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ABSTRACT



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The Healing Power of Words: Community and Communitas in Women's poetry about HIV/AIDS from Southern Africa

This paper looks at a selection of poems from *Nobody Ever Said AIDS: Poems and stories from Southern Africa* (2004) to examine the human face of suffering and the communities of healing that arise surrounding HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa. Broadly speaking, HIV/AIDS is conceptualised through a fusion of scientific and cultural myths regarding the disease and its transmission. As early as 1992, Patricia McFadden recognised this, surmising that 'the social, political and economic aspects of AIDS are as important as the medical and biological ones in improving our understanding of the disease and in decreasing transmission'. The importance of creative responses to HIV/AIDS is also highlighted by the acclaimed writer Njabulo Ndebele when he notes that, '[t]he intimate ways in which people across all communities are being affected by HIV/AIDS are all too often lost in media reports and statistics. It is the creative responses [...] that remind us of the power of art in foregrounding the human face of suffering'.