

Obituary Lieve Troch (1949-2024)



Longstanding ESWTR member Lieve Troch passed away in the morning of December 17, 2024. Although she had been suffering from a muscle disease that was slowly getting worse, she died unexpectedly.

Lieve taught feminist theology and fundamental theology at the universities of Heerlen and Nijmegen, respectively. Since 1998 she was also, as professor for feminist theology, associated with the Universidade Metodista de São Paulo in Brasil.

Lieve and I have been cooperating and

working together for a long time. We both taught feminist theology: Lieve at the Heerlen University for Theology, I at Tilburg University. Later, we became direct colleagues at the Radboud University, Nijmegen. It was in those Nijmegen years, from 1998 onwards, that we spent time and worked together often and intensively. Only then did I seriously get to know her. We became friends and it was there that I discovered her many qualities and expertise.

Lieve was first and foremost an inspired and enthusiastic teacher, who, with her sharp analyses, smooth and clear narrative style, her broad erudition, managed to convince many of her feminist commitments and their theological relevance. In doing so, she also managed to overcome a growing resistance to the word feminism and feminist theology. Of course, she did not successfully convince everyone, especially the church leaders. On the other hand, she managed to transmit to women religious a contagious and enthusiastic way of theologizing. She had good contacts in that specific world and often guided retreats. Lieve may have had fewer and fewer expectations of the Institute Church, but that did not deprive her of her faith and trust in spirituality and the power of spirituality, its life force.

Lieve could be kind, yet extremely critically analytical. I did, for example, look again at the recording of an interview about *Laudato Si* – Pope Francis' mostly applauded encyclical – during which Lieve points to traces of power in the text which, she notes subtly, are sadly not elaborated on by Francis.

Lieve was one of the first in the Netherlands to clearly place liberation theology and feminist theology in a postcolonial framework. Thus, she brought out important concepts such as inter- or multiculturalism in a critical and constructive way. We enjoyed lecturing on these themes together for many years, just as we constantly pointed out the connection between gender, race, class, culture and religion during our Open Study Days. If anything was sacred to Lieve, it was perhaps the deep relation between these concepts. She called for resistance, a fighting spirit, and solidarity and she knew how to formulate all this with crystal clarity. Resistance was her main research theme of which the cutting edge can already be found in her dissertation of 1986: *Verzet is het geheim van de vreugde* ('Resistance is the Secret of Joy,' never translated).

Lieve was a great networker. Unfortunately, her vast international experience and her extensive international networks did not earn her the appreciation and recognition she deserved at the faculty in Nijmegen. While really travelling 'all over the world' she not only had her networks but also taught courses, lectures and readings everywhere and tirelessly. At all levels and in all circumstances.

But Lieve was more than combative, sharp, analytical, intellectual, she also paid attention to people's well-being, to how one felt.

Particularly in smaller circles, this emphatic side of Lieve emerged. Kenei, one of our joint PhD students, from Nagaland in India, writes about this: Lieve was not only 'hard on academics but was also a caring mentor who even asks if I am eating right and if the Netherlands is not too cold'. With the loss of Lieve,' she says, 'she loses a mentor, "mother", friend and inspiration.' Within this context, I would also like to point out another of Lieve's less visible but so very important qualities: she was very good at 'loosening the purse strings,' as she herself called it. By doing so, she made it possible for many foreign women to complete their MA or PhD studies in the Netherlands.

Lieve was resistant, solidary, committed and wise. Our Nijmegen colleague Grietje Dresen wrote: 'Eternal rest will not have attracted her, I fear. But may she be in the Light.' And, I would like to add: may she find Joy there.

Maaïke de Haardt (thanks to Magda Misset-van de Weg for the corrections)

