

Berichten

Symposium 'Sickness & Love'

The annual symposium of *Medische Antropologie* was held on 14th December 2007 at the University of Amsterdam. The title was 'Sickness & Love'. About thirty participants from The Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Portugal, Greece and South Africa discussed eleven papers, most of them works in progress. The discussion took place mainly from the viewpoints of anthropology, literary theory, and medicine. During the discussion two large themes emerged. One theme suggested that love itself is a kind of sickness, which deregulates human behaviour and causes psychological and social problems. Love may indeed have fatal consequences. Novels in particular present this dramatic picture of love as 'sickness', but also in the 'reality' of everyday life (romantic) love may be observed with suspicion, anxiety and condemnation. Papers about love in Nepal and South Africa described such conflict between emotion and culture/society. The second theme was an exploration of how and when sickness may engender (or disrupt) love. Papers dealt, among other things, with the care that is given to (or withheld from) people living with AIDS; and about a mother who tries to free herself from a suffocating love for an addicted child that threatens to destroy her. Below is a complete list of the papers that were discussed:

- Fabio Bacchini: Love as sickness: the analogy put to the test
- Lotje van Leeuwen: Being in love as a psychosocial problem
- Anette Wickström: Love out of joint is an illness
- Frans Meulenberg: Symptomen van de eerste liefde (Symptoms of first love)
- Sofie Vandamme: What has love got to do with it?
- Janus Oomen: Lovesickness: In search of a discarded disease
- Karen Mogendorff: Liefde in tijden van kanker (Love in times of cancer)
- Deanna J Trakas: Loving to death: Sickness in the twilight years and end-of-life care
- Corrie du Preez & Anke Niehof: Caring for people living with AIDS: A labour of love
- Catarina Frois: Love will tear us apart: 'disease' and 'tough love'
- Leonardo *Menegola*. Learning to feel, healing to love

A selection of these papers will be published in the coming June issue of *Medische Antropologie*, guest-edited by Sofie Vandamme and Sjaak van der Geest.