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Session Name: Session 1: Oral, Behavioral & Social Sciences, Business, Humanities & Letters

Presentation Time: 12:00 pm

Presentation Type: 10-min oral presentation w/ a 4-min Q&A

Project Title: Transcending beyond HIV: From a death sentence to metaphor of life in Marta Dillon's Vivir con virus (2016)

Abstract: The experiences of women living with HIV (WLHIV) have historically been understudied in medicine and underrepresented in literature due to medical bias and a lack of access to literary resources. Subsequently, during the first decades of the pandemic (1980s-1990s), autobiographies written by WLHIV were scarce and hence the existing literature did not suffice to give a broad overview of what it was like to be a WLHIV. As a result, women did not have the opportunity to read, and learn from, their peers' life stories.

This research focuses on the literary analysis of Marta Dillon's Vivir con virus (2016), which is a collection of newspaper articles published in Argentina between 1995 and 2016. Therefore, it is one of the first autobiographies written in Spanish by an HIV-positive woman. I argue that Dillon is turning around the social perception of HIV, which, as Susan Sontag studied, was commonly used as a metaphor of death. Instead, Dillon captivates her audience by conceiving HIV as a metaphor of life, gratitude, and self-appraisal.