

## CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUALIZING THE BODY IN A CONTEXT DEFINED BY HIV&AIDS IN *UNLUCKY IN LOVE* (2005)

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The previous chapter focused on illuminating the course that this study will assume in examining the depiction of the nexus between HIV&AIDS, the body and identity in Philip Chidavaenzi's *The Haunted Trail* (2006) and Tendayi Westerhof's *Unlucky in Love* (2005). The writer established that writers tend to concentrate profoundly on the disease and the soul or spirit ignoring the body; yet, it is an important site for further analysis in cases of the HIV&AIDS scourge. The body is conceptualized as a site of contestation as it the very site that largely endures HIV infection. Chapter Two will focus on conceptualizing the body in a context that is defined by HIV in the text *Unlucky in Love* (2005) by Tendai Westerhof. The chapter, however, will examine the significance of the body in our understanding of HIV&AIDS in contexts that have come to be defined by the virus. Varas-Díaz *et al.* (2005) observe that since the body is our vehicle for interaction with the world and others, it is through it that people experience the HIV epidemic. The body, therefore, cannot be separated from the experience of "living" with HIV&AIDS. People are exposed to infection through their bodies. It becomes a very pertinent embodiment site for exploration in situations that have come to be affected and infected by HIV. The body in years before ARVs provided proof of the infection through how an individual struggled with the virus. Recent body management project such as ARVs, dieting and exercise have greatly aided the body's immune system and therefore prolonging life for the HIV positive.

The body, according to Durkheim (1984), is a means through which individuals are attached to, or ruptured from, society. In western intellectual thought the body was for a long time either dismissed or ignored as a site that was not worth of serious study by scholars like

Pluto and Shillings argues that it was as if the thinking person was disembodied. More emphasis was given to the soul. Woodward (2002) argues that the body constitutes our active 'vehicle of being in' the world. The body is therefore seen to be, according to Woodward, (2002) a secure certainty, the certainty that comes with scientific knowledge that an individual exists or existed in terms of being or not to be. As a result some might view the body as the ultimate source of truth about human identity and human existence. As a result we can note that the body is deeply involved in the routes through which identities are forged and Woodward (*ibid.*). further elaborates that this does not mean that the body is the root of identity. It is through this very body that a person's 'being' is manifested and made more real even in terms of identity and in a context that has come to be defined by HIV the body is engaged in a vicious fight with the virus. A lot of changes take place when an individual has been diagnosed with HIV pertaining to physical structure and general health of that individual. In most cases HIV has led to direct death of an individual due to the effects of HIV related illnesses. The body's fight is a fight for survival against an onslaught of attacks from the vicious virus that seeks to dominate and subdue.

Featherstone (1982) is of the opinion that in recent decades people have become increasingly preoccupied with the appearance, size, shape, texture and performance of their bodies. Appearance seems to be the preoccupation of this modern world in individual where science has acted in many ways to enhance the aesthetic qualities of the human body. Giddens (1990) attributes these changes to the consumer culture that characterizes a capitalist world where global identities are being foisted on individuals through various media. Too much attention has come to be paid to the body and lots of emphasis is being placed on eating healthily, being healthy, and exercise and in general how to prolong the effects of aging. This situation is even compounded in situations where an individual has been diagnosed with HIV. People

are already anxious about their body without adding on the burden of being positive because it means the body is potentially at risk as the disease has proved to elude medical and scientific advances for a lasting cure. Leder's thesis (1990) argues that the body ordinarily 'fades' and 'disappears' from our experience when we are engaged in 'purposeful action' that creates our environment and governs our daily routines. He further states that the body can abruptly reappear as a focus of attention when we are ill or in pain and when our bodies are at their least socially productive. The argument being that our daily lives are most commonly marked by the absence rather than the presence of the body as depicted by the following thought:

When reading a book or lost in thought ... I experientially dwell in a world of ideas, paying little heed to my physical sensations or posture. Nor is this forgetfulness restricted to moments of higher-level cognition. I may be engaged in a fierce sport, muscles flexed and responsive to the slightest movements of my opponent. Yet it is precisely upon this opponent, this game that my attention dwells, not on my own embodiment (Leder, 1990: 1)

There are few instances that individuals pay attention to what the body does or how it does it. In most cases most of the body's functions are taken for granted unless, as Leder (1990) has aptly analysed, if something is wrong or an individual is in pain and concludes that there is little suggestion that the body can become a major, prolonged focus of attention in its 'normal' state. One argues that this is the state that usually confronts HIV sufferers. They can go on living their normal lives but they are ever mindful of how their bodies are performing functioning. Peter Freund (1982) has made significant inroads in focusing on how people's experiences of health and illness are shaped and transformed. At the centre of Freund's work (1982) is a concern with people's experiences of health, illness and disease. It has been established that the body must be able to regulate and maintain such features as its blood pressure, body temperature, hormonal levels

and electrolyte balance within, parameters that demarcate conditions of excess or deficiency. When the individual has been tested positive to HIV the body becomes a focal point in terms of treatment, stigmatization, body projects as well as fear of loss of control. Individuals begin to pay attention in trying to assist the body to be in a better position to fight off HIV related illnesses and generally putting the body first in order to prolong life through body projects like exercises, dieting and healthy living.

Foucault (1977) conceives of the body as 'the inscribed surface of events' and as 'totally imprinted by history.' The body is also the site that struggles are being played out. Women's struggles against patriarchy can be seen to be performed in how women's have been struggling to free their sexuality from men's control for a long period. The history of who was able to write women's history can be seen through how women's identity have been defined by men and the history of their subordinate position in society can be read through women's bodies. Women struggle to please men and Spivak (1988) calls them the 'subaltern' because they always have to look at themselves through the eyes of the other and are always being spoken for. Spivak (1988) contends that these women are doubly subjugated by colonial rulers and indigenous patriarchy. Women are blamed for being vectors in the spread of the deadly HIV. In situation where an individual is sick from HIV this struggle can be seen to be played out on the bodies of both men and women indiscriminately and women getting blamed for being spreaders of the virus in society. But with the thesis of Westerhof (2005), she is able to stand up and add a voice to her body's struggle with HIV and how she manages conquer.

McFadden (1992) observes that there are some people who say that a woman never expresses desire for sex, she always says no. He goes on to suggest that in every sexual act there is an element of force in most African society where it is frowned upon for women to be candid

when it comes to their sexual needs. Most women who express their sexual needs are looked at as prostitutes and as a result we may find that it is most women's desire to conform to these expectations of a good chaste woman. The woman in this cycle becomes the hunted as opposed to the hunter an identity that is associated with the men. Looked at from *Unlucky in Love* one can note this aspect in the way that Rumbi, the main character, is hunted down by all those men who end up becoming her husbands in Emmanuel, Joe and Horst. She states that she knew that Joe had several other women beside herself but she accepts this kind of arrangement even when it endangers her life. Women are abused physically, sexually and economically and this just shows lack of power in controlling the spread of HIV in their relationships.

Our normal conception of the body is that it is the mass of flesh that an individual embodies or carries outside. As such images of 'decay' can be seen to be associated with the state of the body when it has been diagnosed to inhabit strains of the HIV virus in the body. All flesh is perishable to some degree and in the case where HIV has been detected the body can be seen to be wasting or decomposing fast. Woodward (2002) notes that the body's association with the flesh means that it is devalued in relation to the mind, which is seen as the source of human agency and the body just becomes a vassal that the mind commands. The body is not given due attention because it does not seem to be agentive without the mind. Shillings (2003) views the body as a source and recipient of collective symbolism that possesses the capacity to incorporate individuals into the moral life of the group. Issues to do with honour can be seen to be inscribed on the body be it an individual's or that of one's wife. Today in Zimbabwe we have cases where women have been stripped naked due to the reason that men think that they should dress properly and not leave the body exposed for viewing by others. Symbols of continuity of human life are represented by women giving birth and symbols of death and decay

can be seen to be represented by the ceaseless attack on the human body that HIV has been known to make on the immune system of a positive person. At the prospect of death due to HIV the individual is filled with fear. Berger (1972) points out that death is an essential feature of the human condition that requires people to develop means of coping with it and it is only in the context of the body's inevitable death that we can understand its (body) full social importance. As such in a context where HIV is the cause of death societies act like they have not heard of death through other ways before. The prospect of death constitutes a threat to people's 'world-building' and 'self-building' activities. Giddens (1990) makes the suggestion that the experience of living in high modernity is like riding a juggernaut which is out of control. He observes that the body provides individuals with a 'last retreat', an entity which appears to be a solid basis on which a reliable sense of self can be built and in a context where everyone around us is either affected or infected one desires the infallibility of the body to provide a steadying effect on the essence of life.

An individual's ability to exert control over one's body is being challenged with the development and rapid spread of AIDS, and with the present failure of the medical community to find a cure for, or prevention against, HIV infection. Shilling (2003) argues, that this is just one instance of the increasingly recognized limitations of medical knowledge. The modern man prides himself on being able to control the universe and it is intriguing that there are a few exceptions where he is yet to take control. The decay or death of the individual is a problematic area in HIV cases. Giddens's (1990) analysis suggests that high modernity places individuals in an environment which constructs death as a particular problem. One knows that death is the final end to everyone's life but there seem to be denial by individuals to perish through this loss of control when the body's immunity succumbs to the virus. The prospect of death from the result of HIV is disturbing for most people. Consequently, it should not be surprising if the prospect

of dying makes modern individuals particularly anxious. Shilling (2003) makes the observation that this is so for the individual whose self-identity has become closely connected to their body, death is disturbing partly because it represents an end to value invested in the body. In *Unlucky in Love* (2005), Rumbie's past career as a model makes her place a lot of value of her body and one can note that she has invested a lot of money and care into looking her best all the time. Her body has earned her a lot of money in the past. Death represents the ultimate end of the self and HIV has proved fatal to the young, as well as to the old, as a result of what Shilling (2003) notes has long been considered a major or source of personal gratification, that is, sexual activity. Shilling (*ibid.*) further elaborates that this link between sexuality and death confronts the living, sensuous body with the prospect of its own demise. It exposes the intimate connection between the flesh as a source of 'ultimate' joy and the source of decay and death. It confronts even the society with the reality that in addition to the argentic possibilities which stem from having bodies; humans are limited by the brute fact of being bodies. The fear associated with HIV&AIDS can also be understood partly by reference to the attack of death when people become aware that death may be already lurking in their bodies, and those of their sexual partners, its reality becomes more pressing. In high modernity, death is not present simply at the end (Bauman: 1 992a) The destruction wrought by AIDS tells people not only that the meaning they have invested in their sexual relationships cannot protect them from the reality of death like Rumbi's search for her knight in shining armour in Horst and her other husbands, but that the very focus of this investment can be a channel through which death now enters their lives. Rumbi is searching for someone to put a ring on her fingers when she discovers that she has also searched her way to an infection. As a result one can note that HIV has come to symbolise a debauched society that is slowly digging its own grave if control on the human body and morals is not heightened. Humans have been blessed with the capability of

learning, and of producing and sustaining social life and that capacity through HIV in our midst is being undermined as it is seen to be occurring in the very spaces that largely account for sexual pleasure and reproduction processes.

The production of women and men as separate and unequal categories has created a lot of strife in a context that sees one sex being dominated by the other. Connell's (1983) analysis of gender focuses on what can be termed the 'exterior' of the body; on its shapes, sizes and musculature. He notes that women's and men's bodies are defined as different through social practices such as categorization. The contradiction in contemporary realities of human embodiment, according to Shillings (2003), is that social categories give a qualitatively new meaning to bodies which cannot be justified with reference to their biological constitution. Birke (1992) goes on to argue that while social categories define people's bodies as different, other social practices exert a much more direct impact on the body. Gendered social practices do not simply negate the body but transcend and transform it. Women and men differ enormously in their height, weight, strength, endurance and the distribution of these features overlaps between the sexes. Berger's (1972) argument states that a man's presence (be it fabricated or real) is dependent on the promise of power he embodies. The power can be seen to be manifested in his body, his stride and his power to control his environment and define it. What Ouzgane and Morell (2002) termed the 'patriarchal dividend' that is enjoyed by all who embodies the male body whether poor, young old or physically disabled. This power is always an active power, a power which can be exercised on and over others especially in the form of hegemonic masculinity. In modern times where the scourge of HIV is looming near, society can target men for behavioural change ideologies that can help to curb the disease because in African society a man has got more room to acquire many women as wives or



girlfriends. Messages of using protection can be filtered through this group in order to make inroads on curbing the crisis.

According to Gane (2007), the masculinist worldview sees virgins as pure and as appropriate objects of male desire—though of course the goal of the desiring male as he notes is precisely to destroy that virginity. Similarly, virgin forests and untouched nature are seen as inviting men to conquer, subdue, and exploit them, and this conquest and exploitation is approved and encouraged. Set against the virginal, whether a female body or a forest, is the impure and experienced, which is at least potentially contaminating and dangerous. Not only is this a dangerously polarized way of thinking as Gane (2007) notes, but it is one that sees women and land alike only from the perspective of their exploiters. This becomes problematic in that it casts women's bodies as objects of male honour or respect and Javangwe (2013) notes that when the body is defiled it becomes symbols of shame and condemnations. He treats her body like his possession as noted when he forcibly has unprotected sex with her;

His hands fumbled roughly on my breasts and I heard him whispering in my ear, not words Of love but, "You are my wife and I will show you who is the boss now dirty bitch with AIDS' (Unlucky in love 2005: 70)

MacBride (2004) argues that among the chief reasons for women's greater vulnerability to HIV is their greater biological susceptibility to transmission than men. The way women's bodies are made makes it easier to sustain bruises and abrasions that can facilitate greater absorption of the virus leading to infections. In addition gender roles narrow the possibilities for women to be in a better position to protect themselves. Women are more susceptible to HIV as a consequence of their disadvantageous position in society where they have few means of economic independence and virtually less control over their own bodies in sexual relationships. A UNAIDS report (1999) identifies traditional norms of masculinity prevalent in many sub-Saharan

countries as highly problematic in relation to HIV. Micheal Denga in *The Haunted Trail* (2006) believes that he cannot be an HIV carrier,

‘If you think you can kill me with your AIDS, you’re fooling yourself. Carry your AIDS away with you’ (2005: 100)

Michael therefore erroneously believes that the male body cannot transmit or carry HIV. Michael acknowledges that though HIV claimed his mother’s life it would be different for him as he was a man. The material success he seems to be favoured with in life can be seen to be transmutable to success in dodging HIV even when he is careless enough not to protect his life. Gupta *et al.* (1994) in their discussion of the reasons why so many men continue to be promiscuous point to traditional beliefs in many societies which encourage men to have multiple partners as a sign of manhood which in turn undermines messages of abstinence and faithfulness to change behaviour - most men are tested through their spouses and generally just do not want to know what their bodies contain unless it becomes very necessary or they become very sick. Women’s roles as bearers and primary nurturers of children entail that they make efforts to know their status and at the same time take corrective measures if found infected because they have a family to raise and the nation at large depends on their infallible hope for the future. A woman generally looks to the future but when a man’s status is confirmed he tends to be myopic. This is exemplified by Michael who commits suicide after his realisation that he was HIV positive. Horst in *Unlucky in Love* as a representative of men in society and their attitude to HIV also typifies this behaviour when he blames Rumbidzai for his infection and ceases to be a loving and caring partner.

Muponde and Muchemwa (2007) observe that gender at its most intimate and visible finds the body as one of its most important sites.

This intimate site is also the most vulnerable since it is also used as a site of dominance, misogyny and othering. Muponde and Muchemwa (2007) further argue that rape, torture, disfigurement, and killing are ways in which recalcitrant bodies are controlled. Macfadden (1992) observes that in intimate sexual relationships involving men and women the male dominates and places the female in victimised positions. The male body, according to Muchemwa and Muponde (2007), is a site of menace from which Zimbabwe's stories of sexual and political vulnerability emerge and it is also from the same site that new strengths can be constructed from the collapse of the menacing male body. The female body on the other hand is seen to be suffering from the Conradian curse which depicted Africa as the harbinger of diseases. Africa is imagined as a woman and nations according to Hubinette (2005) are imagined as 'female.' Therefore the general spread of HIV has come to be blamed on female body.

*Unlucky in Love* (2005) by Tendai Westerhof is a semi-disguised autobiography that explores the life and struggle of Rumbie the main protagonist who discovers through her husband's testing positive that she is also positive. She narrates the pain of the abuse that she suffers at being blamed for infecting her husband and how her life takes a turn for the worse leading to the breakup of her marriage to Horst her white husband. It can be noted that before her marriage to Horst, Rumbi was a part time model and won a few crowns such as Miss Mufakose and used to do a few jobs as a fashion model travelling across the southern African borders. She later opens a modelling agency business called 'Models against AIDS.' She states that modelling was the first thing in her life that she really felt good about (p.43). Rumbi notes that the modelling world is a high risk business for young girls who are constantly mobbed by men who are attracted by their bodies and beauty.

Modelling is all about one's body, there are certain physical requirements one should be aware of when considering becoming a model the like 1.78 metres tall for girls and 1.80 metres for men is about the minimum height that a model can be expected to have. The simple fact of the matter is that taller models display clothes better than shorter a model that is why there is preferences for taller people in this industry. Models also need to be quite slim in proportion to their height in order to fit into the types of clothing that designers want them to wear as result they need to watch their weight they also need to be within the age range of between 16 to 28 years. In text *Unlucky in Love*, Rumbi also triples her work as a secretary, modelling with being a hostess at business dinners that her boss held. In this case one can note that her job again centred on diverting male attention at these dinners in her finery and makeup because she is obviously not invited to talk business. She ends up being picked up by these older men for dates who later become her husbands in Emmanuel, Joe and Horst.

Bourdieu's (1980) statement that the body is in the social world but the social world is in the body point to the many social uses of the body in modern society. Rumbi, as a model, parades her body on the ramp while men and women sit watching and clapping. This consumer culture fuelled on by globalization has created women who are trapped in the visual spaces which defines them in terms of their body and appearance. Tseelon (1995: 124) argues that women have constantly to wrestle with a normative mask which reflects male notions of female essence. These attributes are normally defined by the male gaze on the true essence of female beauty. In context where HIV has come to affect those who are unable to say no to female beauty one can note that it creates spaces for women to become temptresses that men cannot resist fuelling the spread of HIV in society. When Rumbi goes on these business dinners as a model she is actually being cast into the role that allows or tempts men like Emmanuel and Joe to be tempted to take them on as small houses because most men are afraid

that these beautiful women cannot be easily satisfied by one man as their market value is placed high above ordinary women. Beauty pageants are normally fashioned to please men who occupy spaces that have created these insecure women who parade their bodies as commodities that have helped them earn money. Some of the reasons that can be seen to push women into modelling their bodies, according to Tseelon (1995), are cultural and global pressures on women to achieve an 'ideal' body in the tall, slim and facially beautiful woman opposing the essence of individual beauty and tolerance for differences. Women who subscribe to these requirements can be seen to have a much higher social and economic value than those who do not have the model beauty qualities. Tseelon (1995:12) suggests that the mask of womanhood is framed as a manipulative essence masquerading behind 'false decoration': its 'beauty and finery' acts as a 'vehicle to dazzle men to their destruction.' Rumbi's body, even though she has acquired an education as a Secretary, is her most priced economic asset. This is the product that she struts on the labour market disguised in her modelling escapades and trade seems to bloom and dip depending on the market price supplied by men who are interested in possessing it at different times in her life. It can be noted that the moment this body is pronounced to be infected by the virus she is faced with challenges that cannot be ignored. She faces the fact that she can no longer live off her beautiful body as she had done before. This body now needs to be maintained harder than before by a plethora of body projects for survival sake not for the sake of admiration and it sort of now gets attention as Leder (1990) once noted on its own terms as a focal point now that the body is at its least socially productive state. It spells out a decline in the market in terms of men who will now be attracted to Rumbi's body. HIV becomes a threat which can be seen to create by the virus that has now entered her body threatening to culminate into loss of income, opportunities, value as well as market as one can note that in the modelling business the face and the body are weighed and valued to such levels where we

see that one will do anything to restore it to its original state. In a context defined by her infected status modelling, the body and HIV cannot be sustained. One cannot be a model whilst claiming to be HIV positive because in most cases people translate the outside beauty to the inside and this industry thrives on its untarnished definitions of beauty. The contamination of the inside seems to sip through to affect the aesthetic value of the outside.

The body as a 'mask' can be seen to be true looking at the struggle that women go through in order to hide their true selves in. One of Rumbi's nightmares is to be seen as an ordinary girl from Ndarama Mine. She relishes the thought of being seen as a Mrs. Somebody in marrying Horst. This in itself points to insecurity complex in her appearance which is fixed by the masks that she wears every day. Goffman (1969) is of the opinion that the body can act as a mask in projecting particular appearances. Shillings (2003) asserts that women misrepresent themselves in order to gain benefits from others. In this case body work in the form of make-up is seen as a way of masking the true selves. Goffman (1969) suggests that this idea is suggestive of the fact that there exists a private, authentic self behind the shifting identities projected by the donning of different masks: masks designed to create false impressions of an individual's social status, economic worth, or moral trustworthiness. These masks can be seen to be aiding in the folly of trusting that the outside is representative of the beauty contained in that person's blood. When Rumbi meets Horst she is so awed that her beauty has managed to attract the notice of a white man, who is wealthy and well known in Zimbabwe that it never occurs for her that he could infect her with HIV. She says:

'I was going to have a wealthy, handsome, white husband. It was my very own Cinderella story, (p.16)

The same can be said for Horst who immediately strikes up a marriage with the most beautiful lady he met at one of the business dinners that

she frequented as a hostess. These two are so engrossed in the outside appearances or masks that individuals wear every day that they fail to realise that in this day where HIV is not discriminatory one needs to have pre-sexual tests to determine whether the inside is beautiful as well. Horst is justified when he cries, '...what good is love if it kills you!' Before Rumbie is tested positive she notes that Horst had been so proud of her physical beauty. She notes that he always wanted her to be beautiful and well-groomed and dressed her in the bests designer wear money could buy. Even their first encounter Rumbi's body had attracted him to her when she was standing at a bus terminus and he had wooed her like an experienced hunter with money and the promise of social honour. In a context defined by HIV one cannot that all that glitters is not gold and one should not trust what they see on the outside being displayed by the body. Rumbi could have been a vector as when she states:

'I had already accepted the possibility that I might have HIV. After all my two previous partners had children by several women while we were together, so it was obvious that they were not using any kind of protection' (p.10)

This statement shows us that she may have had an idea that maybe she had been infected way before meeting Horst and he might have been the unfortunate victim here but was not as resourceful as she was as one can note that men do not seek publicity for bad images in their lives as women do. She says that she just put the knowledge aside of her possibility of infection before meeting Horst at the back of her mind and waited for it to 'say Hello' thus going back to Leder's (1990) position that the body is an absence that the individual is prepared to ignore as long as it is functioning well. Foucault (1978) identified the body as the principal site upon which power is enacted and exercised. However, Foucault observes that there are limits to how much power can be exercised on the body. Biblically women are projected as appendages of the men's ribs or body as a result she is controlled

sexually, physically and economically. Javangwe (2013: 50) aptly notes that the infected person becomes a 'social aberration' making further suggestions that Westerhof's narrative can be read as a metaphor of where HIV can represent other meanings outside its daily reality of being an outer cover of the bones. Furthermore, Javangwe (2013: 50) observes that the body can be conceptualised as symbol of 'decay of the nation.' McClintock (1993) states that a nation cannot be understood without a theory of gender power. In addition, McClintock (1993) notes that women are projected as mothers of the nation or continent. Similarly, Hubinette (2005: 15) notes that:

...the nation imagined as female body gives rise to strong familial connotations and it is the task of patriarchal nationalism and ,male power  
...to rescue defend and sacrifice and die for her.

The first time that Rumbie comes to realise that their lives may be in danger Horst never stops to consider how this information may impact on her.

It's your entire fault you bitch! They tested me for HIV and I am positive. I must have got it from you, and you have destroyed everything for me'  
(p.8)

In this statement one can note that women are seen as the principal carrier in the spread of HIV (Harris 2008). It never crosses Horst's mind that he could have been the carrier and not her. Horst sees his male body as being immune to HIV because he is a man and has been socialized not to take responsibility for his actions or accept that their promiscuity has actually done harm to their marriage. In most cases men believe that it is a man's right to experiment and women have been raised to aspire for chastity when sexuality is concerned. It has to be the woman's fault and Rumbi reiterates this point throughout her narrative and her stance in not confronting Horst to supply the empirical evidence that supports his notion that her body was the



vector in their marriage when they had not had pre- tests before they had started engaging in sex. She later surmises that both of their sexual networks could have endangered their lives and it was prudent for the kettle not to call the pot black. Horst blames Rumbie for his positive status and it easier for him to live in denial and later not see any reason for change of behaviour because it was not his fault in the first place. It is easy to play the part of a victim of HIV for men and go on a HIV spreading rampage in the defence that they must have got it from some woman so in the long run it is not their fault. Only their bodies know the truth but as it is the individuals are now engaged in shifting identities so as to project a better image and appeal to the audience to the fact that they are the victims. The postmodern views of identity suggests there is no such thing as an unchanging, authentic self, and that social life is dependent on us projecting different embodied identities to various audiences (Gergen :1991). We are different people in different situations. Sennet (1992) also points out the idea that social life represents a theatre in which people stage performances. Our lives are acts of acting because of the fact of us passing on after our time is up. So in this way people are engaged in efforts that seek to maximise their time on earth by these grand masks that hides their true selves. As Gimlin (2002: ) argues, 'by engaging in body work, women are able to negotiate normative identities by diminishing their personal responsibility for a body that fails to meet cultural mandates.'

The woman's body is seen as a critical vector of the spread of HIV. Vambe (2003) notes that women remain a critical aspect in the politics of the spread of HIV. Harris (2008) also notes that women are seen as the principal carrier of the disease. Statistics indicates that more women than men are infected. Javangwe (2013: 50) therefore argues that, 'the sexualised body of the woman can only be imagined in terms of corruption and disease.' A woman becomes a potential killer not because of the way she looks but the infection that she carries inside her blood. One interesting concept that comes out of Westerhof's

(2005) narrative is the body is casts as a potential killer. Chitando (2011) thesis looks at the symbols of danger that the female body is ascribed. The woman as an appendage of the male body is seen as a vector. In a way the whole nation becomes diseased and dysfunctional. Chapman (2000) argues that the body is largely conceptualized as a site of death, contamination and prejudice. It is also critical to note that the body is a primary signifier of a person's identity.

Men can be seen to be using Rumbie's body only to discard it like a used 'condom' in the dustbin. Rumbie's is raped by her husband and she becomes pregnant from this act. Despite the fact that her body has borne children for the men in her life she is labelled 'spoiled goods' because these men are not interested in marrying her. Emmanuel gives her two children and walks away; Joe does the same and one can see that the body is being used only to be discarded later in an unhonourable way. The good part is that these experiences seem to have made her stronger and much surer of the identity that she has to carve out for herself in a context that is defined by HIV. She is able to negotiate for acceptance of her diseased status as well as to come out with spoils of the victims that actually speak of winning. She goes ahead and buys herself a car with the money from 'their safe' when she realises that even though the money was given to Horst to terminate his contract when he is tested positive what belongs to him belongs to her. These experiences make her stronger when she realises that no man is prepared to stick around for better or worse therefore she shall have to go it alone. She is able to rationalize; 'Now I know that happiness comes from within and that no one else can make you happy or sad.' Wittig (1990: 115) notes that women have been reduced to 'sex,' and cannot escape carrying sex as a burden they have to bear in the negative form. The body becomes very crucial when rhetoricizing about HIV. The woman's body is a contested territory where men and women struggle sexually, socially, economically and

physically. Connell (2005) contends that the body is inescapable in the construction of identities.

The body is treated as an enterprise to be worked on, and altered in a process that is meant to reconstructs one's self-identities in line with a developing conception of the ideal self. Before when Rumbi is younger she builds her identity around her beautiful face and body. But later when she cannot rally around her body she begins to hope for a man who could rescue her image and bestow respectability to her failing beauty. Thus we see her reconfiguring her identity at different points in her life in order to gain the status of a married woman rather than a single woman, one time beauty queen who has had children by 4 different men pointing to the hollowness of all who partake a career in the modelling. In the case of *Unlucky in Love* Rumbi can be seen to be engaged in fight that is meant to show that she has not lost the fight that is meant to wrestle control from the virus. She claims, 'My virus and me are happily married' because she is able to control the virus instead of allowing it to control her body, various body projects have helped her to gain control which includes healthy eating, correct dieting, exercise as well as the continued taking of ARVs.

Rumbi in *Unlucky in Love* notes that her life fell apart when she was diagnosed with HIV and these projects can help to take her mind off what is happening around her by concentrating on the most important aspect of her identity: the body. Helping it fight the disease by taking care of her body. It can also help her live healthier while ageing with HIV. Showing how the body has become central to our sense of who we are so that the body itself is part of reflexive self-identity; a component to be worked on, as the representation of the self. Woodward (2002) is of the opinion that the body is the source of frightening uncertainty. He goes further to elaborate that far from offering stability, the body presents terrifying insecurities. The security that comes from knowing that one lives to see tomorrow is taken away

in a context where HIV has been detected. Even the identity that Rumbi in *Unlucky in Love* used to boast of through her beauty and the security that being famous and rich offers is also threatened. One can note that for a poor girl from Ndarama Mine having lots of money and security to maintain a lavish lifestyle was what mattered before she found out that she was positive with HIV. HIV comes in and creates a situation where her dreams and aspirations now seemed frivolous compared to what she is facing now necessitating changes leading to the reconfiguration of identities. These insecurities can be analysed from Giddens's (1991) suggestion that the self has become a reflexively organized construct in the contemporary era of high modernity. The body becomes an object of attention in modern times in the fact that people will do anything to enhance their appearances, lives and look younger in a bid to display the ideal body.

Smith and Watson (2001) have gone on to argue that there is no unified, stable, immutable self that can remember everything that has happened in the past in its tiny, minute or even bigger details. They argue that the process of construction, deconstruction, selection, suppression takes place through the mediation of memory. The individual is confronted with a wide repertoire of experiences that the self would have gone through. The process of selection, even disguising or discarding, is not an innocent act and in this case it becomes an individual's attempt at projecting a better view of her past sexual relationships. There is no doubt that some of her most scandalous narratives have been suppressed and those that have come out are meant to project the idea of a disciplined body. One can note that an autobiography is subjective and the truths contained also become subjective truth in that the author trying to achieve certain rhetorical acts of justification of her honour and in the process may highlight some of those aspects that would paint her in the right at the same time back grounding some important aspects that can be verified by Horst's story had he written one. In short her autobiography seems

to be stressing the point that even though society has coined her 'promiscuous' she was just searching for love albeit from wrong men and came out scathed.

Obsessive dieting, for example, has been seen as a display of simple hatred of the body that one has been blessed with. In a context where an individual has been tested positive with HIV this obsessive behaviour seems to be heightened since one will be battling for control in terms of fighting the virus is concerned. Efforts in one's involvement in restructuring the body which Shilling (2003) defined as 'body projects' are also increased because of fear of HIV. Shilling (2003) describes this need for enhancing the performance of the body as associated with an almost religious devotion to an ideal self. The body is a demi-god that extroverts worship. The ideal body in the case of HIV is a state where the body has been rid of HIV and the body is no longer battling the virus on a daily basis. In short, being healthy inside and outside the body. In an article published in *The Herald* on 3 May 2013, Tendai Westerhof, who is the character Rumbi in her semi disguised autobiography *Unlucky in Love* who was said to be living positively for the last decade, was pronounced to have been miraculously cured of HIV by claiming to have an undetectable viral load. This means if she gets tested for HIV today, she would test negative. She is quoted saying;

I have had an undetectable viral load for the past two years. I still take my ARVs religiously because I have to. ART is for life and this new lease of life can see me live 30 to 40 years since I started medication.

One's CD4 count going up is a sign that the ARVs are working well, but should never be used as a measure to stop ART, Westerhof. (*The Herald*; 3 May 2013)

This problematises the whole concept of the body and HIV whereby the body refuses to be subdued and defined by the virus as now the virus has become undetectable but it is still lurking inside waiting for one to relax their guard and stop those body projects that have helped

to subdue the virus. Rumbi is still harbours the virus in her body but the virus cannot be detected but her body can also pass on the virus to other people if she engages in unprotected sex. Shilling (2003) makes the pertinent observation that body projects are drawn on to by individuals seeking to stabilize their identities in a runaway word. In this way a kind of stability has been achieved as she becomes fearful that Horst denial of the virus may endanger the lives of his unsuspecting girlfriends. Shilling (2003) notes that all individualized identity projects all involve management and maintenance and the notion that the body is open to reconstruction and can be subject to change and to control. Woodward (2005) ideas that, by taking control of our bodies and presenting an attractive physical image of ourselves, we can present an attractive self. An attractive self is one that the individual is confident of and in control of.

HIV's difference with other diseases is that it has a longer incubation period. According to Barnet and Whiteside (2002), this long incubation period facilitates its silent spreading through populations for longer periods. When an individual discovers that they are positive with HIV they are encouraged to engage in body projects like exercises and dieting to improve or enhance the body's fighting spirit against the virus. Body projects provide a myriad of opportunities for investing in the 'real' body for combating the negative effects of ageing, through cosmetic surgery or through working out at the gym or by buying products which will enhance one's appearance as noted by Shilling (1997). However these scholars also note that exercise and dieting cannot control or fight HIV disease on their own, but it may help one feel better and fight many of the side effects of HIV disease and HIV such as loss of body fat as well as constant feeling of fatigue and depression. One can note that one of the many side effects of ARVs is constant feelings of fatigue which affect an individual performance in everyday activities or even at work. These two projects, dieting and exercise can help in making the individual feel that they are being

proactive in fighting HIV. Rumbie in *Unlucky in Love* engages in these activities and one can note that she was able to feel that she was doing something that can enhance her life and prolong her lifespan.

Body projects are a way of demonstrating 'self-discipline' in a world where the individual is seeking to differentiate himself from his uncivilised brothers who lived in the years before civilisation. Sue Benson (2005) notes that the bad body is fat, slack, uncared for; it demonstrates a lazy and undisciplined "self". One can note that this is one of the chief reasons why the modern man is engaged in a fight against fat bodies and unhealthy bodies. The good body is sleek, thin and toned and healthy. Shillings (1997:123) notes that to have such a body is to project to those around you – as well as to yourself – that you are morally as well as physically in shape. It is all about public image and Rumbi as a public personality against AIDS engages in body projects as a way of demonstrating that the virus can be contained and controlled. In her narrative she speaks of how she is able to tame the virus until it can no longer be detected in the body.

Giddens (1991) places the body as a highly malleable resource and in a context where HIV has been detected it is reassuring to note that there are projects that the individual can engage in to reshape their bodies so that it is able to fight off the virus. Rumbi in the text *Unlucky in Love* grows a positive drive that she will do all she can to keep alive and be healthy and it seems all her efforts have paid off. Giddens (1990) theorises that in this context, the body is seen as one last 'raw material' over which the individual could exert influence. One can almost hear the determination in her saying if she cannot control the virus she will she cannot fail to control her body. Giddens (*ibid.*) goes on to note that bodies are now seen and subject to intervention in terms of their genes, blood pressure, cholesterol, size, shape, appearance, aerobic capacity, colour, weight, and a host of other variables. As such, they can appear to provide a firm foundation on which to construct a reliable and

meaningful sense of self in the modern world. He goes to note that however, bodies also often refuse to be moulded in line with our intentions. He gives the example of how most of the weight or fat taken off during diets is put back on again. In the end one can note that even though all bodies age and decay and the reality of death is ever present in an individual who has been tested positive with HIV one can still do something and control how they will die through HIV. It does not have to be the classical death where an individual dies as a skeleton image of his former self but one can actually achieve some dignity where the virus aims to rob one of that even in their last moments.

In summation, the chapter has established the link that exists between the body and HIV. It has been established the body has for a long time been ignore as less important as it is easily seen as a vacuum without the mind which is more agentic. This chapter has established that in times of pain and illness the body is again foregrounded and the individual engages in projects that are meant to fix and manage pain in the body. Bodies matter and as a result the analysis of Tendai Westerhof's narrative is meant to show that there is life after being tested positive as she manages to control her body thereby indicating control of the virus in the process through religiously taking her ARVs, dieting staying healthy and exercises. The chapter also established that the body is a central part especially in situations where there is pain or it has ceased to perform according to expectations. In cases where an individual has been diagnosed with HIV the individual engages in a lot of body projects that are meant to restore the body to its good condition. These body projects can be seen to aid in the body's struggle against HIV. However, through these efforts, the individual is also engaged in the reconfiguration of his or her identity in line with the ideal self. An ideal self in a context defined by HIV is a self who looks normal outside and there are no signs that the body is fighting a life of death war inside. Rumbi seems to have achieved that ideal in



that HIV can no longer be detected in her blood when tested. She can be said to have successfully reconfigure her identity developing the ideal conception of the self.