
Teaching Physical Education with AIDS in the 1990s: Social Imaginaries and Stigma in Tito's *Le Prof*

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Résumé

Tendre Banlieue is a series created by Tito in 1982 that features stories centred on adolescents and educational actors confronted with contemporary social issues rooted in French suburban contexts. The episode entitled *Le Prof* occupies a singular place within the series by addressing HIV/AIDS through the perspective of Christophe Verneuil, a physical education teacher working in a secondary school in the Paris suburbs. Fearing the potential consequences of disclosure, the teacher initially conceals his illness; however, its eventual revelation provokes fear, rejection and processes of stigmatisation among some pupils and members of the teaching staff.

This paper examines how this transmedia narrative (first published in 1982 in the bi-monthly youth magazine *Okapi*, then adapted into a comic book in 1996 and later into a young adult novel in 2004) represents collective fears surrounding AIDS in France during the 1990s through the body of a physical education teacher. The analysis shows how the narrative constructs a gradual deterioration of the teacher's body, shifting from a figure associated with seduction and corporeal authority to a vulnerable, suffering and socially disqualified body. In doing so, Tito foregrounds imaginaries of contagion that reflect the social context of the 1990s and contribute to mechanisms of school-based stigmatisation. At the same time, the youth narrative opens up a space for reflecting on forms of resistance to stereotypes, the emergence of an ethics of empathy among young people, and processes of resilience fostered through sporting sociability.

Methodologically, the study adopts an approach combining cultural and visual history with iconotextual analysis and a socio-historical contextualisation of AIDS-related imaginaries. The theoretical framework also draws on scholarship on bodily representations, stigma and social fears, while considering comics as cultural objects embodying the "ordinary virtues of popular cultures" (Laugier, 2012).

Mots-Clés: HIV/AIDS, Physical education, Social imaginaries, Stigma, Youth culture

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