Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies invites abstract submissions for a special issue scheduled for publication in September 2026

Guest editors: Jesse van Amelsvoort (Universiteit van Amsterdam) and Looi van Kessel (Universiteit Leiden)

Looking for Intersectional Narratives of HIV/AIDS in Literature and Media

AIDS, Paula Treichler suggested (1987, cf. Crimp 1987, Sontag 1989) , has always been an 'epidemic of signification', in which various understandings of the disease fought for predominance and a claim to representation. Looking back over forty years since the first patients were diagnosed in 1981, we can discern various phases in the literary and cultural process of meaning-making around the epidemic: following initial silent years and a feverish period of cultural production came what Alexandra Juhasz and Theodore Kerr (2022) called 'a second silence', in which AIDS as a literary and cultural topic disappeared. From the mid-2000s on, Juhasz and Kerr claim (cf. Nebeling Petersen, forthcoming) a new, more intersectional wave of cultural production emerged, which showcased and spotlit groups that were less visible in earlier stories.

In the past years, various new U.S. American and British publications have shed different lights on the AIDS pandemic of the 80s and 90s. Sarah Schulman's seminal history *Let the Record Show* (2021) draws attention to the diverse and intersectional work that was done by the US grassroots organisation ACT UP in New York; Pamela Sneed's Lambda award winning volume of poetry and essays, *Funeral Diva* (2020), foregrounds the emotional labor enacted by Black lesbian women at the height of the AIDS pandemic; and Charlie Porter's novel *Nova Scotia House* (2025) draws attention to the idea that the fight against government negligence during the AIDS pandemic was, in part, also a class war. Propelled by an impulse to memorialize a history that for newer generations of LGBTQIA+ persons becomes increasingly distant, these works teach us that AIDS activism has been intersectional from the very beginning.

While these new narratives emerge from the United States and the United Kingdom, other national literatures seem to lag behind, or are at least understudied. In the Netherlands, literature from and about the AIDS epidemic has been mostly absent in the public imagination (Mellink and Van Amelsvoort 2024). Historically, Dutch novels and other media narratives frame histories of HIV/AIDS as the domain of predominantly white, Dutch gay men. Missing from these histories are the perspectives of women, people of color, sex workers, and migrants. Even if exceptions to the dominant white and male histories can be found in museum exhibitions (House of HIV 2022), these too seem few and far between. Dutch literature and film appears to have forgotten about these histories altogether.

This perspective shifts again when we leave the North American and (Western) European imaginaries and consider cultural representations of HIV/AIDS from the Global South. Here, uneven access to and excessive costs of medicine, including the highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART)—which transformed a HIV infection from a death sentence to a chronic infection

that can be monitored and controlled from 1996 on (Kagan 2022)—entails a very different socio-cultural and political landscape. The geographic distancing of HIV/AIDS that has happened in the western public imagination has on the one hand contributed to the changed attitudes towards HIV/AIDS in the west itself, while also dismissing any sense of responsibility for the ways in which the realities of HIV/AIDS continue to devastate communities across the world. If narratives about HIV/AIDS from the global south emerge in the west, they invariably imagine HIV/AIDS as endemic to the global south–an externalized threat which white visitors only need to worry about when traveling abroad, while disregarding the effects of living with HIV/AIDS for local populations.

For this issue of the *Dutch Journal for Gender Studies*, we are looking to broaden the research on HIV/AIDS narratives by bringing together new scholarship that looks at living with HIV/AIDS from an intersectional vantage point and that situate these narratives into national contexts beyond the United States and the United Kingdom. We aim to make visible the types of narratives that have been overlooked, or that remain untold because of the dominance of Anglo-American storytelling in HIV/AIDS media. In particular, we hope to see contributions that reflect on the history of HIV/AIDS in different, non-western national contexts, contributions that foreground intersectional perspectives in HIV/AIDS storytelling from various national contexts, and contributions that draw attention to narratives that emerge from the changing realities of HIV/AIDS both in the global south as well as in post-PrEP queer communities. For this issue, we consider contributions that cover a vast array of narrative media. These can include, but are not limited to: literature, film, (online) games, video essays, museum exhibitions, dance or theatrical performances, performance art, visual arts, and art installations.

Preparing your submission

We welcome two types of submissions: articles and essays. Both may take a scholarly or non-traditional form, and be theoretical, commentary, empirical, poetic and/or artistic. All methodologies are welcomed. Full-length articles contain a maximum of 6500 words and essays 3000-3500 words (both incl. bibliography). **Please note that these maximum word counts apply before and after the peer review process.**

Please submit an abstract of 500 words for research papers or 200 words for essays by **November 21**. Abstracts (and manuscripts) can be written in English or Dutch. Note that the initial acceptance of an abstract does not guarantee publication as that the manuscripts will undergo a double-blinded review process. All accepted contributions will be published fully open access.

We strive for diversity among our contributors in terms of career stage, disciplines, self-identification, national location, and scholarly or activist affiliation. We are happy to accommodate different accessibility needs or diverse styles of communication. Please get in touch with (one of) the editors for any of these issues.

Please email your abstract proposal as a Word file to all of the guest editors:

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