these lines particularly add to the richness of sound in the poem. Even though there is no strict sound relationship between the verse lines, the manner in which sound is used and the tight sound relationship within each phrase connects it across the lines of the poem and establishes sound equivalence in "You're".

1.5.4 Rhythm and Metre

"You're" has a fairly consistent metrical pattern and not a lot of discernible deviation from it. It is playful and repetitive in rhythm just like a nursery rhyme, which is apt, given the theme of the poem. (Here too, only the stressed, or accented, syllables are indicated, and it should be noted that a syllable, indicated as stressed, does not convey the degree of stress on the syllable.) See lines 10 to 13 as a sample:

/ / / /
 Vague as fog and looked for like mail.

/ /
 Farther off than Australia.

/ / / / /
 Bent-backed Atlas, our travelled prawn.

/ / /
 Snug as a bud and at home

All the verse lines, with the exception of lines 8, 9, 14, 15, and 18, begin with stressed syllables, or in a strong position.

Lines 8 and 9:

 / / / /
Of July to All Fools' Day,
 / / / /
O high-riser, my little loaf.

Lines 14 and 15:

 / / /
Like a sprat in a pickle jug.
 / / /
A creel of eels, all ripples.

Line 18:

 / / / / /
A clean slate, with your own face on.

Instances of foregrounding as a result of the fairly consistent metrical pattern occur, as most of the verse lines start in a stressed or strong syllabic position, emphasising in each instance specific characteristics of "You". This results in a double emphasis of these words because of the previously explained typographic arrangement that also highlights the specific words at the beginning of the majority of the verse lines of the poem.

1.5.5 Irony

The typographic and syntactic aspects of "Clownlike" and "with your own face on" have already been discussed, and as stated, these serve as perfect polar opposites at the beginning and end of "You're", which also succeeds in creating ironic tension in the poem. The ironic tension is between what is seen, and known, and experienced of the infant, and what is unseen, and unknown, and not yet experienced of the infant.

This tension is not, as far as the poem is concerned, resolved. In a straightforward manner, on the one hand, "You" has no face and cannot be known or really seen during the nine months of pregnancy, while on the other hand the speaker makes clear that the presence of "You" is greatly felt in terms of its growth, movement, and the expectation of "You's" arrival.

There is also irony to be found in the expectation of the arrival of an infant who has, in a sense, already arrived, in that it has already been conceived. The infant is not still 'travelling' towards its parents in a literal sense, but is already present. The other side of this tension is that the parents have not 'met' the infant yet and, in that sense, its arrival is not complete, but looked out for with expectation and, as the poem conveys, excitement.

Another ironic aspect of "You're" can be found in line 12: "Bent-backed Atlas, our travelled prawn". This line equates characteristics of Atlas, the Titan god forced to carry the world on his shoulders, to the very young and inexperienced infant. Perhaps the expectation of the parents can be read as a world on the shoulders of the infant. This reference to Atlas may also, of course, very simply be meant to convey the image of the infant doubled-over in the foetal position, like Atlas is doubled-over in carrying the world on his shoulders, as pointed out earlier in the analysis. The use of the word "travelled" also appears ironic in that, yes, it is a lengthy journey from conception to birth for an infant, but in another sense, upon birth the infant will begin his or her journey as a brand new traveller on earth.

1.5.6 Conclusion

Elton (1949: 236-237) in "A Glossary of the New Criticism (Continued)" quotes Brooks and Warren as stating:

The successful management of ironical effects is one of the most difficult problems of a poet... irony, along with understatement (in which there is a discrepancy, great or small, between what is actually said and what might be said), is a device of indirection; that is, the poet does not present his meaning directly, but depends on the reader's capacity to develop implications imaginatively.

Plath manages irony along with understatement very well in "You're". She does not, however, only manage irony well, but all of the poetic devices: from the use of metaphor, through the well-crafted syntactic and typographic structure, to the ironic

tension in the poem, all devices function together very well to strengthen the poetic voice of “You’re”. It helps the reader to develop the implications of the poem imaginatively, and in this lies the joy of reading a well-crafted poem.

1.6 "Lady Lazarus"

Lady Lazarus

I have done it again.
One year in every ten
I manage it----

5 A sort of walking miracle, my skin
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
My right foot

A paperweight,
My face a featureless, fine
Jew linen.

10 Peel off the napkin
O my enemy.
Do I terrify?----

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?
The sour breath
15 Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me

20 And I a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.

- 25 What a million filaments.
 The peanut-crunching crowd
 Shoves in to see
- Them unwrap me hand and foot----
 The big strip tease.
- 30 Gentlemen, ladies
- These are my hands
 My knees.
 I may be skin and bone,
- Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.
- 35 The first time it happened I was ten.
 It was an accident.
- The second time I meant
 To last it out and not come back at all.
 I rocked shut
- 40 As a seashell.
 They had to call and call
 And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.
- Dying
 Is an art, like everything else,
- 45 I do it exceptionally well.
- I do it so it feels like hell.
 I do it so it feels real.
 I guess you could say I've a call.
- It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
- 50 It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
 It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day
To the same place, the same face, the same brute
Amused shout:

55 'A miracle!'
That knocks me out.
There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge
For the hearing of my heart----

60 It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge
For a word or a touch
Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.

65 So, so, Herr Doktor.
So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,
I am your valuable,
The pure gold baby

70 That melts to a shriek.
I turn and burn.
Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash----
You poke and stir.

75 Flesh, bone, there is nothing there----

A cake of soap,
A wedding ring,
A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer
80 Beware
Beware.

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.

1.6.1 Metaphorical Constructions

The title "Lady Lazarus" alerts the reader to the fact that this poem may deal with death and resurrection, as in the case of Lazarus from the biblical account (John 11). This fact does not, strictly speaking, have anything to do with the intratextual examination of the poem, however, it does bear significantly on the interpretation of the poem. It is not a poem that is easy to grasp upon a first reading. "Lady Lazarus" does not provide the reader with a straightforward account of death and resurrection in correspondence to the biblical account; Plath's Lady Lazarus is quite different from the Lazarus of the Bible. A study of the metaphors in the poem highlights several of the complexities in "Lady Lazarus".

The first metaphorical constructions may be found in lines 4 to 9:

A sort of walking miracle,
vehicle tenor

my skin/ Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
tenor ground vehicle

My right foot/ A paperweight,
tenor vehicle

My face a featureless, fine/ Jew linen.
tenor ground vehicle

As can be seen from this breakdown of the metaphorical constructions into local tenors and vehicles, the metaphorical language in lines 4-9 is quite dense. What is striking about these lines is the way in which the speaker objectifies the various parts of her body as they are being mentioned; body parts are likened to a lampshade, a paperweight, and linen. These are fairly impersonal, everyday objects. There is,

however, something in the language, in the way that the metaphors are constructed, that makes the reader uneasily aware that the speaker is not busy only with a simple listing and objectification of her body parts.

Firstly, she mentions that she is “a sort of walking miracle” and her skin is “Bright as a Nazi lampshade”. The use of the word “Nazi” (see pp. 98-102 for a note on the use of Holocaust imagery) before the word “lampshade” creates a disturbing metaphorical construction. Then she states that her right foot is a paperweight. Lastly, she mentions that her face is “a featureless, fine/ Jew linen”; it carries no expression as it would in death. The linen also recalls the image of grave clothes wrapped around a corpse as in the case of the biblical account of Lazarus’s death and resurrection.

These metaphorical constructions convey an eerie sense that Lady Lazarus is both alive and dead – “a walking miracle” in the sense that she appears to almost be undead. What is meant by this is that the parts of her body, present as everyday objects, such as a lampshade, and a paperweight, and linen, ensure her continued presence among the living, even in death. In another sense “walking miracle” may refer to her being brought back to life every time, which is the tricky part of Lady Lazarus’s act. As she states in line 50: “It’s easy enough to do it and stay put.”

Line 21 of the poem reads: “And like the cat I have nine times to die”. Put another way, the line may read: I have nine times to die like a cat. The use of metaphor here is perhaps not very original but it conveys the ability of the speaker to die and to come back to life over and over again. As the next line states: “This is Number Three”.

The metaphorical constructions in lines 37 to 45 are again more complex.

The second time I meant
To last it out and not come back at all.
I rocked shut
tenor

As a seashell.
vehicle
They had to call and call
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.
tenor ground vehicle

Dying

tenor

Is an art, like everything else,

vehicle

I do it exceptionally well.

Lines 39 to 42 cause the reader to think of ocean images and also communicate that, unlike the first attempt, which is referred to as an accident, the second attempt at death/dying is described as more determined than the first. There is an active participation in the second attempt, on the part of the speaker. This description of the second death alerts the reader to the fact that the word "miracle" in line 4 might need to be treated with some reservation. The 'miracle' that Lady Lazarus is experiencing is of a different nature altogether, when compared to the miracle of Lazarus's resurrection, recounted in the Bible. For one thing, two of Lady Lazarus's deaths are committed by her own hand, while the biblical Lazarus died after an illness. For another, Lady Lazarus dies and is resurrected at least three times.

In lines 43 and 44, the speaker states that "Dying/ is an art". Special attention should be paid to this metaphor. It is particularly noteworthy as it ties in with other verse lines that make references to art, works of art, and underscores the act of dying as a form of art. Please see the following:

- ✧ "This is Number Three" – line 22: This line, with the capitalisation of the words, can be read as a caption to a specific work of art.
- ✧ "The peanut-crunching crowd/ Shoves in to see" – lines 26 to 27 bring the image of an audience to mind. Granted, it is perhaps not a sophisticated audience, but certainly an audience attending some kind of a show or display of an artistic creation.
- ✧ "The big strip tease" – line 29, other than being highly ironic in the context of the poem, underscores the show-like quality of the poem, or performance of death and resurrection. It also underscores the tendency to the burlesque in the poem. Watching someone undress from their grave clothes can hardly be considered an appealing striptease. The image conveyed feels out of place and irreverent, and it also cheapens the 'miracle', again highlighting the different nature of Lady Lazarus's miracle.

- ✧ “It’s the theatrical/ Comeback in broad day” – lines 51 to 52 make reference to the theatre and the putting on of a show, which can be classified as another form of art.
- ✧ “I am your opus” – line 67: An opus refers to any creative piece of work in the sphere of art and can also refer more specifically to a musical work of art.

There is the notion, throughout the poem, that with practice, Lady Lazarus is improving her skill; morbid as it may sound, after several attempts at dying, the ‘artist’ is getting better at her performance, better at dying and coming back to life – or perhaps more accurately, being brought back to life. There is a sense in the poem that Lady Lazarus might be an object or piece of art.

This brings me to the metaphorical constructions in lines 67 to 70:

I am your opus,
tenor vehicle

I am your valuable,
tenor vehicle
The pure gold baby
 vehicle

That melts to a shriek.

The abovementioned metaphorical constructions point to Lady Lazarus being the show or the work of art. Lady Lazarus seems to be either the work of art (lines 67 to 69) or the artist (lines 43 to 45), or even both. Continuing with the thought of Lady Lazarus as the work of art, there is, in the poem, participation from other parties in bringing her back to life and in unwrapping her from her grave clothes, and therefore, the reference to “Herr Doktor”, for example. The creation of a piece of art is dependent on a creator or artist. Like Lazarus, Lady Lazarus is dependent on someone else for the actual coming back to life, just as Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Lady Lazarus, it appears, is much more reluctant as a participant in the ‘miracles’ of her resurrection. This is perhaps best reflected in the last line of the poem:

And I eat men like air.

There is a sense of impending revenge in this last line. Lady Lazarus, rising from the ash after her third death, eats men like air. It brings to mind an image of flames that 'eat' oxygen (air) to keep burning, to keep alive. Lady Lazarus, in the same manner as a flame consumes oxygen to keep burning, consumes men like air in her resurrection – there is a price to be paid for bringing her back to life, or for her coming back to life. The viewing of any work of art has a price tag attached – the show is not for free. Again, this is in stark contrast to the biblical account of the miracle. As the form and target of her revenge is rather vague, however, how effective Lady Lazarus's revenge is, is an entirely different matter.

In conclusion, I would assert that there are two possible global tenors and vehicles in "Lady Lazarus":

One: Lady Lazarus is an artwork.

Two: Dying/ suicide, and the resurrection that follows, is a form of art.

Lady Lazarus dies and is 'resurrected' as Jesus resurrected Lazarus from the dead, thus there is an aspect of Lady Lazarus's resurrections that does not happen of her own volition. Perhaps that is why there is a price to be paid for the fact that she is brought back to life. One has the sense that for Lady Lazarus, being brought back to life is not exactly a joyous occasion. "It's the theatrical/ Comeback in broad day/ To the same place, the same face, the same brute/ Amused shout:/ 'A miracle!'/ That knocks me out" (Lines 51 to 56).

1.6.2 Syntactic and Typographic Organisation

The title of this poem, "Lady Lazarus", immediately affords the reader with important insight into the focus of the poem. As already mentioned, the name Lazarus brings to mind the biblical account of Lazarus's resurrection by Jesus. Lazarus, of course, was a Jew. Lady Lazarus, also apparently Jewish, is significantly different from the Lazarus of the Bible (for one thing, Lady Lazarus is a woman). Certain lines in the poem nevertheless remind the reader of the account of Lazarus's death and resurrection:

Lines 8 to 9: "fine/ Jew linen" – May be read in reference to Lazarus's ethnicity.

Line 17: "the grave cave ate" – Lazarus was buried in a cave with a stone rolled over the entrance (John 11:38).

Line 28: "Them unwrap me hand and foot" – After Lazarus's resurrection, Jesus commanded that his grave clothes be removed from him (John 11:44).

Line 55: "A miracle!" – The resurrection of Lazarus is considered to be one of the many miracles that Jesus performed during his ministry.

These verse lines afford the reader with an initial insight into the communication of the poem and are referred to again in the discussion around the use of irony in "Lady Lazarus" towards the end of this analysis.

"Lady Lazarus" consists of 84 lines in total. The 28 stanzas are arranged in three lines each, and significantly so, as the poem makes reference to three 'deaths and resurrections' and thus each stanza, of three lines each, reminds the reader throughout the poem about the three deaths and resurrections of the speaker.

The lines arranged across the stanzas are very short, with certain exceptions, such as lines 13, 21, 34, 42, 53, 58, 61, and 72. Punctuation is faithfully applied throughout the text, even obsessively so, for example:

Line 3: "I manage it----"

Line 12: "Do I terrify?----"

Line 28: "Them unwrap me hand and foot----"

Line 59: "For the hearing of my heart----"

Line 73: "Ash, ash----"

Line 75: "Flesh, bone, there is nothing there----"

A dash may indicate letters or words that were omitted or can be used instead of commas, colons or brackets. In this poem it may have been used to signify overdramatic pauses in the poem; it may be meant to heighten the showmanship of the performance. The dashes may also be meant to create or heighten the tension or expectation in the poem.

Looking at the typographic structure of the poem, "Lady Lazarus" starts with a description of a resurrection – her third, as line 22 explains. Lines 1 to 34 are then dedicated to a description of this resurrection, to her coming back to life, as in line 10, "Peel off the napkin", which refers to the removing of her grave clothes. Lines 16 to 18 reveal her gradual coming back to life with: "Soon, soon the flesh/ The grave cave ate will be/ At home on me".

Lady Lazarus's first death and resurrection, as it were, is mentioned almost in passing in lines 35 to 36 simply as "The first time it happened I was ten./ It was an accident". The

line "It was an accident" is a rather ambiguous one. Should the reader infer that the dying was an accident or that the being brought back to life was an accident? Whichever option is correct, in the context of the whole poem, the narrator does not seem to view this first event to be as significant as the other two because only two verse lines are dedicated to describing it.

To the description of the second death and resurrection, more verse lines are dedicated. Lines 37 to 42 refer to the second event, and looking at lines 37 and 38, "The second time I meant/ To last it out and not come back at all", it is clear that the second 'act' was not an accident but a well-deliberated 'performance' or attempt at dying. There is more intentionality present with each successive performance.

Lines 43 to 64 make general observations regarding the performances (which the discussion of the metaphorical constructions in the poem, under section 1.6.1, already highlights) while the reader may observe a change in focus in lines 65 to 80 again. Lines 41 and 42 already indicate that others may be involved in the execution of the performances, or in bringing Lady Lazarus back to life, as it refers to the "they" who had to "call and call" and "pick the worms like ... sticky pearls". In the last 7 stanzas of the poem, these others come more clearly into focus, along with their involvement in the acts of the narrator and their complicity in bringing her back to life. She addresses "Herr Doktor" and "Herr Enemy" in lines 65 and 66, as well as "Herr God" and "Herr Lucifer" in line 79 of the poem. It is also during these last few stanzas that the notion of exacting revenge is highlighted and that the object/s of the narrator's revenge takes/take a vague shape.

In a discussion of the syntax and typography of "Lady Lazarus", one should also highlight the many instances of repetition in the text, which creates parallelism. In some instances certain words are repeated twice, in other instances whole phrases are repeated twice, duplicating syntactic structures throughout the poem:

Line 16: "Soon, soon the flesh"

Lines 23 and 25: "What a trash"/ "What a million filaments."

Line 41: "They had to call and call"

Lines 49 to 50: "It's easy enough to do it in a cell./ It's easy enough to do it and stay put."

Lines 67 to 68: "I am your opus,/ I am your valuable,"

Lines 80 to 81: "Beware/ Beware."

Apart from the rhythmical value of these repeated words and phrases, they also serve to emphasise certain thoughts in the poem, creating a unity of expression across the various verse lines. When an author writes something twice in a text, he/she wants the reader to pay closer attention to what is being written. Thus, via repetition, insistence upon certain thoughts is created in the abovementioned lines of verse. The repetition of "Beware" in lines 80 to 81 also underscores the warning issued by the speaker, making it sterner in nature. In line 41, on the other hand, the repetition serves to underscore the length of time it took for Lady Lazarus to be brought back to life. It conveys, too, the effort, in a sense, on her part, in coming back to life.

There are also a number of instances where a word or phrase is repeated three times:

Lines 45 to 47: "I do it exceptionally well./ I do it so it feels like hell./ I do it so it feels real."

Line 53: "To the same place, the same face, the same brute"

Lines 57 to 59, and 61: "There is a charge/ For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge/ For the hearing of my heart----" / "And there is a charge, a very large charge"

Lines 65 to 66: "So, so Herr Doktor./ So Herr Enemy."

Line 73 and 82: "Ash, ash----" / "Out of the ash"

Again, apart from adding to the rhythmical value of the poem, the repetitions underscore certain thoughts in the poem. As these repetitions occur three times in each instance, there is an obvious correspondence between the repetitions and the speaker's three attempts at death and subsequent resurrections. Verse lines 45 to 47, and 53 serve as a case in point: the speaker has "done it" three times and returned all three times to "the same place, the same face, the same brute". No matter how many times she dies and is raised again, things do not change – only the 'performance' or 'act' gets better. Line 34 states: "I am the same, identical woman", however, the charge for viewing the 'miracle' increases with each recurrence, as lines 57 to 59, and 61 communicate.

The repetitions in "Lady Lazarus" may also further point to an expression of monotony. Lady Lazarus is caught up in the pattern of death and resurrection and there does not seem to be any escape from it. The same event is repeated over and over again, and the repetitive words and phrases reinforce its inescapability.

1.6.3 Sound

The repetition of sound in a poetic text generally serves as a foregrounding device. Though sound in itself does not convey meaning, sound is distinctive to the genre of poetry and it helps in the establishment of the 'melody' of the poem. Via the creation of sound patterns, the reader may be aided in recognising the core communication of a poem. Alternatively, the use of patterns of sound may reinforce or strengthen the communication of a poem.

Looking at the alliteration of the "f"-sound throughout "Lady Lazarus": lines 6 and 28: "foot"; line 8: "My face a featureless, fine"; line 13: "full set of teeth"; line 16 and 75: "flesh"; line 25: "filaments"; line 35: "first"; line 53: "face"; line 78: "filling", a relationship of similarity is established, via sound repetition, between these various objects, or rather, the parts of Lady Lazarus's body.

In lines 39 to 40, "I rocked shut/ As a seashell", the diffuse repetition of the "sh"-sound strengthens the metaphor and establishes a closer relationship between "shut" and "seashell" via sound.

By means of rhyme, the personification of the "grave" that ate Lady Lazarus's flesh is reinforced in line 17: "The grave cave ate will be".

In line 53: "To the same place, the same face, the same brute", rhyme again reinforces the repetition that Lady Lazarus experiences every time that she is brought back to life – nothing changes for her.

"Lady Lazarus" does not have a regular end rhyme pattern but instances of end rhyme do occur as seen in the following lines:

Lines 17 to 18: "The grave cave ate will be/ At home on me"

Lines 38, 41, and 48: "To last it out and not come back at all."/ "They had to call and call"/ "I guess you could say I've a call". The end rhyme of "all" and "call" establishes a vertical relationship across these verse lines, on top of the horizontal repetition of "call" in line 41. The speaker states that she did not want to "come back at all" from her second death – the end rhyme in line 41 then highlights this fact by the repetition and end rhyme of "call". Line 38 is rather ironic in light of line 48, and the irony is highlighted by the end rhyme of "call". Others are insistent on calling Lady Lazarus back

to life and, ironically, though she wanted to “last it out and not come back at all”, she also seems to feel that she has a call on her life to end her life and be brought back to life again.

Lines 45, 46, and 49: “I do it exceptionally well./ I do it so it feels like hell.”/ “It’s easy enough to do it in a cell”. The end rhyme pattern here is simple in terms of sound use, and has a lovely melodic sound, however, what the speaker is saying is everything but simple or lovely in subject matter. The light treatment of these lines adds to the shock that the reader experiences in reading it. It also further highlights the burlesque quality of the poem and the very macabre third performance.

The last two lines of “Lady Lazarus” are two of the most crushing verse lines of the poem, but it also conveys something triumphant: “I rise with my red hair/ And I eat men like air” (Lines 83 to 84). It carries within it a warning, reinforcing the “Beware” of lines 80 and 81, as well as a sense of impending punishment. Lady Lazarus wants revenge as she is brought back to life for a third time. She has warned of the charge to see the show, and the final lines of the poem bear out that she will exact it. If she cannot be left to “stay put” she will make the most of being forced to come back to life by taking her revenge, and in the context of the poem, generally on men and more specifically on “Herr Doktor”, “Herr Enemy”, “Herr God” and “Herr Lucifer”. Not that the exaction of revenge is likely to bring Lady Lazarus any closure, because the pattern of resurrection and death seems inescapable – Lady Lazarus can perhaps only make the most of the cycle she is caught up in by exacting revenge.

1.6.4 Rhythm and Metre

“Lady Lazarus” has a regular rhythm. As John Frederick Nims (1985: 56) states in “The poetry of Sylvia Plath – A technical analysis” taken from *Ariel Ascending: Writings about Sylvia Plath*:

Far from making metre new, *Ariel* even marks what metrists might consider a severe regression. Apart from the syllabic “You’re”, everything can be accounted for by the most basic of English rhythms. Frost says that we have ‘virtually but two rhythms,’ strict iambic and loose iambic. These, and little else, we find in *Ariel*, often both in the same poem.

What follows is a sampling, then, of the metrical pattern in “Lady Lazarus”, which one could describe as “loose iambic”:

Lines 1 to 6:

/ / / /
I have done it again.
/ / /
One year in every ten
/ /
I manage it----

/ / / /
A sort of walking miracle, my skin
/ / / /
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
/ /
My right foot

And lines 43 to 48:

/
Dying
/ / /
Is an art, like everything else,
/ / /
45 I do it exceptionally well.

/ / /
I do it so it feels like hell.
/ / /
I do it so it feels real.
/ / /
I guess you could say I've a call.

Apart from certain verse lines that are much longer than the average verse lines in "Lady Lazarus", there are no noteworthy deviations from the established metrical pattern in the poem. This regular metrical pattern serves to highlight the cyclical and perhaps monotonous nature of events in "Lady Lazarus", and the statement in line 2: "One year in every ten". The pattern is set, and escape from it seems difficult, if at all possible.

1.6.5 Irony

The tone of "Lady Lazarus" is hard to determine. Is it supposed to be humorous, or serious, or ironic, or irreverent? Is the lady sad, frustrated, or angry, or is she ultimately only interested in exacting revenge? In terms of its ironic tone, the greatest irony of the poem seems, to me, to be that Lady Lazarus wants to die and be left alone, but what she desires is not within her reach; after every death she is once more resurrected to face the same life and circumstances as before. It is as if with every death and resurrection, her anger and need for revenge grow. The first time is an accident, the second attempt more determined, but foiled, and the third coming back to life carries revenge and punishment with it. The resolution that Lady Lazarus finds, or what Plath termed her "resourcefulness", lies in being able to take revenge for being brought back to life. She performs the act of dying but others bring her back to life, and in being continually thwarted, her anger and desire for revenge become the means by which she is able to get even. It is perhaps also the means by which she feels less helpless or simply caught up in a monotonous cycle she cannot escape.

Lady Lazarus feels put on display every time she dies and comes back to life (or is she putting herself on display and enjoying the attention very much?). She does not like it, but if it must be, she will ensure that her money's worth is gotten out of the unwanted attention provided.

Another very ironic aspect of the poem is that Lady Lazarus's resurrections cannot, strictly speaking, be called miracles. Also, apart from not being able to really classify her 'resurrections' as miracles, the irony is increased by the fact that for the speaker, being brought back to life is in some sense a confirmation of failure, of having to face again those things from which she was trying to escape in the first place. The fact that she cannot even escape her reality via death or suicide strengthens the inescapable, macabre cycle of death and resurrection in the poem, and it is anything but miraculous.

1.6.6 A Note on the Use of Holocaust Imagery in "Lady Lazarus"

Grappling with Plath's use of Holocaust imagery in "Lady Lazarus" is rather difficult to do via a strict close reading exercise. Part of the premise of this thesis is that close reading is a necessary and worthy exercise when exploring poetry, but that, at times, the reader is forced to broaden the horizon from which interpretation is drawn, even during a close reading exercise, in order to get at the heart of a poem. This is particularly so in the case of a poem such as "Lady Lazarus".

Plath's incorporation of the historical fact of the Holocaust into her accounting of death and rebirth in "Lady Lazarus" is rather curious and disconcerting, though Lady Lazarus's ethnicity as Jewess possibly suggested its use. Some of the specific lines of poetry that make use of Holocaust imagery in the poem are as follows:

- ✧ Line 5: "Bright as a Nazi lampshade" – "Nazi" refers to someone who followed the doctrines and leadership of Adolf Hitler who was set on providing a 'final solution' to the Jewish problem in Europe. More ominously, the line may be read in reference to the rumoured practice of Nazis making lampshades out of the skin of their victims, however, it does appear as though this is an unsubstantiated historical fact (see "Books Bound in Human Skin; Lampshade Myth?" in *The Harvard Law Record* by Dan Alban (2005)).
- ✧ Lines 8 and 9: "My face a featureless, fine/ Jew linen" – In contrast to the "Nazi" reference, if the reader was in any doubt, Lady Lazarus's ethnicity is underscored with the reference to "fine/ Jew linen".
- ✧ Line 49: "It's easy to do it in a cell" – This brings to mind the capture of Jewish people during World War II, and their being held in concentration camps and death camps throughout Europe.
- ✧ Lines 65 and 66: "So, so Herr Doktor./ So Herr Enemy" – The German form of address is used here, along with the German spelling of 'doctor'.
- ✧ Line 71: "I turn and burn" – This brings to mind the extermination of Jewish and other 'undesirable' peoples in Europe, in the death camps.
- ✧ Lines 73 to 75: "Ash, ash ---/ You poke and stir./ Flesh, bone, there is nothing there----" – This is the same as above.
- ✧ Lines 76 to 78: "A cake of soap,/ A wedding ring,/ A gold filling" – These lines remind the reader of the degradation that those who were exterminated experienced beforehand and afterwards.
- ✧ Line 79: "Herr God, Herr Lucifer" – Again, the German form of address is used here.

Via the use of Holocaust imagery, Plath may have sought to identify with the European Jews, similarly being victimised and marginalised (Flanzbaum, 1998: 265) in her context as a woman, or a poet, or a citizen. Also, apart from dealing with the issue of suicide, the jarring effect of this poem is heightened through the use of Holocaust imagery.

Critics respond very differently to Plath's use of Holocaust imagery. Gill (2008: 61), for example, provides a sampling of the varied attitudes towards Plath's use of Holocaust imagery:

Other readers, most notably Irving Howe, have objected to this identification, describing the allusions in "Lady Lazarus" and "Daddy" as 'illegitimate'. As he goes on to say, 'there is something monstrous, utterly disproportionate, when tangled emotions about one's father are deliberately compared with the historical fate of the European Jews; something sad, if the comparison is made spontaneously'. ... James E. Young defends Plath's position and indicates that she was not alone in her use of Holocaust imagery. The subtle difference, as he puts it, is that where others wrote about the Holocaust explicitly from the outside, she internalises and reproduces motifs, images and memories which were part of the collective consciousness or cultural memory of her time: 'In Plath's case, her metaphors are built upon the absorption of public experience by language itself, experience that is then internalized and made private by the poet, used to order her private world, and then reexternalized [sic] in public verse.

From my observations of Plath's writings, it is hard to believe that she would not have been quite deliberate about her use of Holocaust imagery. As a poet, she seems to have been very aware of the materials at her disposal for weaving into verse, and how the specific parts made up the whole – how they contributed to the poem as a whole.

Al Strangeways, in the article "The Boot in the Face": The Problem of the Holocaust in the Poetry of Sylvia Plath", provides rather more in his article than what the scope of this thesis calls to address as it relates to the use of Holocaust imagery in Plath's poetry. Nevertheless, his observations (1996: 371) are insightful: "The problem of Plath's utilization of the Holocaust can be broadly divided into two parts: the motives behind her use of such material, and the actual appearance of it in her poetry."

He answers the first part of the problem by acknowledging Plath's political interests (1996: 375) and by looking at the exposure that Plath would have had to the facts and evidence of the Holocaust both in high school and in college (1996: 371). Strangeways

(1996: 375) goes on to say that "Plath's personalized treatment of the Holocaust stems, then, from a combination of two motives: her very 'real' sense of connection (for whatever reason) with the events, and her desire to combine the public and the personal in order to shock and cut through the distancing 'doubletalk' she saw in contemporary, conformist, cold war America."

As far as the "actual appearance" or second part of the problem of Holocaust imagery in Plath's poetry goes, Strangeways (1996: 385) states, "Such poems are culturally valuable because the appearance of the Holocaust in them is like a 'boot in the face' – certainly, few readers leave them feeling 'complacent instead of concerned or disturbed.'" He states this after explaining in the article (1996: 384) how, in certain artistic depictions, the extreme horror of the Holocaust is relegated to a place of myth in order to make sense of it or deal with it, because it is too horrible to be real or true. Though Plath understood myth and frequently employed it in her poetry, she did not employ Holocaust imagery in her poetry as myth. Her use of Holocaust imagery is 'in the face' of the reader and, while personalised, it does not diminish the horror or reality of the Holocaust. This interpretation seems accurate to me, as Plath's use of Holocaust imagery is infinitely disturbing and not something the reader can just pass over without taking notice of it.

As Strangeways (1996: 387-388) concludes:

These two readings reflect Plath's own foregrounding of her culturally situated conflict about the uses of poetry, between the mythic desire that poetry transcend history and the 'committed' purpose that it name history and thus remember it. An understanding of the 'boot in the face' effect of Plath's treatment of the Holocaust, then, enables the recognition that the dissonances between history and myth in her poetry are not an aesthetic problem but work to prohibit complaisance about the definitions of – and the relationship between – myth, history, and poetry in the post-Holocaust world.

1.6.7 Conclusion

As observed at the beginning of this analysis, Plath's "Lady Lazarus" is a well written but exceptionally complex poem. Perhaps this complexity arises from its subject matter and the almost irreverent treatment of death and suicide. It could also arise from the incorporation of Holocaust imagery, or exist because the reader is not sure how personal this poem ultimately is. How far removed is the author from the narrator? With the

abovementioned exploration of poetic devices via a close reading strategy, I hope that I have highlighted and shed some light on some aspects of the complexity of "Lady Lazarus".

As Gill (2008: 60-61) states in also highlighting the complexity of the poem, "'Lady Lazarus' is not only, if at all, a personal complaint, or a suicide note *avant la lettre*. It also encodes broader commentaries on creativity and subjectivity in a social and political context. 'Lady Lazarus' like 'Daddy'... reflects on the lesions for modern civilisation of the Nazi Holocaust and other traumatic events."

1.7 "Balloons"

Balloons

Since Christmas they have lived with us,
Guileless and clear,
Oval soul-animals,
Taking up half the space,
5 Moving and rubbing on the silk

Invisible air drifts,
Giving a shriek and pop
When attacked, then scooting to rest, barely trembling.
Yellow cathead, blue fish–
10 Such queer moons we live with

Instead of dead furniture!
Straw mats, white walls
And these travelling
Globes of thin air, red, green,
15 Delighting

The heart like wishes or free
Peacocks blessing
Old ground with a feather
Beaten in starry metals.
20 Your small

Brother is making
His balloon squeak like a cat.
Seeming to see
A funny pink world he might eat on the other side of it,
25 He bites,

Then sits
Back, fat jug
Contemplating a world clear as water,

A red
30 Shred in his little fist.

1.7.1 Metaphorical Constructions

The use of metaphor is again plentiful in this poem of Plath's and it carefully and cleverly conveys images of the, at times, strange balloons as well as the fascination of the little boy with the balloons, as observed through the eyes of the speaker, a mother, in the poem. I begin by looking at the local metaphors of the poem.

The local metaphorical expressions relating to the balloons describe these as follows:

Balloons are: Guileless and clear,/ Oval soul-animals

tenor

vehicle

Invisible air drifts

vehicle

queer moons

vehicle

travelling/ Globes of thin air

vehicle

These metaphorical expressions accomplish a few things. Words like the adjective "Oval" (line 3) as well as the nouns "moons" (line 19) and "Globes" (line 14) convey the shapes of the balloons while other words in the metaphorical expressions convey something of their nature. For example, the inanimate balloons are likened to animate animals, giving them a lifelike quality and a mobility of their own volition. These balloons, however, are rather weird and wonderful animals, and the use of descriptive words such as "Oval soul-animals" (line 3) and "Yellow cathead, blue fish" (line 9) alert the reader to this otherness they possess.

The comparison of the balloons to "travelling/ Globes" (lines 13 and 14) and "queer moons" also makes the reader aware of the movement of the balloons. The type of movement described here is different, though, from the idea of animal movement. To the human eye the moon moves rather slowly and one is scarcely aware of the movement of the earth except in regard to its orbit around the sun. In the same way, the movements of the balloons are at times barely perceptible, orderly, and even stately, but this is not their constant state and the comparison of the balloons to animals brings this other part of their nature to the fore.

Furthermore, the use of the word "queer" (line 10), which has synonyms such as: surprising, funny, perplexing, curious, and remarkable, highlights the fact for the reader that these balloons do not exactly contain the essence of moons. They may have the shape of moons and they may even hang in the air like moons do, but they are much more perplexing in nature, especially to the little boy, who might well still be an infant and who is referred to in the poem simply as 'Your small/ Brother' (lines 20-21).

Other adjectives in the metaphorical expressions, such as "clear" (line 2), "Invisible" (line 6), and "thin" (line 14), reveal and describe the image and characteristics of what is presumably gas inside the balloons, keeping them adrift. There is also the use of the adjective "Guileless" (line 2), which carries with it the meaning of being naïve and trusting. One might well ask how a balloon can be naïve and trusting but, conceivably, the word is used to allude to the fact that balloons are naïve about the human beings that handle them and who can, in the process of handling the balloons, pop them quite easily. This quality of guilelessness is not one which a person would normally associate with a lifeless object, but it highlights the sense that the balloons are animate and in possession of their own souls. It also, as early as in line 7 of the poem, quite effectively highlights the stark contrast between the innocent, defenceless balloon animals and the 'hostile' world in which they find themselves, and this is affirmed when one of the balloons is eventually popped.

The delight that the balloons inspire in their audience is likened to wishes, and to finding the feather of a peacock shed on "Old ground". The metaphor here is particularly rich and deserves further investigation. Lines 15 to 19 are reproduced below in order to look at the metaphor more closely:

Delighting/ The heart like wishes or free

Peacocks blessing/ Old ground with a feather/ Beaten in starry metals.

tenor ground vehicle

As previously stated, the delight that the balloons bring is compared to the delight of making a wish, and to the unexpected discovery of a peacock feather. In the lines quoted above, one should note the use of the word "Old" (line 18) in reference to the ground. "Old ground" can be read as having one of two meanings in the context of the poem. First, it may literally refer to the ground as being old, or second, it may refer figuratively to ground that has been gone over so many times that it has become old and familiar – the discovery of a peacock feather, in this context, is thus an unexpected delight. This image may then also be linked to the image of an old or familiar room, the

space referred to in the first stanza, which is suddenly enlivened by the presence of the balloons in it, just like a well-trodden path or old ground can suddenly become exciting with the discovery of something new and unexpected on it.

The abovementioned metaphorical expression is further strengthened as the uniqueness and preciousness of the free peacock feather is highlighted by stating that it is beaten out of "starry metals". The image of the peacock feather being made out of "starry metals" gives it a feature of otherworldliness in the same way that the balloons are compared to "queer moons", and are made to seem otherworldly. Indeed, line 9's and 16's references to the balloons' colours of yellow, blue, red and green also correspond with a couple of the colours generally associated with peacock feathers. The complete metaphor thus underlines the wonder that the balloons excite in the little boy and the treasure that it is to him, as well as the very lively difference the balloons are making in the otherwise drab apartment: "Instead of dead furniture!/ Straw mats, white walls" (lines 11 and 12). It also succeeds in creating quite a contrast between the balloons and the drab apartment space.

The last metaphorical expression of the poem that is up for discussion is conveyed by the final two lines: "A red/ Shred in his little fist". These two lines reveal the consequence of the little boy biting into one of the balloons and popping it as he does so. All the animal-like, otherworldly imagery and the imagery conveying lively movement thus far associated with the balloons in Plath's poem is suddenly replaced by the image of a fist with a static "red shred" in it.

This last image explodes in the imagination of the reader at the end of the poem just as suddenly as a balloon may pop, and the surprise of the little boy is shown in line 28: "Contemplating a world clear as water" or, in other words, a world that is not clear at all because it has been blurred by surprise. The burst balloon in the little boy's fist also alerts the reader to the fact that there is something more below the surface of this seemingly playful poem.

Plath manages to create a palpable tension and anticipation for the balloon popping with lines such as: "Giving a shriek and pop" and "Your small/ Brother is making/ His balloon squeak like a cat". The reader will most likely be familiar with the sound that balloons make when squeezed, and it recalls to mind the instances when one anticipates the imminent bursting of a balloon, but one still gets a fright when it finally does burst into nothingness in one's, or somebody else's, hand.

The reader could interpret the “red shred” in the hand of the boy as a literal image of the popped balloon covering his fist. It would also be plausible, I think, for the reader to interpret the red shred in the fist of the little boy as a metaphor of, or conveying an image of having blood on his hands; popping the red balloon is significant in the context of the poem. This is a rather menacing image in an otherwise fairly light-hearted poem. Since the speaker, however, presented the balloons as funny and weird animals with their own souls, the popping of one of the balloons can then be equated with a slaying of some kind, by someone who is perhaps too small to understand the significance of what he has done. The little boy is surprised by the sudden loss of the balloon and may not even understand how his actions caused the loss. Alternatively, the image may also be meant to convey more forcefully the real loss that the little boy feels after the balloon is popped.

The final metaphor of “Balloons”, apart from illustrating the surprise of the little boy, may be read as highlighting a less friendly and menacing aspect of the world. There is a light-heartedness throughout most of the poem, yes, but it ends on a sobering note, with the life having gone out of the balloon and the poem. The little boy has ‘blood’ on his hands and his innocence has been compromised because of the popped balloon.

1.7.2 Syntactic and Typographic Organisation

The heading of the poem reveals that it is a poem about balloons. Without the heading it might take the reader a while longer to figure out what exactly the poem is about – something that is true for a number of Plath’s poems.

“Balloons” consists of 30 lines typographically arranged across six stanzas of five lines each. Following Plath’s punctuation, the syntactic units of the poem ending in a full stop are as follows:

Since Christmas they have lived with us,/ Guileless and clear,/ Oval soul-animals,
Taking up half the space,/ Moving and rubbing on the silk// Invisible air drifts,/ Giving a
shriek and pop/ When attacked, then scooting to rest, barely trembling./

Yellow cathead, blue fish –/ Such queer moons we live with// Instead of dead furniture!/
Straw mats, white walls/ And these travelling/ Globes of thin air, red,
green,/ Delighting// The heart like wishes or free/ Peacocks blessing/ Old ground with a
feather/ Beaten in starry metals./

Your small// Brother is making/ His balloon squeak like a cat./

Seeming to see/ A funny pink world he might eat on the other side of it,/ He bites,//
Then sits/ Back, fat jug/ Contemplating a world clear as water,/ A red/ Shred in his little
fist.

It is possible that syntax does not play as significant a role in "Balloons" as the typographic arrangement of the poem does. The typographic arrangement of the sentences into six stanzas of five lines each accomplishes, for instance, the highlighting of words such as "Delighting" (line 15), which stands completely on its own and is placed at the end of stanza three. "He bites" (line 25) is also typographically foregrounded at the end of stanza five, and adds to the tension of expecting the balloon to burst at any moment and wondering what the reaction of the little boy may be.

The tension of expecting the balloon to burst after the little boy bites into it is further highlighted typographically by the comma that appears after "bites". Though Plath made use of punctuation marks throughout the poem, none of the three preceding stanzas ends with a punctuation mark. Each stanza flows freely from one into the other, except for stanza four, which ends with a comma. This pause at the end of the stanza heightens the tension as the reader anticipates the bursting of the balloon and the little boy's reaction.

Added to this, the typographic arrangement of "Your small" (line 20), "Then sits" (line 26), and "A red" (line 29) into shorter verse lines, ending the verse line without completing the unit of thought, creates longer, awkward pauses in the poem. This, of course, enhances the tension of waiting for the balloon to pop, but it also helps to illustrate the dawning realisation of the boy that the balloon has burst and is gone. His surprise is more pronounced, and believably conveyed, as a result of the typographic ordering.

In "Balloons", there is an instance of extra patterning (structural patterning that emphasises semantic correspondence (Gräbe, 2002: 56)) via the coupling of the following words across the stanzas of the poem: "lived" (line 1), "soul" (line 3), "moving" (line 5), "shriek" (line 7), "scooting" and "trembling" (line 8), "travelling" (line 13), and finally "squeak" (line 22). Such words are normally used in reference to sentient beings, but in the poem they are used to describe the balloons.

All of the abovementioned words convey a sense of the constant motion and lifelikeness of the balloons. It is reinforced throughout most of the poem as these words are spread across the lines and stanzas of the poem. The static "red shred" in the boy's fist stands in stark contrast, then, at the end of the poem to all the lifelike, sentient qualities of the balloons and, as a result, the final metaphor in the poem of the 'blood' on the boy's hand, is also typographically strengthened.

1.7.3 Sound

There is no set end rhyme pattern in "Balloons", but it does contain instances of sound imitation, assonance, and alliteration. I continue by looking at how these are employed in the poem, and the relationships that are established through the use of sound.

Line 7: "Giving a shriek and pop"

Lines 21 to 22: "making/ His balloon squeak like a cat"

These lines draw attention to the sounds that the balloons make by means of onomatopoeia or sound imitation. A link is also established between the abovementioned lines because of the similarity in the sound of the two words "shriek" and "squeak".

There are a number of words in the poem that are phonically interconnected via the alliteration of the "s"-sound and these are; "Since", "soul-animals", "space", "silk", "scooting", "Such", "Straw", "starry", "small", "squeak", "Seeming", "see", "side", and "sits". And then also the "sh"-sound in "shriek" and "Shred". These words create a sound pattern in the poem by means of correspondence, and also establish closer relationships between the words via sound.

The words "scooting", "moons", and "balloon" are connected by means of assonance, and the metaphor which refers to the balloons of the poem as "Such queer moons" (line 10) is further strengthened through the use of sound.

Under the heading of sound, I take another look at the last two lines of the poem "A red/ Shred in his little fist". The words "red" and "Shred" are linked with one another through sound because they rhyme, and thus they also underline the image of the popped balloon in the hand of the little boy. The image of the popped balloon is reinforced by the lines stating that the red shred is still in the boy's fist, and this also

underscores the surprise and inability of the little boy to separate himself from what has happened with the lifelike balloon that he was holding in his hand only a second ago. Finally, it also strengthens the metaphor explored under section 1.7.1.

In terms of the more menacing aspect of the poem, this close association via sound between “red” and “shred” further highlights or strengthens that the boy has blood on his hands. The act of popping the balloon, as the little boy bites into it, has compromised his innocence. Just as most balloons eventually pop, innocence is eventually lost or compromised, and the little boy cannot separate himself from what he has done, however unwittingly.

1.7.4 Rhythm and Metre

It is the sound, and the rhythm and metre of a poem together which makes it somehow fall differently on the ear when compared to prose and, of course, a poem does not need to rhyme in order for it to have rhythm or for it to be called a poem. As is often the case in poetry, it is the deviation from a set pattern, the unexpected turn, which causes the reader to pay attention to what is being said or highlighted by the poet, as Ina Bierman (2001: 55) states, “In essence, the metre depends upon the establishment of a pattern and functional deviation from the pattern.” In other words, one may say that the metre contributes to the rhythm of a poem and when the rhythm is disturbed, or deviated from, the reader needs to pay closer attention in order to discover the communication of the poem. It should be noted that the converse is also true, in that there may be no set metrical pattern in a poem but when it does appear the reader again should take note of it and what it highlights in or about the poem.

Close investigation of the poem reveals that most of the lines in “Balloons” consist of an even number of syllables. Of the 30 lines, 20 contain two, four, six, eight or ten syllables each, and this consistent pattern of an even number of syllables harmonises the structure of the poem. There are, however, a few instances of deviation from this pattern or structure, where certain lines contain an odd number of syllables. Please note these deviations:

	/	/	/
6	Invisible air drifts,		
	/	/	/
7	Giving a shriek and pop		

- / / / / /
- 8 When attacked, then scooting to rest, barely trembling.
- / / /
- Beaten in starry metals.
- /
- 20 Your small
- / /
- Brother is making
- / / /
- His balloon squeak like a cat.
- / /
- Seeming to see
- / / / / /
- 24 A funny pink world he might eat on the other side of it,

Plath's establishment of a metrical-rhythmical structure in the poem and then deviating from it on occasion with verse lines of unequal syllables, communicates to the reader the disruption of the natural or general state of the balloons of almost imperceptible movement in the room where they are hanging in the air undisturbed. In lines 7 and 8, as well as in lines 21, 22, and 24, the balloons' natural state is disturbed when they are attacked, and when the little boy finally bites into one of the balloons and it bursts.

1.7.5 Irony

The ironic tension in "Balloons" is created via the personification of the balloons and the little boy's interaction with the strange balloon animals. This tension between the animal-like balloons and the little boy is abruptly resolved when he bites into a red balloon, causing it to burst.

The poem speaks of the colour that the balloons brought to an otherwise drab space, and of the delight that it inspires in the occupants sharing their space with the balloons. In the end, though, the little boy, in his innocence and ignorance 'kills' one of the balloons. Ironically, it is often in one's very innocence and ignorance that one can cause hurt, and in the end, the light-hearted poem is perhaps not so light-hearted after all. This innocence may also be said to be lost in the act of 'killing' the defenceless balloon.

1.7.6 Conclusion

Exploring “Balloons” via a close reading strategy for this thesis allowed me to uncover some of the less light-hearted and friendly aspects of the poem, aspects that I initially overlooked when I explored it during my Honours studies. As a result, this analysis has, for me, further highlighted Plath’s skill at using poetic devices and being able to do so in a manner that cleverly paints a very engrossing and moving poetic world.

Exploring this poem a second time for this thesis has also highlighted the fact that a reader changes, and as he/she changes, the way in which a poem is read and what stands out in a poem via close reading may change too. There is consistency between the first and second close reading exercises, but more depth has been added after a second close reading. This also reveals that close reading is a skill, which develops with practice and over time.

I acknowledge too, in making this observation, that it is nearly impossible not to overstep into the sphere of context when analysing a particular poem, but again, as I have argued before, it is important to attempt to allow the text to speak for itself first. The text should be the point of departure, but I do hold that the text and the context in which it was written are both important and the one will or should eventually inform the other in a complete analysis. This approach affords the reader with the best chance of not exclusively imposing his or her own views, or context, on the text.

1.8 Summary

This, then, concludes the close reading exercise applied to each one of the selected Plath and Jonker poems. Now that the reader has allowed the poems to speak for themselves by analysing each, the thesis continues by comparing the intratextual relations of the poets’ selected works. An exploration of intertextual relations follows, and the discussion in Chapter 4 is concluded by looking at the extratextual relations of the poems. The form of discussion in Chapter 4 is focussed via comparison.

Chapter 4 – A Comparison of Intratextual, Intertextual and Extratextual Relations

“If a poem is concentrated, a closed fist, then a novel is relaxed and expansive, an open hand: it has roads, detours, destinations; a heart line; morals and money come into it. Where the fist excludes and stuns, the open hand can touch and encompass a great deal in its travels.”
–Sylvia Plath

“When I am asked to talk about my poetry I sometimes feel like answering that poetry should really speak for itself. But I know that this is a little unreal and perhaps asking too much. Poets speak the words, the ideas, the thoughts and dreams of everyone. The difference is that they use these words and ideas in a way that, when successful, is heightened, sharper, clearer, more piercing than in ordinary speech.”
–Ingrid Jonker

1.1 Introduction

Poems are not, as stated already in this thesis, written in a vacuum and none of the poems explored in this thesis are an exception. As the *Advanced Theory of Poetry* study guide (Bierman, 2001: 3) states, “In short, we view a poetic text as a special instance of language usage, within a specific context.” Now, via comparison, attention is given to the intratextual relations (relations within the texts), intertextual relations (literary relations), and extratextual relations (non-literary relations) of the selection of poems. Thus, the Plath poems are compared to the Jonker poems or vice versa.

As already mentioned (see p. 12) a comparison is being done because comparison helps the reader to see one work more clearly in the light of another work. A comparison can help the reader with considering different angles, similarities, and differences that the reader may not have noticed or considered when working with only a single text or the texts of a single author.

One of the points of intersection for this comparison of selected poems is the biographical overlap that exists between the lives of Ingrid Jonker and Sylvia Plath (see pp. 7-10). They were women and contemporaries, but they never met, and there is no evidence that either was familiar with the other’s oeuvre. Another point of intersection for the specific comparison of the Plath and Jonker poems is the themes that they wrote about, such as motherhood, social and political awareness, death and rebirth, love, and

a sense of one's own identity as a woman at a time in history when a woman's place and status in society were much discussed and rapidly changing. Both poets wrestled with the political and social issues of their day and tried to grapple with these issues in their writings.

1.2 A Comparison: Intratextual Aspects of the Selected Poems

I return for a moment to one aspect of this thesis' research question: Flowing from the thematic overlaps that exist between the selected Jonker poems and Plath poems, what similarities or differences in poetic form, the use of poetic devices and content, in other words intratextual relations, can be discovered via a comparison? As the close reading exercise applied to the selection of poems has been completed, I now proceed with the comparison of the intratextual relations of the chosen poems.

What is meant by the term 'intratextual' is the examining of relations within a certain poetic text: within "You're", "Balloons", and "Lady Lazarus, and within "Swanger Vrou", "Bitterbessie dagbreek", and "Met hulle is ek". This process was undertaken and completed with the analysis of each of the selected poems in Chapter 3. The intratextual examination of relations, in large part, is the way through which the text is allowed to speak for itself.

It was important to me, in the context of this thesis and the research question, that each of the selected poems be explored via a close reading exercise first, before delving into the context of the poem, whether literary or biographical, political or social. Now that the close reading of each poem has been completed, and before I examine and compare the broader contexts of the selected poems by Plath and Jonker, I continue by comparing the intratextual relations of these poems brought to light by the analyses, noting any similarities in the way that Plath and Jonker used poetic devices (see pp. 34-35 for an overview of poetic devices) or noting if there are differences in their use of poetic devices. I also explore to what effect these two poets applied poetic devices to convey similar themes in their work.

It has to be noted that undertaking a comparison between individual poetic works, even when written by the same author, may be seen as already moving away from an exploration of intratextual relations, towards an intertextual and extratextual comparison of relations. As the thesis requires a comparison of intratextual, intertextual, and

extratextual aspects, however, the study of the use of poetic devices by Jonker in comparison with Plath is undertaken based on similarities in theme in the selected poems.

I asked myself, for example, how Plath employed metaphor in "Balloons" in comparison to how Jonker employed it in "Swanger vrou", based on the thematic similarity in the poems, both of which focus on the world and surroundings of the poem through the eyes of a mother. The speaker, a mother in each poem, is interacting with her child/children in a certain space or setting.

In comparing Plath's "You're" and Jonker's "Swanger vrou", the overlap of theme is again motherhood, but this time with an emphasis on the expecting mother, as in both "Swanger vrou" and "You're" the speaker is a woman expecting a child. In "You're", the speaker seems, at times, to speak for both the father and mother when expressing expectations, but in "Swanger vrou", apart from a reference to the act of conception, the voice of the speaker is more singular than it is in "You're".

Plath's "Lady Lazarus", as its analysis revealed (see p. 87), is an intensely complex poem and very dense in meaning. One may convincingly uphold a few different interpretations of this poem via a close reading strategy. There is in "Lady Lazarus", however, the theme of being on the receiving side of injustice (or perceived injustice). Lady Lazarus is a woman wronged, and looking for revenge. This is, of course, only one aspect of the "Lady Lazarus" poem, but this theme overlaps with the theme in Jonker's "Bitterbessie dagbreek", which illustrates the effects of a woman wronged in a romantic relationship.

In comparison to "Lady Lazarus", it can be argued that "Bitterbessie dagbreek" is a much less complex poem in that, for one thing, the theme of the poem is more focussed, or singular, than is the case in "Lady Lazarus". As mentioned though, there is a sense that the speakers, both women, have been treated unjustly, though in different ways. In the case of "Bitterbessie dagbreek", the speaker has been wronged in her relationship with a lover. In "Lady Lazarus", the lady has been wronged, generally by men and specifically by Herr Doktor, Herr Enemy, Herr God, and Herr Lucifer, as her direct addresses to them seem to point out.

In "Lady Lazarus", there is also an expression of what one may call the social awareness of the speaker as she repurposes a socially unjust event to express personal turmoil. This theme of social awareness is also expressed in Jonker's "Met hulle is ek". The

speaker in Plath's poem comments on and incorporates the event of the Jewish Holocaust, while Jonker's speaker comments on, and in, the context of Apartheid in South Africa. Thus, while Plath uses Holocaust imagery in a personal fashion in her poetry, she draws from it at a distance. Jonker, on the other hand, does not simply draw from Apartheid imagery, but personally experienced Apartheid itself, as a result of censorship during Apartheid and the unjust treatment of her friends and acquaintances that were not white. These two events, or facts of history (extratextual aspects), were based on racial discrimination and can be traced in a few of both poets' writings. These expressions also lend a political voice to both poems. The themes of social and political awareness, then, become the point of intersection in comparing these two poems, to further explore similarities and differences.

In my view, in a more general comparison of works by Plath to works by Jonker, one can observe in the analyses of their poems Plath's formal training versus Jonker's largely informal training. This difference is clearly reflected in their technical abilities in their more formal poems, as well as their free verse poetry. Of the two, Plath was the more disciplined and prolific poet. Both poets worked hard at their craft, however, and Jonker is certainly the one who had less time and opportunity to develop her natural talent as a writer.

Plath, a Smith College graduate and recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship (Gill, 2008), received a lot of training and had a lot of time to work at her technical skill as a writer. Jonker, who finished high school, but never officially attended a university, was informally mentored by poets such as D.J. Opperman, Jack Cope and, in particular, Uys Krige. As Viljoen (2012: 42-43) conveys:

[S]he felt a special affinity for Uys Krige, who soon became her mentor. He read her poems with a sharply critical eye, advising her to revise her work constantly. Krige was so stern a reader that she referred to him as 'the Iceman', a play on the name Uys and Eugene O'Neill's play *The iceman cometh*. He was the one who encouraged her the most... It was Krige who introduced her to the work of surrealist poets like Éluard, whose work he translated into Afrikaans, leading her to experiment with free verse and abandon the formal rigidity of her first volume.

Along with the informal mentoring she received from Krige and others, Jonker worked on and honed her writing skills on her own. It is perhaps why Jonker's free verse is ultimately 'freer' than Plath's. In a sense, it may have been easier for Jonker than it was

for Plath to abandon the more formal structures of poetry. Ultimately, although in very different ways, they both found their own unique voice as reflected in their later writings.

Plath's poems are generally very rich in metaphor, and complex metaphor at that, as already observed during the poetic analyses. Jonker's poems, on the other hand, are generally richer in sound than metaphor. Jonker also had a knack for choosing the 'right' words, although both poets' command of their particular mother tongue is impressive and inspiring.

1.2.1 Comparing the Intratextual Aspects of "Balloons" and "Swanger vrou"

The speaker, a mother in each poem, is interacting with her child/children in a certain space or setting. The reader is viewing or seeing the world, in both poems, through the eyes of a mother. In "Balloons", the speaker is a mother with at least two children, of which one is a boy. In "Swanger vrou", the speaker is a mother expecting a child, and the gender of the child is unknown.

As mentioned during the analysis (see p. 107 and 112), there is a definite lightness to "Balloons" that is largely absent from "Swanger vrou", but below the surface of the "Balloons" world, less friendly characteristics can be detected – menacing aspects of the world captured by the final lines (28 to 30) of the poem: "Contemplating a world clear as water,/ A red/ Shred in his little fist". The reader observes this 'blood' on the fist of the boy via the experience and interaction of the speaker with the children and the balloon 'animals'.

In "Swanger vrou", the unfriendliness of the world the speaker finds herself in is conveyed much less subtly as a result of the repeated references to the "riool" ("sewer") image and the personification of it. It is also clearly conveyed as such in lines 32 to 34: "ek lê bewend singend,/ hoe anders as bewend/ met my nageslag onder jou water... ?" ("I lie shivering singing,/ how else but shivering/ with my offspring submerged in your water...?"). There are also aspects of playfulness, however, conveyed by lines 4 and 21 and the elaboration on these particular lines.

In both poems, then, there are aspects of playfulness and aspects of discordance in relation to the playfulness as the speaker observes and interacts with her surroundings as a mother. These surroundings, or the reactions of the people in the surroundings, are at times hostile and menacing (for "Swanger vrou" see pp. 47-48 and for "Balloons" see p. 107).

There is a focussed use of metaphor in "Balloons", while with "Swanger vrou" the metaphorical occurrences seem more divergent. In "Swanger vrou", though the metaphorical constructions are complex, they do not necessarily relate well to each other in functioning as a whole and in expressing the global tenor/s and vehicle/s of the poem. In contrast, as already generally observed, Plath used metaphor more than Jonker did, and with more purpose – this is the case with "Balloons" in comparison to "Swanger vrou". In "Balloons", all the local metaphorical expressions work well together in eventually giving a complete expression to the strange balloon 'animals' and the difference they make in the drab apartment, which aids in heightening the shock and real loss experienced when the red balloon is popped.

The numerous metaphors in "Balloons" work well together to convey the nature, form, and movement of the balloons. The complex peacock feather metaphor (see pp. 105-106), for example, highlights the joy and wonder of the balloons in the drab apartment and their interaction with the people in it, while the final metaphor breaks the spell of innocence with the bursting of the balloon and the figurative blood on the boy's fist, or read literally, with the red rubber of the balloon covering the little boy's fist.

In "Swanger vrou", the few metaphors are quite complex, but generally not as strongly purposeful as the metaphors in "Balloons" in working together in the poem. The first metaphor, which indicates a time of day, "die kors van die nag" ("the crust of night") in line 1, may at first be read as hopeful, as the breaking of a new day is hopeful, but, as explained in the analysis (see p. 38), it is later subverted in stanza 4. Then there are the "my gister" ("my yesterday") and "my kalkoentjie" metaphors (lines 14 to 16) that convey both the embodiment of the speaker's yesterday in the form of the expected child, and the feelings of endearment towards the child. The "besie-hart" ("cicada heart") metaphor (lines 17 and 18), on the other hand, conveys the intensity of emotion in the poem, and contradictory emotion at that. This metaphor, as pointed out in the analysis, seems to function as the central metaphor of the poem (see p. 40).

Moving on to the syntactic and typographic arrangements of these poems, "Swanger vrou" typographically and syntactically highlights the vacillation of emotion, as do some of the metaphorical constructions in it, while in "Balloons", mostly via typography but aided by syntax (see pp. 107-109), the arrangement of verse lines provides a final, unexpected, surprising punch: the burst balloon and the realisation that the painted world is perhaps not what it seemed to be. Though used to different effect, I would assert that both poets used typography and syntax effectively in communicating and strengthening the communication of their poems.

As the analyses showed, there is no set end rhyme pattern in either "Balloons" or "Swanger vrou", though both poems make use of sound imitations, assonance, and alliteration to establish and strengthen relationships formed via poetic devices such as the metaphorical constructions. In the central "besie-hart" ("cicada heart") metaphor of "Swanger vrou", sound plays a foremost role and strengthens the conflicting emotions of the speaker, already captured by the metaphor. In "Balloons", the close association, via sound, between "red" and "shred" in the final metaphor of the poem strengthens the figurative image of blood on the little boy's fist, of the 'slain' balloon as a "red shred" in his fist (see p. 109).

In "Swanger vrou", an ever-dawning and developing realisation is communicated via the use of poetic devices, but in "Balloons" there is an instant realisation, a shock realisation brought about by the use of poetic devices. In both poems there is, however, a sense of numbness too. In "Swanger vrou", it is sensed via the dawning realisation of the inability to change the fact of, and circumstances in, the sewer. In "Balloons", the numbness is brought about via the shock of the realisation that there is something menacing below the innocence and light-heartedness of the poem that is completely unforeseen, so heightening the shock.

A comparison of the poems reveals both poets' skilled use of poetic devices and how, via the use of poetic devices, the perspective of a mother in both poems is conveyed. Though Plath's use of poetic devices, in particular her metaphorical constructions, work together better as a whole compared to Jonker's use of poetic devices, ironic tension is created in both poems. As per Peck and Coyle's (2002: 159) New Critic definition of irony, both poems reveal that there are many sides to the perspective of the mother in each poem, which is highlighted by the ironic tension created in both poems (for "Swanger vrou" see p. 47 and for "Balloons" see p. 111).

1.2.2 Comparing the Intratextual Aspects of "Lady Lazarus" and "Bitterbessie dagbreek"

As mentioned, following the analyses it can be argued that "Bitterbessie dagbreek" is a much less complex poem compared to "Lady Lazarus". There is a sense in both poems, however, of the speakers, both women, having been treated unjustly. Both poems also convey the disparity between expectations and the fulfilment of those expectations, which also forms part of the themes of the poems, and is another point of intersection. In the case of "Bitterbessie dagbreek", the speaker has been wronged in her relationship with a lover, while in "Lady Lazarus", the lady has been wronged generally by men and

specifically by Herr Doktor, Herr Enemy, Herr God, and Herr Lucifer. The content of the poem is not particularly clear about the ways in which Lady Lazarus has been wronged, but there seems to be displeasure on Lady Lazarus's part at being brought back to life after each of her deaths. Because it would appear that these men play a role in resurrecting her, her ire is directed towards them.

The speaker in "Lady Lazarus" is powerful and able to undermine the acts of injustice towards her by seeking revenge after her rebirths, however bizarre and emotionally unstable the rebirths of the speaker may be. It also has to be noted, though, that there is an aspect of defeat and unfulfilled expectation in her continual resurrections, because it is clear that Lady Lazarus actually wants to die and be left alone, or in peace. In "Bitterbessie dagbreek", the speaker is ultimately powerless against the effects of the broken relationship and the manner in which she has been treated. She is trapped and lost, and getting more and more lost.

Poetic devices have been used to create very well-structured poems in both instances. What I mean to say by the poems being structured well is that the form of each poem is consistent and is not deviated from. In both "Bitterbessie dagbreek" and "Lady Lazarus", the typographic arrangement of the verse lines of each stanza, for example, remains consistent throughout: four verse lines per stanza in "Bitterbessie dagbreek" and three verse lines per stanza in "Lady Lazarus". In contrast to the ordered form, the subject matter of these poems may be described as rather chaotic, though, conveying great depths of emotion and emotional upheaval. What each speaker experiences is felt deeply and is crushingly conveyed in each poem, despite the seemingly more formal or disciplined poetic structures.

"Lady Lazarus" is a rather long poem, 84 verse lines compared to 20 verse lines in "Bitterbessie dagbreek", and there are a number of metaphors in the poem. These metaphors are varied and complex, consistent with Plath's use of metaphor throughout most of her poems. In "Bitterbessie dagbreek", the few metaphors are purposeful and work together effectively to convey meaning. The "bitterbessie" ("bitter-berry") metaphor (lines 1 and 2; lines 19 and 20) is even repeated in the poem. A lot of repetition does occur in the use of almost all poetic devices in "Bitterbessie dagbreek", establishing and reinforcing the echo motif of the poem (see pp. 51-60).

In "Lady Lazarus", punctuation has been faithfully, even obsessively, applied while no punctuation occurs in "Bitterbessie dagbreek". As explained during the analysis of "Lady Lazarus" (see p. 92), the punctuation may have been used to signify overdramatic

pauses in the poem, heightening the showmanship of the performances. In both poems, the analyses showed that syntactic and typographic repetition occurs to strengthen the poems' communication. Repetition also serves to reinforce the inescapable cycles that are created in both poems via the use of poetic devices.

Lady Lazarus, in a certain sense, triumphs by taking or seeking revenge, though she is thwarted in her attempts at dying. The speaker in "Bitterbessie dagbreek", however, is caught up in a cycle from which she does not seem able to escape. There is a cycle in each poem: the cycle of death and resurrection in "Lady Lazarus" and the cycle of days in "Bitterbessie dagbreek". As a side note, these cycles actually came into better focus as I compared the two poems to each other, which serves to illustrate again one of the benefits of undertaking a comparison, in this case highlighting the cyclical aspects of the poems more clearly. The very structured use of poetic devices by both poets at first creates, and then serves to reinforce, these cycles. Though Lady Lazarus is defeated in being able to die and remain dead or "stay put", she is able to use the cycle to her own purpose, but the "Bitterbessie dagbreek" speaker is lost in her cycle and getting more disorientated with each passing cycle of day and night.

As noted in the analysis, "Bitterbessie dagbreek" is very rich in sound and has a consistent end rhyme pattern. Of the three selected Plath poems, it can be argued that "Lady Lazarus" has the most to offer in terms of sound when read aloud. It has no set end rhyme pattern, however, though end rhyme does occur in a scattered fashion in the poem.

Both "Lady Lazarus" and "Bitterbessie dagbreek" were crafted with discipline in applying poetic devices throughout, but to different effect in each. In "Lady Lazarus", the disciplined use of poetic devices creates the cycle of death and resurrection, but also underscores the vengefulness and resourcefulness of Lady Lazarus as she rises from the ash to eat men like air. In "Bitterbessie dagbreek", the disciplined use of poetic devices creates the cycle of "bitterbessie" days, but also underscores the disorientation of the speaker, reinforcing that she has been shut in by the broken relationship and that, no matter how hard she tries to order things, to find her way, she is entangled in the attempt at ordering. "Bitterbessie dagbreek" brings a well-structured labyrinth to mind, but in its very structure lies the deception in which the speaker is caught up and from which the speaker is unable to escape, and so continues to "step on [her] regret". I noted this labyrinthine aspect of "Bitterbessie dagbreek" during my analysis (see p. 52), but C. Van der Merwe (1991: 124) also refers to it in the analysis of the poem for *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, Vol. 29.

The speaker in each poem suffers from unfulfilled expectations: Lady Lazarus because she cannot die and remain dead, the speaker in "Bitterbessie dagbreek" because no matter how much she tries to find her way, all she does is continue to step on her regret. Expectation and its fulfilment, or rather lack of fulfilment, created via the use of poetic devices, remain in tension in both poems. I find the way in which both poets conveyed deep emotional upheaval on different topics, despite (or even because of) a disciplined use of poetic devices, particularly noteworthy. Perhaps both poets understood that no matter how ordered life, or a poem, may appear on the surface, below it may lie a lot of emotional chaos, further aggravated by the appearance of order.

1.2.3 Comparing the Intratextual Aspects of "Swanger vrou" and "You're"

It can be said that "You're" is the lighter poem in tone in comparison to Jonker's "Swanger vrou". The overlap in theme is again motherhood, but this time with an emphasis on the expecting mother. Giving birth and having children was an experience that Plath and Jonker shared, as pointed out in the discussion around the biographical overlap in their lives (see pp. 7-10).

The expecting mother in "Swanger vrou" is decidedly more ambiguous in her feelings about giving birth and in her feelings towards the infant than the speaker in "You're". In "You're", there is excitement and joyous, even silly, expectation (see p. 78). In "Swanger vrou", there is uncertainty and reluctance mixed with real endearment and a sense of protectiveness towards the expected infant. There is nothing, however, of the unequivocal joy of an expecting mother (see pp. 47-48).

Endearment is conveyed in both poems, but there is much more uncertainty in the tone of "Swanger vrou". In "You're", poetic devices highlight the unknown becoming known: the "Clownlike" (line 1) infant being expected and eventually born, "a clean slate, with your own face on" (line 18). In "Swanger vrou", the use of poetic devices also highlights uncertainty and what is unknown, but it remains uncertain and unknown. The poem concludes with the infant having been born, but the speaker says in lines 32 to 34, "ek lê bewend singend,/ hoe anders as bewend/ met my nageslag onder jou water...?" ("I lie shivering singing,/ how else but shivering/ with my offspring submerged in your water...?").

In "You're", there is focussed expectation, and the use of poetic devices creates and maintains this focussed expectation, thus every metaphorical construction in "You're" conveys something of the nature of the eagerly expected infant (see p. 73). The

typographic arrangement and the use of sound, and rhythm and metre, further underscore the nature of the infant and the joyous expectation in every verse line.

In reading "You're", one may feel that it was almost casually written, quickly put down on the page, but in exploring the use of poetic devices one cannot reach this conclusion. Thought went into the specific metaphorical constructions, the typographic arrangement, the ironic tension, the use of sound, and the almost nursery rhyme type rhythm.

In "You're", the infant is addressed throughout the poem, while in "Swanger vrou" the "riool" ("sewer") is the addressee at times. In "You're", the focus is completely on the infant and the reader is only aware of the parents, and more specifically the mother, in relation to how they are presenting "You" and their expectations regarding the birth and baby. In "Swanger vrou", the attention is not as focussed on the infant, and the reader is much more aware of the speaker (or expecting mother) and her vacillation between various emotions, related to bringing a child into the "riool". Even in talking about the infant, she does not address the infant, but the more ambiguous "riool" of the poem.

These are the few lines that make more direct reference to the expected infant:

Line 3: "En my nageslag lê in die water."

Lines 11, 12, 19, and 20: "maar riool o riool/ my nageslag lê in die water."

Lines 15 and 16: "my gister hang onder my hart,/ my kalkoentjie, my wiegende wêreld,"

Line 26: "stoot ek jou uit deur die kors in die daglig,"

This last line represents the only instance in the poem where the speaker directly addresses the baby.

Between Plath's and Jonker's poems, there is a similar reference to the infant in water, which is probably to be expected in the context of a pregnancy, as water can symbolise life. One would have to compare these two poems to other poems by the same poet, and other poets' poems in order to determine a greater significance, if any, but it may take the discussion in this thesis too far. In both poems, there are also ambiguous references to an owl or owls, and in both cases the references are rather difficult to fathom, even in the context of the poems.

“Swanger vrou” conveys a clear acknowledgement that the world the infant is born into is decidedly difficult to navigate, and even unsafe. The speaker has not found the world to be altogether straightforward in her own experience and she can hardly promise or expect anything different for her child. So the speaker does sing, but she is also trembling as she sings, and ultimately only trembles. This is very different from the focussed expectation in “You’re”.

In terms of conveying the emotions and perspectives of the expecting mother, “Swanger vrou” stands out as the more complex and mature of the two poems. Even if it does not stand out, at all times, in the use of poetic devices, then it certainly does in the emotional authenticity of the poem. In comparing “You’re” to “Swanger vrou”, it highlights one of the instances of Jonker’s ‘freer’ free verse poems. Great technical ability is present in both poems, but in this comparison, it is Jonker’s “Swanger vrou” that feels more truthful in conveying the opposing emotions of the mother, and because of these opposed attitudes and emotions, it is immune to ironic challenge.

1.2.4 Comparing the Intratextual Aspects of “Met hulle is ek” and “Lady Lazarus”

In “Lady Lazarus”, there is an expression of what one may call the political awareness of the speaker and an expression of her awareness of social injustice or apathy. This theme is also expressed in Jonker’s “Met hulle is ek”. The speaker in Plath’s poem personalises the event of the Jewish Holocaust, while Jonker’s speaker narrates about, and in, the context of Apartheid South Africa.

Some of the specific lines of verse in the poems that make the reader aware of the politically and socially aware voices of the poems are as follows:

Political/ social voice of “Met hulle is ek”:

Line 17: “met hulle kleurling african
ontroof” (“with those coloureds africans
dispossessed”)

Lines 21 to 24: “en vergeet asseblief/ van
geregtigheid dit bestaan nie/ van
broederskap dis bedrog/ van liefde
dit het geen reg nie”

Political/ social voice of “Lady Lazarus”:

Line 5: “Bright as a Nazi lampshade,”

Lines 65 and 66: “So, so, Herr Doktor/ So,
Herr Enemy.”

Line 79: “Herr God, Herr Lucifer”

("and please forget/ about justice it
doesn't exist/ about brotherhood it's a
fraud/ about love it has no right")

Much can be discovered about both poems via a close reading strategy, however, a consideration of the poems' possible political and social contexts greatly assists in the interpretation of these particular poems. As mentioned (see p. 31), in Plath's case, her context included exposure to Holocaust history and her political interest. In Jonker's case, her context included the fact that she lived in Apartheid South Africa, was sympathetic to the plight of African and Coloured (mixed race) people under Apartheid, and was also very outspoken against what she perceived to be social and political injustice in South Africa (see p. 8-9).

Once more, powerful emotions are conveyed through both "Lady Lazarus" and "Met hulle is ek". Both poems convey disappointment and anger, and a certain amount of disillusionment with the speaker's surroundings and context.

Typographically, "Lady Lazarus" is the more measured poem, bringing a certain order to the strong emotions. The poem also builds up in a measured way to its final conclusion: Lady Lazarus rising from the ash and taking her revenge, eating men like air. "Met hulle is ek" is emotionally forceful from the beginning. The stage is not first set as it is in "Lady Lazarus", and it is only towards the end of the poem that more measured emotion is conveyed via the typographic arrangement of the final three statements of the poem (see p. 67).

Of the three Jonker poems, "Met hulle is ek", in particular, has very few metaphorical constructions, while "Lady Lazarus" contains many very complex metaphors. Also, the use of Holocaust imagery heightens the function of certain of the metaphorical constructions in "Lady Lazarus" and adds a deeply disturbing and disconcerting layer to it, which is hard to ignore (see p. 98-101).

As mentioned, anger may be detected in both poems, but "Lady Lazarus", it feels to me, gets under the skin more and lingers longer after a first reading compared to "Met hulle is ek", and I believe this is largely due to Plath's masterful use of poetic devices in the poem. She very capably channels the emotions in the poem via the use of poetic devices. Jonker, on the other hand, seems to almost indiscriminately pour emotion into poetic form, and seems to do so without taking into consideration how all the parts

function as a whole; although this may also have been done deliberately in order to highlight the social and political dissent that the speaker conveys in the poem (see p. 72). The typographic arrangement of "Met hulle is ek" is the strongest feature of the poem and it is this feature which finally delivers the communication of the poem most clearly.

As mentioned in conclusion after the analysis of "Met hulle is ek", it is perhaps its disregard of a regular metrical pattern, verse lines, and end rhyme, in favour of a free verse poem, that functions as a type of rebellion, as a distancing technique from more structured poetic formulations and what the poet may have socially and politically associated with it (see p. 72). This would be a further siding "met hulle" ("with those") and "teen die" ("against the"). Free verse, in the context of the poem, in and of itself becomes a foregrounding device meant to jar and shake the perceived complacency, so that the attention of the reader is fixed on the things that are jarring in society and the political environment. In this light, the lack of structure and more subdued use of poetic devices make more sense, and serve to reinforce the communication of the poem, rather than weaken it.

Although jarring in its use of Nazi Holocaust imagery, just like in other Plath poems, "Lady Lazarus" is intimate and conspiratorial, and draws the reader in. "Met hulle is ek", on the other hand, is emphatically not intimate or conspiratorial, and almost tends to ranting, which could cause the reader to miss what Jonker may have wanted to convey via the free verse style of the poem. Perhaps "Met hulle is ek" is a poem of Jonker's that has not received all the attention it deserves for this very reason. The reason for stating this is that Jonker does manage to create and keep the ironic tension, despite the tendency of the poem to ranting, but the way in which she does so is perhaps more subversive and subtle, using free verse as one means of subversion. In comparison, Plath's 'boot in the face' use of Holocaust imagery, though it can also be read as subversive, is decidedly less subtle and impossible for the reader to miss.

1.3 A Comparison: Intertextual Aspects of the Selected Poems

One aspect of the intertextual relations of a poem has to do with the interaction of the text with other texts (other poems in the same collection, or other collections by the same author, or other authors). Intertextual relations also function as one of the aspects of the context of the poem. This section of the chapter looks at the intertextual

aspects of the selection of poems in a comparative way. The intertextual focus here is very narrow and specific, however, and does not consider all possible intertextual relations related to the chosen poems, but only relations between the chosen poems and between the poems within the collections of poetry in which the chosen poems first appeared. I consider then, when and in which collection of poems each poem first appeared, noting similarities or differences. I also consider what critics said about it at the time and what, if any, fresh considerations, criticism or perspectives since then should be taken into consideration, as one compares the selected poems by Plath to those written by Jonker. Here, too, I consider similarities and differences.

The selection of Plath poems all first appeared in the collection of poems titled *Ariel* (1965). The collection of *Ariel* poems indicated a change in approach compared to Plath's earlier work, as it contains poetry that is, for one thing, more personal in nature. Plath's *Ariel* poems can also be described as having been written with a disciplined freedom. They display the same stylistic discipline to be found in *The Colossus*, but the poems broke out of the strict stylistic confines in a fresh and daring manner (Frieda Hughes, 2004: x).

All the selected Jonker poems can be read in her posthumously published *Versamelde Werke* (1994). Originally, though, the poems "Swanger vrou" and "Bitterbessie dagbreek" appeared in *Rook en Oker* (*Smoke and Ochre*, 1963), while the poem "Met hulle is ek" appeared posthumously in *Kantelson* (*Tilting Sun*, 1966). Jonker's total contribution in terms of poetic text, in comparison to Plath's, is much smaller. Though smaller, it is weighty, however, and has grown in popularity and influence, both in South Africa and abroad as Viljoen (2012) highlights in Chapter 7 of *Ingrid Jonker: Poet under Apartheid*.

1.3.1 Comparing the Intertextual Aspects of "Balloons" and "Swanger Vrou"

It may be good to get a possible objection regarding the selection of "Balloons" out of the way, before continuing with this intertextual discussion. Scholars may raise questions regarding the presence of "Balloons" in the 1965 version of *Ariel*, especially following the publication of the restored edition of *Ariel* in 2004, and taking into consideration that Plath herself did not include "Balloons" in her index of poems for *Ariel* before her suicide.

Both the 1965 edition of *Ariel* and the 2004 restored edition list 40 of Plath's poems. The difference between the two anthologies, other than the order of the poems (see pp.

154-155 for the difference in order), is that 13 of the 40 poems differ in the two collections. *Ariel* (1965) contains the following poems not contained in the 2004 edition: "Sheep in Fog", "The Hanging Man", "Little Fugue", "Years", "The Munich Mannequins", "Totem", "Paralytic", "**Balloons**", "Poppies in July", "Kindness", "Contusion", "Edge", and "Words".

Ariel (2004) contains the following poems not contained in the 1965 edition: "The Rabbit Catcher", "Thalidomide", "Barren Woman", "A Secret", "The Jailor", "The Detective", "Magi", "Lesbos", "The Other", "Stopped Dead", "The Courage of Shutting-Up", "Purdah", and "Amnesiac".

As mentioned, since *Ariel* (1965) was not submitted for publication before Plath committed suicide, the decision to publish and include "Balloons", among a few other poems in the publication, was made by Ted Hughes. As Jo Gill (2008: 51-52) states,

Ariel was initially published in London by Hughes's publisher, Faber and Faber, in 1965 and in New York the following year by Harper & Row. These slightly different UK and US versions comprise the selection and arrangement of poems undertaken by Hughes in approximate accordance with the order of the poems that Plath left in a black ring-binder at her death; the extent of his editorial involvement was barely scrutinised at the time. Subsequently, Hughes was quite clear about his role in choosing and ordering poems for the volume.

The criticism would, however, eventually follow. Some of the criticism levelled at the different arrangement of the *Ariel* (1965) poems is highlighted by Gill (2008: 58):

Perloff and Bundtzen have critiqued this decision [Ted Hughes's arrangement of poems], pointing out that in Plath's arrangement *Ariel* begins with the word 'Love' and ends with the word 'spring'. Moreover, the larger trajectory of the bee sequence, leading from isolation to community, innocence to experience, stasis and death to new life and hope, potentially casts the whole of *Ariel* in an entirely different light.

Though Hughes ended up receiving much criticism for his alteration of the collection of *Ariel* poems finally printed in 1965 (the Perloff and Bundtzen criticism being only a sample), I would assert that, despite the criticism, which is not addressed here, "Balloons" does seem to have been written in Plath's 'Ariel voice' and, therefore, may

reasonably be considered intertextually with the *Ariel* collection of poetry, whether in the 1965 or 2004 editions.

Frieda Hughes (2004: x), Plath's daughter, refers to the style of her mother's later poems as her 'Ariel voice', as illustrated by the following excerpt:

But towards the end of 1961, poems in the Ariel voice began to appear here and there among the transitional poems [what Blosser (see p. 29) terms Plath's monological poems]. They had an urgency, freedom, and force that was quite new in her work. In October 1961, there was 'The Moon and the Yew Tree' and 'Little Fugue'; 'An Appearance' followed in April 1962. From this point, all the poems she wrote were in the distinctive Ariel voice. They are poems of an other-worldly, menacing landscape[.]

Since "Balloons" was written in February 1963, this poem may reasonably be considered along with her later and last poems – poems written in the 'Ariel voice' as her daughter described it. As previously stated, the purpose of this thesis is not to discuss the reasons, merits or disadvantages of Hughes's edits, but rather to look at the selection of poems within the body of work that can be referred to as having been written in Plath's 'Ariel voice'.

The word 'other-worldly' stood out when reading Frieda Hughes's introduction to the 2004 restored edition of *Ariel*. In "Balloons", this other-worldly aspect of Plath's later writings is present, as it also is in "The Moon and the Yew Tree". Thus, in the context of *Ariel* (1965), the seemingly light-heartedness of "Balloons" might not make sense at first, but its other-worldliness does allow for it to interact comfortably with the other poems that are in *Ariel* (1965) and the poems Plath wrote in the last three years of her life.

"Balloons", if read in the context of *Ariel* (1965) with its interaction with the other poems in the collection, gains different shades of meaning. "Balloons", as well as "You're" may be described as light-hearted poems; their subject matter certainly is light-hearted, but these poems appear in a collection of poetry that also contains poems such as "The Moon and the Yew Tree", "Tulips", and "Lady Lazarus", poems which are much more heavy in subject matter and serious in tone. As the analysis of "Balloons" revealed too, there is a more menacing or disturbing aspect just below the surface of the "Balloons" world (see p. 107); these menacing characteristics are also present in poems such as

"Tulips", "Lady Lazarus", and "Daddy", to mention only a few, which also appear in *Ariel* (1965).

In further considering the position of "Balloons" amongst Plath's 'Ariel voice' poetry, I would also like to draw the attention of the reader to the poem "Cut", which though not the same in subject matter as "Balloons", still reminds the reader of it. "Cut" expresses the same liveliness, also to be found in "The Applicant", the same rhythm and lightness, while underneath the surface, there are much weightier things to consider.

I turn now to the intertextual aspects of "Swanger vrou", which appears in Jonker's second collection of poems, *Rook en Oker*, which was published in 1963 and, overall, was much better received than her first collection, *Ontvlugting*. As Viljoen (2012: 95) indicates, "The critics wrote enthusiastic reviews of the book and in 1964 it was awarded the APB prize for the best Afrikaans book published in 1963."

The poems in *Rook en Oker* were much less rigid in form compared to those in *Ontvlugting*. Jonker wrote only a couple of poems with rhyming couplets for this collection, and many more poems in free verse. In my opinion, *Rook en Oker* marked Jonker's coming into her own as a poet. Her voice is more forceful and steady, but also freer. In comparing Plath's collections of poetry with Jonker's, Jonker's *Rook en Oker* collection may, I think, be looked at as her 'Ariel' collection of poems.

According to Viljoen (2012: 89), *Rook en Oker* was divided into five sections around certain themes. Jonker's *Versamelde Werke*, however, divides the collection into six sections, though it seems clear that section five and six can form a single section together, as in the *Rook en Oker* collection.

"Swanger vrou" appears very early in the volume, in the first section of poems that has to do with the body and its relationship with others, such as the lover, the self, and the unborn child (Viljoen, 2012: 89). The section contains eight poems in total, all written in a freer verse style, though "Swanger vrou" stands out stylistically and thematically amongst the other poems.

These two poems, "Balloons" and "Swanger vrou", both appear in collections of poetry which are generally considered to display the poets' own voices and maturity (see pp. 14-17). "Balloons" functions well within the context of the *Ariel* collection of poems, while "Swanger vrou", in the context of *Rook en Oker*, stands out as one of Jonker's most commendable poems, both in form and content.

1.3.2 Comparing the Intertextual Aspects of “Lady Lazarus” and “Bitterbessie dagbreek”

As “Lady Lazarus” appears in both the 1965 version of *Ariel* and the 2004 restored edition, there is no difficulty in classifying it as one of Plath’s ‘Ariel voice’ poems. “Lady Lazarus” can also be considered as what Silvianna Blosser in *A Poetics on Edge* (2001) refers to as Plath’s late poems or apostrophic poems (Chapter 4). As Blosser (2001: 119) states:

By means of the apostrophe, the poet has recreated their [the father’s and mother’s] presence in her texts and she asserts herself as a subject vis-à-vis the father and the mother by turning them into unpleasant and even disgusting creatures, which enables her ‘to do away with them.’ In these poems the apostrophic figure does not create a fictive encounter between subjects. Its only purpose is to help the speaker regain her own self.

In “Lady Lazarus”, therefore, the speaker explores reinvention, or the “regaining of her own self”, amongst other things. In Plath’s (2004: Appendix ii) own words, as taken from the script for the BBC broadcast ‘New Poems by Sylvia Plath’:

This poem is called “Lady Lazarus”. The speaker is a woman who has the great and terrible gift of being reborn. The only trouble is, [sic] she has to die first. She is the phoenix, the libertarian spirit, what you will. She is also just a good, plain, very resourceful woman.

The other poems in the collection that touch on some of the same themes as “Lady Lazarus” are poems such as “Daddy” and “Getting There”.

Turning to the intertextual aspects of “Bitterbessie Dagbreek”, it appears in the third section of *Rook en Oker (Smoke and Ochre)* along with other poems that express disappointment at the loss of love and the bitter taste of being let down, and disappointment at being betrayed (Viljoen, 2012: 92). Looking at *Ontvlugting (Escape)*, although none of the poems in the selection of poems were chosen from it, Jonker’s first selection of poems, published in 1956, reveals the development of certain themes in Jonker’s work. Viljoen (2012: 35-36) sums up the nature and reception of this first collection of poems as follows:

Although her debut volume attracted the attention of important critics of the time, their reviews mostly emphasised its adolescent youthfulness and thematic 'slimness'. While *Ontvlugting* may be limited in its formal and thematic scope, it was clearly the product of a self-conscious poet who took her work seriously. It suggested that Ingrid Jonker was not just an intuitive poet whose poems came effortlessly, but someone who carefully crafted and revised her work.

The collection of poems touches strongly, with some exceptions, on the themes of coming of age, love, loss, loneliness, sorrow, and death. These themes would be developed and expressed again with greater maturity in Jonker's next two collections of poems.

In much of Jonker's writings, it is clear that there is life in being accepted and death in being rejected, as lover, as mother, as daughter, as human being. Put another way, life is found in being loved, and death in being scorned. Along with these themes, Jonker also uses much ocean imagery in her poetry in *Ontvlugting* and also her other two collections of poems. It occurs often, and it is clear that the sea played a big role in her life and also her art.

I would like to focus the attention on a specific poem in *Ontvlugting* and how it interacts with "Bitterbessie dagbreek". The poem is "Offerande" ("Sacrifices"), in which the first two lines of the poem read: "Die kamer sal verander in 'n woud/ waarin ek rondwaal, stom en koud" ("The room will be transformed into a forest/ in which I will wander, mute and cold"). These lines, it seems to me, are possibly the germ of "Bitterbessie Dagbreek" in which the imagery of the speaker as lost, abandoned and unable to find her way in a forest is fully explored and developed.

"Offerande" is more hopeful in its conclusion, in that there is the expectation that the current sacrifice may be transformed into something better. With "Bitterbessie Dagbreek", the poem ends much less hopefully, in that the speaker remains lost and continues to run into her sorrow while failing in her attempts to find her way out of the forest, or to break the cycle of "bitterbessie" ("bitter-berry") days. The tension in "Bitterbessie Dagbreek" is heightened and remains intact throughout even the conclusion of the poem.

1.3.3 Comparing the Intertextual Aspects of “Swanger vrou” and “You’re”

As some of the intertextual aspects of “Swanger vrou” have already been considered, I consider the intertextual aspects of “You’re” first before tracing similarities or differences in the intertextual relations of these two poems.

“You’re”, as “Swanger vrou” does, also focuses on the themes of motherhood and expectation. Other poems in the *Ariel* collection that also focus on these themes are “Morning Song” and “Nick and the Candlestick”, for example. In “Morning Song”, the arrival of an infant is described, as well as how the event of becoming a parent almost feels foreign. It closes with the mother, baby in arms, watching the arrival of the dawn.

In “Nick and the Candlestick”, the space or atmosphere in which the baby lies is described as a cave and not a very welcoming, warm, or safe cave, but rather as “Waxy stalactites/ Drip and thicken, tears// The earthen womb/ Exudes from its dead boredom./ Black bat airs// Wrap me, raggy shawls,/ They weld to me like plums.// Old cave of calcium/ Icicles, old echoer”. The mother of the infant, however, has tried to make it friendlier: “Love, love,/ I have hung our cave with roses,/ With soft rugs–/ The last of Victoriana”. Ultimately, for her, it is the presence of the infant that makes it all worthwhile as she expresses in conclusion: “You are the one/ Solid spaces lean on, envious./ You are the baby in the barn”.

Again, in Plath’s (2004: Appendix ii) own words:

In this poem, “Nick and the Candlestick”, a mother nurses her baby son by candlelight and finds in him a beauty which, while it may not ward off the world’s ill, does redeem her share of it.

In the light of Plath’s other poems, such as “Nick and the Candlestick”, “You’re” then conveys a surprisingly traditional view of the emotions of the expecting mother, or parents. When one then considers “You’re” intertextually next to “Swanger vrou”, one can see, as mentioned (see p. 48), that “Swanger vrou” conveys something much less traditional. There is a clear acknowledgement that the world the infant is born into is decidedly difficult to navigate, and even unsafe. This, I believe, is one of the reasons why critics highlight “Swanger vrou” as one of Jonker’s poems that has the most to offer, both in considering form and content, and as reflecting her maturity as a poet (see pp. 14-17).

As the analysis of "Swanger vrou" in this thesis highlights, it is a very ambiguous poem and continually hovers between joy and sadness, excitement and apprehension, or distraction, without completely settling on a specific emotion, and ultimately ends in a rhetorical question. As a result of the vacillation between emotions and ambiguity about which emotion triumphs, it is different in tone from other poems written on motherhood by female poets preceding Jonker, as well as some of her contemporaries in South Africa. As Viljoen (2012: 52) observes about the poem: "Indeed it is closer in tone to the poems on motherhood and childbirth that the American poet Sylvia Plath would write a few years later in the early 1960s, and it came to exert a strong influence on future poets in Afrikaans like Antjie Krog and Marlise Joubert." (The poems of Plath that Viljoen may be referring to, in this context, would be poems such as "Nick and the Candlestick", rather than "You're".)

1.3.4 Comparing the Intertextual Aspects of "Met hulle is ek" and "Lady Lazarus"

The publication of Jonker's final collection of poems, in which "Met hulle is ek" appears, was, similarly to Plath's *Ariel* (1965) collection of poems, managed by others, but without any of the controversy that later came to surround Plath's 1965 publication. This is possibly because *Kantelson (Tilting sun)*, published after Jonker's suicide in 1966, was already accepted for publication before her death, while the final publication was overseen by Jack Cope: "Jack Cope conducted the final negotiations with [Bartho] Smit and prepared the collection for publication. It contained the poems written after Ingrid met Brink in 1963 and reflected the major events in the last two years of her life. It also included her last three poems, written after Bartho Smit had received the manuscript from her" (Viljoen, 2012: 141).

Jonker abhorred injustice, particularly racial injustice (Viljoen, 2012: 79), and this is reflected in many of her later poems. The poem "By die Goodwood-tentoonstelling" ("At the Goodwood Show"), however, from her first publication, *Ontvlugting*, already reflects something of her poetic voice concerning what she perceived as social or political injustice in the world, and this voice would become stronger in some of her later poems such as "Die kind wat doodgeskiet is deur soldate by Nyanga" ("The child who was shot dead by soldiers in Nyanga") and "Met hulle is ek".

Published after her suicide in 1966, *Kantelson* was not as enthusiastically received as *Rook en Oker*. Ernst Lindenberg in the 1982 edition of *Perspektief en Profiel* stated that the collection of poems was not on the same level as those in *Rook en Oker*. He

continued to say that no growth in terms of Jonker's craft was evident either, and that the bitterness and despair, or acerbity, were more evident, and her disillusionment more present in the collection. Lindenberg's assessment is, in my opinion, perhaps a bit unfair as Jonker's last poems were maybe not all fully appreciated at the time of publication, or for some time after publication, but it is an assessment that is somewhat echoed by Viljoen (2012: 141-142):

Although the volume is close to *Rook en Oker* in its style and execution, it lacks its impact and coherence. ... What is new in this volume is the shading of melancholy into bitterness and disillusionment in poems such as "Met hulle is ek" and "Ek dryf in die wind", in which the speaking subject expresses her conviction that society has become corrupt.

The particular lines from "Ek dryf in die wind" ("I drift in the wind"), which highlight this conviction and which also echo "Met hulle is ek", read as follows: "My volk het van my afgevrot/ wat sal word van die vrot volk/ 'n hand kan nie alleen bid nie// Die son sal ons bedek/ die son in ons oë vir altyd bedek/ met swart kraaie" ("My volk has rotted away from me/ what will become of this rotted volk/ a hand cannot pray on its own// The sun shall be covered by us/ the sun in our eyes for ever covered/ with black butterflies").

A note on the translation of the poem is, again, useful here: although the image of the "black butterflies" is haunting, I prefer the translation of the Afrikaans "kraaie" into "crows". Crows convey a much blacker and despairing image; there is nothing beautiful about this image. Crows are also symbolically associated with death and darkness. Butterflies, on the other hand, even if black, convey a more hopeful and, though haunting, beautiful image. Taking the overall tone of this poem into consideration, the phrase "black butterflies" seems to hit a discordant note in the text, while the image of black crows reinforces the death imagery and complete despair of the speaker.

"Met hulle is ek" and "Ek dryf in die wind", from *Kantelson*, are both poems that highlight Jonker's political voice, just like "Die kind wat doodgeskiet is deur soldate by Nyanga" and "Madeliefies in Namakwaland" ("Daisies in Namaqualand"), from *Rook en Oker*, do. The most notable difference, however, as pointed out by Lindenberg and Viljoen (amongst others), is the fact that the poems in *Kantelson* afford no glimmer of light, whereas even the sharply melancholic "Madeliefies in Namakwaland" in *Rook en Oker* does offer a final hopefulness. Though not technically deficient, these last poems of Jonker in *Kantelson* do not manage the tension as well as the poems in *Rook en Oker* do (Viljoen, 2012: 141). It is perhaps for this reason, and not because of the lack of

hopefulness, that the poems feel less forceful. They do not communicate as forcefully about injustice, alongside a contrasting hopefulness, which perhaps sharpens the injustice, as “Die kind wat doodgeskiet is deur soldate by Nyanga” and “Madeliefies in Namakwaland” do.

Returning to the intertextual aspects of “Lady Lazarus” again, it is one of a few poems in *Ariel* (1965 and 2004) that reflects Plath’s use of Holocaust imagery. Another of Plath’s poems that touches on the Jewish Holocaust during the Second World War is “Getting There”. The reason for this assertion is underlined by the use of certain words in the poem, such as line 6: “Of Krupp, black muzzles” and the use of certain imagery, such as the train imagery, which calls to mind the taking of passengers or prisoners to a concentration camp. This poem, interestingly enough, also has a line, its final line, that reads “pure as a baby”. It is noted here because of the line in “Lady Lazarus” that refers to a “pure gold baby/ That melts to a shriek”. Apart from this similarity in words, there is further similarity in that death is not the end in “Getting There”. The final lines of the poem read: “I shall bury the wounded like pupas,/ I shall count and bury the dead./ Let their souls writhe in a dew,/ Incense in my track./ The carriages rock, they are cradles./ And I, stepping from this skin/ Of old bandages, boredoms, old faces// Step to you from the black car of Lethe,/ Pure as a baby”.

“Getting There”, just like “Lady Lazarus”, speaks of a rebirth. When the speaker says: “I shall bury the wounded like pupas”, there is the expectation that they will be transformed into something else, that they are not gone. This is underlined by the fact that the carriages are likened to cradles and that the speaker steps from “the black car of Lethe,/ Pure as a baby”, not conquered, but conquering her oppressors. The resurrection in both these poems perhaps conveys something of Plath’s intentions behind using Holocaust imagery in her poetry, in that the use of it served as a forceful remembrance. She resurrects the event of the Holocaust via her use of Holocaust imagery in her poetry, and so the reader is not able to forget what happened or those who died, which means that, in one sense, their lives continue to be lived.

Plath’s ‘Ariel voice’ in her latter poems, though distinct in style from poems before 1961, still reflects her great technical discipline in using poetic devices, while between *Ontvlugting* and *Rook en Oker*, there is a marked difference in Jonker’s approach. Her technical ability matured, while her poetic expressions also became freer, less rigid, and, as a result, the poems succeed in engaging the reader to a greater extent.

Plath left two collections of poetry, *The Colossus* and *Ariel*, while Jonker left three collections, *Ontvlugting*, *Rook en Oker*, and *Kantelson*. This does not reflect the total collection of their work accurately, as Plath was, as previously mentioned, the more prolific writer of the two. In taking the intertextual aspects of the poets' works into consideration, it seems clear that it took both of them some time to find and be comfortable with their own poetic voices. This is reflected by Plath's *The Colossus* in comparison to *Ariel*, and by Jonker's *Ontvlugting* in comparison to *Rook en Oker*, as well as the development of certain themes in their poetry over time.

1.4 A Comparison: Extratextual Aspects of the Selected Poems

The extratextual relations of a poem have to do with the interaction between the text and the author's (auto)biographical, historical, social, and political context. This, along with the intertextual relations, form another part of the context of the poem. Each of the selected Plath and Jonker poems is now viewed in the light of the poets' (auto)biography and only certain aspects of their historical, social, and political contexts, as is relevant to the poem being discussed. The selection of poems is looked at specifically and comparatively, focussing on the biographical facts and overlap in the poets' lives, to see if further similarities or disparities may be detected. Chapter 1, section 1.1.1. (see pp. 7-10) may be referred to again for a concise overview of Plath's and Jonker's lives, however, I mention a few more (auto)biographical events here, relevant to the discussion about their lives and the contexts they lived in.

Jonker's social, political, and literary contexts were influenced by her growing up as a white Afrikaner in Apartheid South Africa. She was a decidedly poor white Afrikaner, and her family had a very hard time of it, experiencing deep poverty for a time after Jonker's grandfather passed away (Viljoen, 2012: 19). This was before she and her sister moved in with their father upon the death of their mother (Viljoen, 2012: 24). In her father's home, which was much stricter than the home her mother and grandmother made, she lived in and experienced more privilege. Finally, part of Jonker's extratextual context was that she lived in the milieu of the Sestigers, and everything that the group came to be associated with in Apartheid South Africa. As Viljoen (2012: 10) points out, "Her life was also closely intertwined with the work of the Sestigers, who were busy rewriting Afrikaner history and literature by opposing the political and literary establishment of the time."

The social, political, and literary contexts in which Plath wrote, on the other hand, were rather varied. She was born an American, but as Gill (2008: 14) points out: "she traces her ancestors back to Germany and Poland and was brought up by parents for whom English was a second language. In terms of literary and linguistic influences, then, she is partway between American and European heritages." Plath was a first generation American on her father's side and was raised in the American middleclass. She was educated in America at the prestigious Smith College, but also spent a number of years studying and living in Britain, which, though English, is an altogether different context from America.

1.4.1 Comparing the Extratextual Aspects of "Balloons" and "Swanger vrou"

As far as biographical events go, motherhood is an experience that Plath and Jonker shared. In considering poems such as "Balloons" and "You're", it is noteworthy that Plath was, just as can be seen of Jonker, very eager to become a mother. As Gill (2008: 8) points out: "Plath wanted, as her *Journals* repeatedly make clear, to write, to teach and to be a fulfilled wife and mother." By the autumn of 1959, after the Hughes couple had been trying for some time to get pregnant, Plath knew that she finally was (Gill, 2008: 9).

"Balloons" was written on the 5th of February 1963, only six days before Plath's suicide. Plath was living with her two small children in an apartment at this time, and was separated, but not divorced, from Ted Hughes by then. The 5th of February was relatively soon after Christmas and the poem possibly describes an actual event in Plath's life with her children and the balloons left over from the Christmas celebrations in the modest apartment. As a result, the subject matter of the poem has an autobiographical note to it. Considering that Plath wrote this poem with its bright and almost humorous perspective six days before her death adds a shade of poignancy to it, although, considering the underlying unfriendliness of the "Balloons" world, it is perhaps not all that surprising after all.

Jonker also often expressed her desire to be a mother and in 1957 she writes to Uys Krige: "[E]k het mos gesê ek sal jou die nuus gou-gou vertel, nou ja, ek is in die ander tyd, die 'baba' is sewe weke oud, en ons is vreeslik in ons skik! Teen die end van November hoop ek om mamma te wees..." ("I said that I would not delay in telling you the news, well, I am pregnant, the 'baby' is seven weeks old, and we are very pleased! I hope to be a mommy by the end of November...") (Metelerkamp, 2003: 81).

In the same letter, Jonker sent Krige a revised version of "Swanger vrou" and thanked him for his 'inspiring' help with the poem, while she also pointed out specific edits she had made to it (Metelkamp, 2003: 81). The poem itself reflects something very different from the joyous excitement that Jonker expressed at, and during, her pregnancy.

"Swanger vrou" forces the reader to ask if the narrator is happy or unhappy. Has she had an abortion before or has she not had an abortion? Perhaps she is anticipating an abortion even up to the point of giving birth? Is the poem recalling a lost infant, as well as reporting on an expected birth? It is possible to read "Swanger vrou" and trace something of an unwanted pregnancy in it. The reader could make a strong case for the presence of abortion imagery in the text, especially when taking the references to the sewer into consideration. It does not seem clear, however, that Jonker intended for this imagery to be present in the poem. If she did, it seems more likely that she may have done so in reference to her own birth rather than an expected child's birth at that stage of her life. Here an excerpt from Gertenbach's (2008: 185) article "Die aantrekkingskrag van die see" ("The magnetism of the ocean") may shed some more light on this aspect of the poem:

Iets waarmee Jonker 'n stryd gevoer het, is dat haar ma haar maklik kon aborteer het nadat sy van Abraham Jonker af weg is (Van der Merwe, 2006: 239). Miskien is dit waarop die woordjie "riool" (r. 2, 11, 19, 31) sinspeel: dat afstand van die kind gedoen is en dat Jonker haarself daarmee identifiseer.

(Something that Jonker battled with, was that her mother could have easily aborted her after she left Abraham Jonker (Van der Merwe, 2006: 239). Maybe that is what the word "sewer" (l. 2, 11, 19, 31) hints at: that the child was abandoned and that this is what Jonker identifies with.)

The reading of the poem in search of abortion imagery is perhaps fuelled by the fact that Jonker aborted a child fathered by Jack Cope in 1961 (Metelkamp, 2003: 115). There are also speculations about a pregnancy and abortion in 1965, this time with André Brink as the father. Although this may be true, it is difficult to confirm beyond a doubt. Brink's novel, *Orgie*, may have something to do with these speculations, but as Viljoen (2012: 115) states:

Because of its [*Orgie's*] strongly autobiographical content, some commentators have been tempted to use elements from the novel to reconstruct Ingrid's life. As

I have stressed, this is a dangerous move because it disregards the complex interplay between fiction and (auto)biographical fact that comes into play in any literary text.

In any event, both the first abortion and the second abortion (if the second took place), would have occurred some years after Jonker wrote "Swanger vrou". Thus, though abortion imagery may be traced in "Swanger vrou" via a close reading strategy, a reading strategy based purely on the biographical facts of Jonker's life would not support it; it could only be biographically supported in reference to the circumstances surrounding her own birth as Gertenbach points out, and the fact that her father viewed her as illegitimate.

A much better argument for abortion imagery can be made in a reading and analysis of the poem "Korreltjie Sand" ("Little grain of sand"). This is especially true when reading lines 9 to 12: "Kindjie wat skreeu uit die skoot/ niks in die wêreld is groot/ stilletjies lag nou en praat/ stilte in Doodloopstraat" ("Baby that screams from the womb/ nothing is big in this tomb/ quietly laugh now and speak/ silence in dead-end street") and lines 17 to 20: "Pyltjie geveer in verskiet/ liefde verklein in die niet/ Timmerman bou aan 'n kis/ Ek maak my gereed vir die Niks" ("Small arrow feathered into space/ love fades away from its place/ Carpenter seals a coffin that's bought/ I ready myself for the nought"). Jonker actually wrote this poem during a hospital stay, and gave a copy of it to her psychiatrist in 1961 (Metelerkamp, 2003: 115-116).

"Balloons" and "Swanger vrou" afford the reader a look at the world through the eyes of a mother. As shown, both Plath and Jonker were eager and excited about becoming mothers, as Plath's "You're" and Jonker's letter to Uys Krige reveal. Both women were, however, aware of how difficult it can be to navigate the world safely. They experienced this in their own lives and thus poems such as "Balloons" and "Swanger vrou" reveal worlds in which the speakers (mothers) are aware of the complexities that exist, in which the "sewer" is a reality along with childbirth and joy, and in which the child can have blood on his hands as he interacts in ignorance with the world around him.

1.4.2 Comparing the Extratextual Aspects of "Lady Lazarus" and "Bitterbessie dagbreek"

The biographical overlap that bears on the extratextual discussion of "Lady Lazarus" and "Bitterbessie dagbreek" has to do with the significant male relationships in Plath's and Jonker's life. In the case of "Lady Lazarus", relationships with men in general are

portrayed, but in the case of "Bitterbessie dagbreek", the broken relationship explored appears to be romantic.

In Plath's biography, two significant male relationships stand out: her relationship with her father, Otto Plath, and her relationship with, and marriage to, Ted Hughes. Otto Emil Plath was born in a town on the Polish/German border. His parents were German, but one of his grandmothers was evidently Polish. Otto Plath did very well at school and when his grandparents, then living in the USA, learnt of his potential, they sent for him to join them in America (Gill, 2008: 1). Insight into Plath's relationship with her father is scant. Other than the fact that he was much older than her mother and died when Plath was only eight years old, there is not much more one can glean, except that it seems clear that Plath deeply felt the loss of her father throughout her life. Several of her journal entries highlight this fact (Plath, 2000: 64, 223, 431, 433, 474).

Plath and Ted Hughes met and married in England in 1956 and, though separated at the time of Plath's suicide, they remained married until she died. With both being writers, Plath and Hughes's marriage, their relationship to one another's work, as well as Plath's struggles with depression, must have been difficult to navigate. Gill (2008: 11) writes that "[b]y the summer of 1962, the marriage was in difficulties. Aurelia Plath [Plath's mother] visited for some weeks in July and August but soon sensed the 'anxiety in the air' (LH 485). Earlier in the summer, Hughes had begun a relationship with a mutual acquaintance, Assia Wevill."

After having lost her father at a young age, the betrayal she felt at Hughes's unfaithfulness was deep. As Gill (2008: 11) further highlights, "Plath's letters indicate how traumatised she was by these events: 'The worst things that could happen to her were happening to her,' as Middlebrook puts it. Nevertheless, this period proved unexpectedly fruitful in terms of the creativity and focus of her writing." Taking into consideration both these significant relationships with the opposite sex, and the complicated dynamics in both, the reader could possibly see reason for Lady Lazarus's desire for revenge against men, though revenge would be an extreme simplification of the complex nature of the poem, and the variety of themes in it.

Looking for a moment at the significant male relationships in Jonker's life, no one familiar with her life and her relationships with men would say that she ever truly found what she was looking for in love, as her romantic relationships were all rather unstable. The complicated relationship with her father is highlighted on p. 8 of this thesis, and, significantly, she wrote the following to Laurens van der Post on the 2nd of August 1964,

quoted by Metelerkamp (2003: 155): "I know there are other things in life apart from love, but one has to have a basis to go out from. Without it, my whole wretched past lifts its dreadful head, and looks at me with that sad and wasted look which paralyses me with terror." No matter how hard Jonker tried to find safety in love, she could not seem to find it. Apart from her difficult relationship with her father, her marriage to Piet Venter, as well as her other relationships with Jack Cope, André Brink, and Herman van Nazareth, were rather complicated and altogether emotionally messy. These relationships and all their complications certainly provided Jonker with plenty of material with which to work, however, when she put pen to paper to write poems such as "Bitterbessie dagbreek".

The thematic overlap for comparing "Lady Lazarus" with "Bitterbessie dagbreek" was the fact that the speakers in the poems, both women, have been treated unjustly in one sense or another by men. In "Bitterbessie dagbreek" and in "Lady Lazarus", the speakers are experiencing either pain or frustration as a result of a man, or men, such as the "hom" in "Bitterbessie dagbreek", and the "Herr Doktor", "Herr Enemy", "Herr God", and "Herr Lucifer" in "Lady Lazarus". In both poems, there is continual conflict between the speakers' expectations and the fulfilment of those expectations. This conflict also creates ironic tension in both poems, and remains unresolved.

It is difficult to trace when "Bitterbessie dagbreek" was written. It was certainly written before the publication of *Rook en Oker* in 1963 and by this time, Jonker's relationships with the opposite sex had already become intensely complicated. In general, what may be observed of the speakers in Jonker's poems is that they are either lost (and at a loss) without their lover, or unable to see or discover themselves without being reflected in the image of the lover. Poems like "Dubbelspel" ("Double game"), "Ek herhaal jou" ("I repeat you") as well as "Bitterbessie dagbreek" reflect this.

An important difference between the speaker in "Lady Lazarus" and the speaker in "Bitterbessie dagbreek" is the creativity of Lady Lazarus in purposefully channelling her pain and seeking to be inventive in gaining her revenge, whereas the speaker in "Bitterbessie dagbreek" sees no solution or road to lead her to safety, apart from finding her lover and trying to fix what was broken. In broad strokes, I feel that this reflects something of the biography of the two poets: Plath became even more prolific and cutting in her writing after Hughes moved out, while Jonker's emotional disorientation became more and more melancholy, captured by other poems such as "Alles wat breek" ("All that breaks").

1.4.3 Comparing the Extratextual Aspects of “Swanger vrou” and “You’re”

As already discussed under 1.4.1. with the extratextual comparison of “Balloons” to “Swanger vrou”, motherhood was a shared experience between Plath and Jonker. “You’re” is a poem of such expectation of the infant’s arrival that one cannot help but think that it actually echoes something of Plath’s own eager expectation during her two pregnancies. Plath was a writer, but she was also a mother, though she found juggling these different roles in her life very complicated at times. Social expectations at the time probably did not help matters either.

In 1957, after their wedding, Hughes and Plath moved to the USA and Plath took up a teaching position at her alma mater. It is very telling that Plath’s Journals “indicate a degree of ambivalence about this new role [teaching at Smith College]. On the one hand, it was an honour to be included among the faculty of such an esteemed institution, on the other, Plath had no female role models who could persuade her of the feasibility in these circumstances of reconciling all her other aspirations. The Smith faculty were largely single (and apparently less than enthusiastic about their star pupil’s hurried marriage) and dedicated to their academic lives” (Gill, 2008: 8).

It would seem that the social expectations of the day dictated that Plath either be a fulfilled wife and mother, or a fulfilled writer and lecturer, however, it does not seem that there was room in Plath’s social context to be both. Plath wanted both – not just the one or the other, and this may be one of the reasons for some of the emotional conflict that Plath experienced in her life as a wife, mother and writer. With a poem like “You’re”, she could almost fulfil all the roles she desired to fulfil: reflect her thoughts and excitement on motherhood while penning it on paper as a very skilled writer in her own right.

Jonker’s “Swanger vrou”, on the other hand, though it carries expectation, is deeply coloured by the mother’s ambiguous feelings about birthing a child into the “sewer”. Though the reader knows that Jonker desired to be a mother and loved her daughter dearly by all (auto)biographical accounts, “Swanger vrou” conveys reluctance and doubt about being a mother and about giving birth to a child, knowing that the child will be faced with the same sadness of the “sewer” that the mother has been, and still is, faced with.

The fact that Jonker held these ambiguous feelings about motherhood in tension so well in “Swanger vrou”, in contrast to the unequivocal and eager expectations of “You’re”, is

starkly highlighted by the intratextual comparison of the poems. Plath wrote poems such as "Nick and the Candlestick", which is closer in tone to "Swanger vrou", while she was also capable of penning a poem such as "You're". "You're", however, reflects nothing of the tension that Plath felt in becoming a mother while still fulfilling the roles of wife and writer. She fully expressed the expectation of the mother, but said nothing of the change and challenges that the baby inevitably carries with it upon arrival. This is what makes Jonker's "Swanger vrou" more 'successful' in a certain way, when compared to Plath's "You're", as it expresses the conflict of the mother truthfully and well.

1.4.4 Comparing the Extratextual Aspects of "Met hulle is ek" and "Lady Lazarus"

In comparing "Met hulle is ek" and "Lady Lazarus", I want to highlight Jonker's and Plath's social and political voices. As mentioned before (see p. 137), Jonker is regarded as a Sestigers poet. Apart from Jonker, writers like André Brink, Jan Rabie, Adam Small, Bartho Smit, Etienne Leroux, and Breyten Breytenbach (amongst others) also formed part of the group. The overriding political context in which Jonker and the Sestigers lived and wrote was Apartheid. Flowing out of Apartheid, there were censorship issues that confronted almost all of the Sestigers in one way or another, and Jonker was quite outspoken against these. The censorship issues in South Africa are also what brought Jonker and her father, a Nationalist, into open and very public conflict with one another.

The 1960s, and especially the early 1960s, were a tense time in South Africa. The Sharpeville Massacre took place on the 21st of March 1960 at a police station in the old Transvaal province (today located in the Gauteng province). After a day of demonstration against the Pass laws, 69 people were killed when police opened fire on the protesting crowd. Shortly after, the Rivonia Trial took place over the course of 1963-1964. At this trial, leaders of the ANC were tried for acts of sabotage designed to overthrow the Apartheid regime in South Africa. These are but two incidents that illustrate the tension in South Africa at this time – many more incidents occurred on a daily basis, which, though smaller in nature, were just as important in perpetuating the injustice and corresponding tension.

Other matters that would have been present in the background, other than the censorship issues and pervading political tension, were the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Immorality Act (1950), which made it a criminal offence for any white person to have a sexual relationship with a person of another race. One example of the enforcement of these laws may be found within Jonker's own circle of

friends and acquaintances: in 1965 Breyten Breytenbach's wife Yolande, of Vietnamese descent, was denied a South African visa in order to accompany Breytenbach in accepting the APB Prize for his work (Viljoen, 2012: 121).

It is against this backdrop of Apartheid and censorship issues that Jonker writes "Met hulle is ek" in January of 1965, which is also the year that she eventually committed suicide. Though Jonker was surprised to have people refer to her political voice in poems such as "Die kind wat doodgeskiet is deur soldate by Nyanga", it is doubtful that she would have expressed surprise in reference to her political and social voice in "Met hulle is ek". This poem from Jonker's *Kantelson* collection of poems sees its speaker drawing a clear line in the sand, and it quite clearly states on which side of the line the speaker is taking her place. As Viljoen (2012: 148) points out: "She [Jonker] brought a distinctive voice to the writing of the Sestigers, with whom she shared a break with tradition, assimilation of influences from a wider world literature and a sensitivity to the social and political exigencies of the time."

As I have written much already on the topic of Plath's social and political awareness reflected in "Lady Lazarus" (see pp. 87-102), my overview here is quite brief: Plath's father, Otto Emil Plath, was of German descent and a first generation American. Plath's mother, Aurelia, was the daughter of a German-speaking family from Austria who had left their country for the USA earlier in the nineteenth century (Gill, 2008: 2). In light of her family roots, then, Plath's use of Holocaust imagery in her poetry perhaps appears rather strange and even ironic.

The Holocaust was a public experience, however, and as such became a phenomenon of language in the years after the Second World War. Plath absorbed and experienced it as an American in an American context. Due to the public experience of the Holocaust and its incorporation into language, poets such as Plath could then make this 'Holocaust language' their own, part of their personal experience in life. Holocaust language could be used to describe, via metaphor, personal, or private experiences. It was then made public again in the form of a published poem. Plath absorbed her culture and what was happening around her, and made it personally applicable by expressing it in her poems (Strangeways, 1996: 375-376).

Plath's use of the Jewish Holocaust is, as noted, perhaps highly ironic in the context of her German descent, while Jonker's outspokenness, as a Sestiger, against the injustice of the Apartheid system in her poetry is today applauded by many, and almost expected,

as the reader interacts with her texts in the aftermath of Apartheid. It is not as surprising as Plath's use of Holocaust imagery in her poetry, in other words.

Jonker expressed strong feelings against what she perceived as injustice in certain of her writings, such as in the poems "Met hulle is ek" and "Die kind wat doodgeskiet is deur soldate by Nyanga", in which the boy eventually becomes a man that travels the world without a pass. In certain of Plath's poems, like "Lady Lazarus" and "Getting There", the victims of the Holocaust are raised from the dead. It may be that, through their words, these two poets tried to give a public voice to the injustices of their world, those things they perceived as deeply wrong in their social and political settings. By giving the dead a voice, or by being a voice for the dead and, in a sense, raising them from the dead to speak, to remind, these poets attempted to correct the past wrongs. Their writings have, in a way, become a witness of a certain time or occurrence in history. Perhaps they are not strictly reliable or factual, but nevertheless present, and in being present, emotionally powerful and loud.

1.5 Summary

Plath's formal training in comparison to Jonker's largely informal training reveals, as I suspected before commencing the analyses and the comparisons of the selected poems, that Plath was the more disciplined author of the two. Though Jonker's style is not at all deficient, the comparison of intratextual relations reveals that she did not use and apply poetic devices with the same focus as Plath. Poetic form plays a significant role in conveying the content of Plath's poems, while in Jonker's poems, the form does not always fully engage with, or support, the content.

The exploration and comparison of intertextual relations reveal that the selection of poems in this thesis reflects a sampling of the poets' 'own' voices. This 'own' voice for Plath is reflected in her *Ariel* collection of poetry, and for Jonker, it is reflected in her *Rook en Oker* collection. It also reveals the development of their maturity as writers and the development of themes across their poetry and collections of poems. The intertextual relations also reveal a development in both Plath's and Jonker's poems of their social and political voice: a controversial voice in the case of Plath and her use of Holocaust imagery, and an, at first hopeful, but finally dissenting and disillusioned voice in the case of Jonker.

The exploration and comparison of extratextual relations consider the biographical overlap in the authors' lives, and how these events may be traced in the selection of

poems by each poet. It reveals how their role as women was reflected in their work: Lady Lazarus is a very powerful resourceful woman despite her circumstances, while the speaker in "Bitterbessie dagbreek" remains powerless. On the other hand, the poem "Swanger vrou" acknowledges an authentic emotional conflict in becoming a mother, while "You're" is mute on the subject, despite Plath's struggles with fulfilling all the roles that she desired to fulfil as a woman. In reflecting on social and political events such as those represented by the Holocaust and Apartheid, both women reveal an awareness and dislike of injustice. It also perhaps reflects their understanding of the power of words and how words in a poem may, in an emotionally powerful manner, give a voice to those who are voiceless and are being treated in socially and politically unjust ways.

The comparisons also reveal that Jonker and Plath were more than the words they wrote. They were more complex as individuals, and much more complex than what one can comprehend by reading the words they left behind. They were more than their struggles with mental illness, and more than their eventual suicides. What facts and writings are available regarding their lives, I feel, clearly illustrate this. To approach their work in search of biographical fact, signs of mental illness, and impending suicide is not only unfair, but in the end undermines who they were, and what and how they wrote. This being said, the biographical events of their lives may broaden interpretation of what they wrote about, and more fully colour the context of each poem. It is very difficult, for example, to fully explore "Lady Lazarus" without considering the effect that Holocaust history had on Plath. In the same manner, it is difficult to fully appreciate the anger and disillusionment in "Met hulle is ek", unless the reader is aware of the injustice of Apartheid and censorship with which Jonker was confronted, and against which she was very outspoken, even to the detriment of her relationship with her own father.

As Gill (2008: 13) observes, "[I]t would be a disservice to Plath's ingenuity as a writer to see the work as a mere mirror of the life she led." This is a sentiment which is echoed by Viljoen about Ingrid Jonker in *Ingrid Jonker: Poet under Apartheid*. I firmly agree with both Gill and Viljoen, and again assert that it is not only fair, but essential to allow the poetry of Plath and Jonker to speak for itself, before the reader looks at the context in which they both lived and wrote. As a consequence, I would assert that criticisms of both authors' works should endeavour to include more close readings of their works (the exploration of intratextual relations), along with intertextual and extratextual discussions.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Apart from looking at selected poems by Plath and Jonker comparatively, the aim of this thesis was to try and give equal attention to both the poetic text and context in which it was written, and to try not to engage more with the one than with the other. In this final chapter of the thesis, I consider and discuss how the main issues in Plath's and Jonker's literature, explored in Chapter 2, connect with the discussion under Chapter 4. I also convey the answers to the research questions, in summary. Lastly, I look at recommendations or suggestions for further research, based on what this thesis brings to light.

1.1 Conclusions

The Literature Review (Chapter 2) reveals that there is an abundant amount of academic conversation that has happened and continues to happen around the works of Sylvia Plath. In reviewing the literature available on Ingrid Jonker's works, the academic conversations are shown to be a little more muted. The Literature Review also reveals the very varied approaches that have been undertaken in analysing both poets' works. It reveals, too, that exercises of close reading, with a few exceptions, have not been the main focus in the discussion of either poet's poetry. In other words, context has, for the most part, been favoured over text, and over form.

Chapter 3 seeks to make clear the form and content of the selected poems via a close reading exercise. Chapter 4 then seeks to comparatively explore the intratextual relations of the selection of poems and then seeks to extend, or enrich, this by a comparative exploration of intertextual and extratextual relations. It remains my opinion that the numerous explorations that emphasise context over text may have clouded the communication of Jonker's and Plath's poems to a certain extent.

As a close reading of "Lady Lazarus" reveals, the poem is much more complex than simply offering an account of Plath's own suicide attempts. Thus, reading it only to discover her emotional state or motivations for committing suicide does an injustice to both the poem in question and the life that Plath lived. The circumstances surrounding Plath's death were so much more complicated than ascribing her suicide to emotional instability allows. Thus, I believe that the attention that is paid in this thesis to the 'own' voice of each of the Plath and Jonker poems, and the analysis of the use of poetic

devices and the poems' structure (or form, as it were), already enriches the reading of these poems.

Something that I would like to note in concluding this thesis has to do with my second attempt at a close reading of "Balloons". As I point out in Chapter 1, under the Rationale heading (see p. 10), some of the significance of this research lay for me personally in the development of my critical skills in the study and appreciation of poetry, and in my development as a critical reader in the literary theory tradition. I honestly feel that the work on this thesis has more than brought about this development, and I can trace it most significantly by comparing my initial close reading of "Balloons" for my Honours studies to the close reading of the poem for this thesis. I discovered much more about the complexities of the poem as I read it again for analysis in Chapter 3. One aspect that demonstrates this is the discovery that there is something more menacing below the light-hearted surface of the poem.

My first close reading of "Balloons" only focussed on the funny acrobatics of the balloons, the colourful and lively atmosphere they created in the drab apartment, and the fascination of the boy with the balloons and his surprise at popping one of the balloons. My second close reading of "Balloons" highlighted the "red shred" metaphor at the end of the poem, and the possibility of the boy figuratively having blood on his hands as a result of slaying one of the balloon animals. This reading was also enhanced when I further engaged with Plath's work in the *Ariel* collection of poems, and as I considered the content of "Balloons" in the light of Plath's 'Ariel voice' and in the light of her other poems (such as "Cut" and "The Applicant") which also read in a light-hearted fashion, but with weightier things being considered.

The research question of this thesis seeks to ask and answer whether there are overlaps in intratextual, intertextual, and extratextual relations in Sylvia Plath's and Ingrid Jonker's poetry, given that they were contemporaries and shared biographical events. It also asks what can be discovered, after having followed a close reading strategy, about the intratextual relations of each poem, and how these relations compare, based on the thematic overlap of the selection of poems. Finally, it asks what can be discovered about the intertextual and extratextual relations of each poem, and how these relations compare.

The short answer to the first part of the research questions is, yes. Yes, there are overlaps in the intratextual, intertextual, and extratextual relations of the selection of poems, but also differences. A comparison of intratextual relations reveals Plath's formal

training in comparison to Jonker's largely informal training, for example, and that generally Plath was the more disciplined author of the two. Nevertheless, a close reading of poems such as "Balloons" and "Swanger vrou" reveals both poets' deftness at using poetic devices to communicate the content of these poems. It reveals their mature handling of the subject matter, and their maturity in creating and maintaining ironic tension.

The explorations of intratextual relations revealed too that Plath's poems are generally rich in complex metaphor, while Jonker's poems are generally richer in sound than metaphor. It showed, too, Jonker's knack for choosing the 'right' words, although both poets' command of the languages in which they wrote is impressive and inspiring.

The intertextual and extratextual relations of each poem (and how these relations compare) revealed and highlight that the selection of poems is a reflection or sampling of the poets' 'own' voices. It also revealed the development of their maturity as writers and the development of themes across their poetry and collections of poems. I also briefly explored the difficulties that surrounded Plath's posthumously published *Ariel* collection, difficulties which were not present with Jonker's posthumously published *Kantelson* collection. Finally, the exploration and comparison of extratextual relations again considered the biographical overlap in the authors' lives, and how these events may be traced in the selection of poems by each poet.

1.2 Recommendations/Suggestions for Further Research

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, it is impossible to say everything that can be said about the intratextual, intertextual and extratextual relations of Plath's and Jonker's work. As I worked on this thesis, what I noted as areas or recommendations for further study is that a reading of Jonker's work that is in the same vein as Blosser's reading of Plath's may be one area of further research that could be a worthy undertaking. It may help with tracing the development of themes, as well as the development of the use of poetic devices and style in Jonker's entire oeuvre. Such an exploration may allow the reader to engage more fully in a comparison of Plath's and Jonker's works, as it would look completely at the development of each poet across her entire body of work.

Other poems that I would highlight for comparison purposes, not only in light of their technical beauty and themes, but also in light of the biographical overlap in the poets' lives, are Jonker's "Ek wil nie meer besoek ontvang nie" ("I do not want to receive any more visits") and Plath's "Tulips". These two poems are very similar in the way they

are written, and also in theme and the subject matter that is laid bare. Each speaker finds herself in a hospital or recovery situation, and both are tired of the intrusions they are experiencing. The (auto)biographical events of the poets' lives reveal that they both spent periods of time in hospital for treatment of their depression, and once (in Plath's case) after an attempted suicide.

In Jonker's poem, the intrusions come in the form of other patients and visitors, and in Plath's poem, in the form of the red tulips in the room of the speaker. In broad terms, these well-meant intrusions only serve to further exacerbate and frustrate the speakers instead of improving their circumstances or state of being. Though not explored in this study, I would assert that it would be worthwhile to do so in further studies that seek to compare Plath's and Jonker's poetry.

In summary, as a last and very general observation of the two poets' work, I would note that, for the inexperienced reader, Jonker's poems may be easier to plumb than Plath's. Jonker's poems are mostly more transparent in meaning, while poems such as Plath's "Death & Co", "Fever 103°", and "Lady Lazarus" are decidedly more opaque and the meaning harder to get at, if the reader is not familiar with Plath's style. Close reading of either poet's poems, however, does much in bringing the reader closer to the communication of the poems, and gives the reader greater understanding of their incredible skill as poets and their shared experiences, which were broader than the conclusion of their lives in acts of suicide. Thus, in my estimation, the critical reader should not just consider the text or the context, the form or the content, but both equally as far as possible, allowing the text to speak for itself first.

Glossary of Terms

Apostrophe: The use of the term apostrophe in this thesis refers to addresses to an imaginary person. It also refers to a rhetorical segment in which an absent or imaginary person, or an abstract or non-living entity is addressed directly.

Diffuse repetition: This kind of sound repetition in a poem may be best explained by an example, “fail – fields – flies – hail – lilies – blow” (Gräbe, 2002: 66).

Extratextual: Pertaining to, or being of something that is external to a literary text. Thus, extratextual refers to the context (biographical, social, cultural, and historical) in which a text was written.

Free verse: This form of verse does not completely abandon the use of poetic devices, but it is usually, as Peck & Coyle (2002: 38) point out: “written in irregular lines and without any regular metre.” All other forms of verse are based on a set metrical pattern (Peck & Coyle, 2002: 38).

Intertextual: This is the relationship between texts: the relationship that exists between different texts, especially literary texts, or the reference in one text to other texts.

Irony: Explored in terms of the New Critic sense of the word, as Peck & Coyle (2002: 159) explain: “[T]he ‘New Critics’ expanded the meaning of the word, identifying irony as an informing attitude in good poetry. ... [A] good writer is aware that there are a great many sides to any issue, and so good poetry is always ironic as the author always undercuts any straightforward statement of his or her views ...”

Metaphor: The three components of metaphor looked at in this study are: 1.) Tenor, which refers to the ‘something’ that is being made clear or vivid by the metaphor. 2.) Vehicle, which is the ‘something else’ to which the tenor is being equated or likened. 3.) Ground, which refers to what the tenor and vehicle have in common.

Metre: This is poetic measure; the arrangement of words in regularly measured, patterned, or rhythmic lines or verses.

Onomatopoeia: The imitation of sound in words, or the formation or use of words that imitate the sound associated with something, e.g. ‘hiss’ and ‘buzz’.

Syntax: "Syntax ... is concerned with the placing and relationships of the units of language within sentences. More simply, syntax refers to the way in which word order affects meaning." (Peck & Coyle, 2002: 174)

Typography: In poetry, typography has to do with the arrangement of the poem on a page in, for example, verse lines or stanzas; the appearance of the poem on the page, in other words.

The arrangement of poems in *Ariel* (1965) versus the arrangement of poems in *Ariel: The Restored Edition* (2004):

<i>Ariel</i> (1965)	<i>Ariel</i> (2004)
Morning Song	Morning Song
The Couriers	The Couriers
Sheep in Fog	The Rabbit Catcher
The Applicant	Thalidomide
Lady Lazarus	The Applicant
Tulips	Barren Woman
Cut	Lady Lazarus
Elm	Tulips
The Night Dances	A Secret
Poppies in October	The Jailor
Berck-Plage	Cut
Ariel	Elm
Death & Co.	The Night Dances
Nick and the Candlestick	The Detective
Gulliver	Ariel
Getting There	Death & Co.
Medusa	Magi
The Moon and the Yew Tree	Lesbos
A Birthday Present	The Other
Letter in November	Stopped Dead
The Rival	Poppies in October
Daddy	The Courage of Shutting-Up
You're	Nick and the Candlestick
Fever 103°	Berck-Plage
The Bee Meeting	Gulliver
The Arrival of the Bee Box	Getting There

Stings	Medusa
Wintering	Purdah
The Hanging Man	The Moon and the Yew Tree
Little Fugue	A Birthday Present
Years	Letter in November
The Munich Mannequins	Amnesiac
Totem	The Rival
Paralytic	Daddy
Balloons	You're
Poppies in July	Fever 103°
Kindness	The Bee Meeting
Contusion	The Arrival of the Bee Box
Edge	Stings
Words	Wintering

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