Portrait of a Lady with Text

Ina Gräbe

At a colloquium on Text and Ideology held at RAU Island a couple of years ago Ina Gräbe read a paper entitled “Text as Artistic Dictator”. The word “text” in this title reflects a central concern in Ina’s work as reader and theoretician of literature during the past three decades. Her very special contribution to the promotion and development of literary theory and comparative literature in South Africa goes far beyond reading texts, however, though this remains a key term even in the way she reads university management. It is for this special contribution that we dedicate this issue of *Journal of Literary Studies* to Ina Gräbe.

Ina has made a huge contribution in four fields – as seminal theoretician, as a most competent promoter and champion of literary theory, as editor of journals and as scholar of international repute. In all that she remains a charming person, though not one to be taken lightly.

As theoretician Ina very ably continued the theoretical impulse of the Amsterdam school of stylistics in a highly competent way. In particular she continued the pioneering work of T.T. Cloete, whose student she was both for her M.A. at the University of Port Elizabeth as well as for the D. Lit. et Phil. in theory of literature that she completed at Potchefstroom University. Her thesis, on aspects of poetic language, remains seminal in the analysis of poetry in Afrikaans. Her most important contribution since then has been her work on narratology on important South African writers like John M. Coetzee, Zakes Mda and Marlene van Niekerk. Her most recent publication is a monograph entitled *Landscape as a Troubled Space* (Odense University Press, Denmark, 1997). She has also supervised a number of thorough and innovative studies by masters and doctoral students, like the one by G. van der Linde on cognitive rationality and indeterminism.

Ina has been a persuasive promoter and champion of the theory of literature in many different spheres. Since 1984 she has been head of the Department of Literary Theory at Unisa and since 1982 chairperson of the South African Society for General Literary Studies (SAVAL). In both capacities she made a huge contribution in promot-

ing and developing the discipline. In many lectures and talks at conferences, symposia and reading circles she championed the value of literary theory and actively demonstrated its usefulness. In CoHSSSA (Consortium for Human & Social Sciences Associations) and in the South African Academy for Arts and Science she rendered valuable services, as she did in the commission who supervised the new rhymed version of the Psalms in Afrikaans.

As co-editor and editor of the *Journal of Literary Studies/Tydskrif vir Literatuurwetenskap* since 1985 Ina has done a tremendous job in establishing the journal into an international journal of repute. In November 2000 she also accepted an invitation by the "Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns" to assume the position of chairperson of the Editorial Board of the Afrikaans interdisciplinary journal, *Tydskrif vir Geestes-wetenskappe*, following the retirement of the former chairperson, Prof. Edith Raidt. This is no small honour.

Ina's reputation as a scholar of international repute has become clearer in recent years, but the foundation for that was already laid during her study for the Drs. Litt. in Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature at the University of Utrecht and in the Ph.D. programme at Cornell University (1973). Later on she spent a sabbatical at the Porter Institute for Poetics and Theory of Literature at Tel Aviv University (1980) and in 1992 she was a guest lecturer in the Department of General Literary Studies of the University of Texas at Austin.

A frequent participant at South African Conferences and guest lecturer at local institutions, Ina also read papers on South African literature at a number of international conferences, including the International Conference on Narrative at Vanderbilt University, Nashville (1992), the XIVth and XVth triennial congresses of the International Comparative Literature Association in Edmonton (1994) and Leiden (1997), the Chinese Conference on Cultural Dialogue and Cultural Misreading in Beijing (1995), the 2nd International Congress of the Greek Association of Comparative Literature on Identity and Alterity in Athens (1998) and the International Colloquium on Multiculturalism and Identities in Literature and Art in Tahiti (1999). In August 1996 she participated in the Nordic Ph.D. Course on Literature's Nature, where she presented a lecture on the representation of nature in South African Literature.

In 1997 she was elected to the Executive Council of the ICLA and she is at present serving a second three-year term in that capacity. In August 2000 she was the General Organiser of the XVIth triennial congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, which was held at Unisa's Sunnyside campus, 13-19 August 2000 — the first time ever that an ICLA-congress was convened on African soil. During 2000 she was also honoured to be the African representative on the executive board of the newly founded International Association for Literary Theory, which will have its first executive meeting and international colloquium in Beijing in August 2001.

At the beginning of the 21st century, theory of literature in South Africa – like so many other institutions and disciplines – faces a particularly challenging period. The zeal and dedication of Ina Gräbe will remain a guiding light to all in the discipline – beacons to strive towards and inspiring examples of what a single person can accomplish.

Hein Viljoen
on behalf of the
Assistant Editors

Portret van ‘n vrou – met teks

Ina Gräbe

Tydens ‘n colloquium oor teks en ideologie wat ‘n paar jaar gelede op RAU-eiland gehou is, het Ina Gräbe ‘n referaat gelewer met die titel “Teks as artistieke diktator”. Die woord “teks” in die titel is ‘n sleutelterm in Ina se werk as leser en teoretikus van die afgelope drie dekades. Haar besondere bydrae tot die uitbou en bevordering van die literatuurwetenskap in Suid-Afrika strek egter veel wyer as die lees van tekste, al bly dit ook sentraal selfs in die manier waarop sy die universiteitsbestuur lees. Dit is vir hierdie besondere bydrae dat ons hierdie uitgawe van *Tydskrif vir Literatuurwetenskap* aan Ina Gräbe opdra.

Ina se bydrae lê veral op vier terreine – as rigtinggewende teoretikus, as uiters bekwame pleitbesorger en uitbouer van die vak, as tydskrif-redakteur en as wetenskaplike van internasionale aansien. By dit alles bly sy nog ‘n innemende mens wat op ‘n natuurlike wyse gesag afdwing.

As teoretikus is Ina ‘n baie waardige voortsetter van die teoretiese impuls wat uitgegaan het van die Amsterdamse stilistiese skool en met name van die baanbrekerswerk van T.T. Cloete, wie se student sy ook was, sowel vir die M.A. aan die Universiteit van Port Elizabeth as vir die D.Litt. et Phil. in Algemene Literatuurwetenskap aan die Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir CHO. Haar proefskrif, *Aspekte van poëtiese taalgebruik*, is nog steeds rigtinggewend vir die poësie-analise in Afrikaans. Haar vernaamste bydrae daarna lê stellig in haar werk op die terrein van narratologie en die studie van die werk van belangrike Suid-Afrikaanse skrywers soos John M. Coetzee, Zakes Mda en Marlene van Niekerk. Haar belangrikste onlangse publikasie is ‘n monografie met die titel *Landscape as a Troubled Space* (Odense University Press, Denmark, 1997). ‘n Ander belangrike bydrae is die deeglike en vernuwende werk wat haar M- en D-studente gedoen het, soos bv. die een oor kognitiewe rasionaliteit en onbepaaldheid deur G. van der Linde.

Ina is op talle terreine 'n uiters bekwame pleitbesorger en uitbouer van die literatuurwetenskap. Sy is sedert 1984 hoof van die departement Algemene Literatuurwetenskap aan Unisa en ook reeds sedert 1982 voorsitter van die Suid-Afrikaanse Vereniging vir Algemene Literatuurwetenskap (SAVAL). In beide hoedanighede het sy reusewerk gedoen om die vak te bevorder en uit te bou. Daarbenewens het sy in talle praatjies en lesings by vakkongresse, leeskringe en simposia en leeskringe die nut en waarde van literatuurwetenskap bepleit en daadwerklik aangetoon. Ook in CoHSSSA en in die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns het sy besondere dienste gelewer. Sy het ook gedien op die Interkerklike Kommissie vir die Psalmberyming.

As mederedakteur en redakteur van die tweetalige *Journal of Literary Studies/ Tydskrif vir Literatuurwetenskap* het Ina berge versit om die tydskrif opgerig te kry en uit te bou tot een van internasionale peil. Dat sy in November 2000 uitgenooi is om voorsitter te word van die Redaksie van *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* by die aftrede van prof. Edith Raidt as voorsitter, is 'n duidelike bewys van die respek wat Ina as akademikus en redakteur afdwing.

Ina se internasionale statuur as wetenskaplike het in die onlangse jare duideliker geword, maar die basis daarvan is reeds gelê tydens haar studie vir die Drs. Litt. in teoretiese en vergelykende literaturwetenskap aan die Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht en haar deelname aan die PhD-program van die Cornell-universiteit in 1973. Later het sy ook 'n sabbatsjaar deurgebring aan die Porter Institute for Poetics and Theory of Literature van die Tel Aviv Universiteit (1980) en in 1992 was sy gasdosent in die Department of General Literary Studies van die Universiteit van Texas in Austin.

Ina neem dikwels deel aan Suid-Afrikaanse kongresse en tree dikwels plaaslik op as gasdosent. Haar internasionale aansien blyk ook uit die referate oor Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde wat sy by 'n hele aantal internasionale kongresse gelewer het. Dit sluit in die International Conference on Narrative by Vanderbilt-universiteit, Nashville (1992), die XIVde en XVde driejaarlikse kongresse van die International Comparative Literature Association in Edmonton (1994) en Leiden (1997), die kongres oor *Cultural Dialogue and Cultural Misreading* in Beijing (1995), die 2de internasionale kongres van die Griekse

Vereniging vir Vergelykende Literatuurwetenskap oor Identity and Alterity in Athene (1998) en die internasionale colloquium oor Multiculturalism and Identities in Literature and Art in Tahiti (1999). In Augustus 1996 het sy deelgeneem aan die Noorse Ph.D.-kursus oor Literature's Nature, waar sy 'n lesing oor die representasie van die natuur in die Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde gelewer het.

In 1997 is Ina verkies tot die Uitvoerende Raad van ICLA en sy dien tans 'n tweede driejaartermyn uit in hierdie hoedanigheid. In Augustus 2000 was sy die algemene organiseerder van die XVIde driejaarlikse kongres van die International Comparative Literature Association, wat van 13 tot 19 Augustus op die Sunnyside-kampus van Unisa gehou is. Hierdie reuse taak dra bowendien die onderskeiding dat dit die heel eerste keer was dat 'n ICLA-kongres op die vasteland van Afrika gehou is. In 2000 is Ina ook genooi om die verteenwoordiger vir Afrika te wees op die hoofbestuur van die nuut gestigte International Association for Literary Theory, wat sy eerste bestuursvergadering en internasionale colloquium in Augustus 2001 in Beijing sal hou.

In die 21ste eeu gaan die literatuurwetenskap in Suid-Afrika – soos soveel ander dissiplines en instellings – 'n besonder uitdagende tydperk tegemoet. Die ywer en toewyding van Ina Gräbe is vir almal in hierdie omstandighede 'n besondere baken – 'n lig wat nagestreef kan word en 'n voorbeeld van wat 'n enkele individu kan bereik.

Hein Viljoen
namens
Assistent Redakteurs