

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

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In summation, the study has established the link that exists between the body and HIV. It has been established that the body has, for a long time, been ignored and perceived as less important as it is easily seen as a vacuum without the mind which is more agentive. In times of pain and illness the body is, again, made more important 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 showed that there is life after being tested positive as she manages to control her body thereby indicating control of the virus in the process control of her life through religiously taking her ARVs, dieting staying healthy and exercises. The body is a central part especially in situations where illness has been discovered and the body is not at ease and 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 war with a virus. Rumbi seems to have achieved that ideal in that HIV can no longer be detected in her blood when tested but she regretfully notes that she has failed to save her marriage to Horst. She can be said to have successfully reconfigured her identity developing the ideal conception of the self in that the virus can no longer be detected in her body. Thus the body can now be managed but what remains to be managed are issues of destabilised identities.

Contagious bodies and destabilised identities was analysed in the text *The Haunted Trail*. It was established that society and the individual are all afraid of the contagious body and, in most cases, seeks to attach

negative meanings to the identity of the individual who has been infected. The discussion centred on the weak identities that were displayed by characters in the text through the analysis of Michael, Stella and Chiedza during the times that they had been diagnosed with HIV. It is argued that Michael's background as a rootless and fatherless loner who was running away from poverty were the causes of the factors that destabilised his identity leading to his decision to take his life when he was now facing the demise of his constructed and artificial powerful identity. He had been advised that every men fights alone by his mother and that the individual does only favours for itself thus in a context defined by HIV lonely figures often seek to end their life because it can be noted that HIV needs the support of the family members and society. When faced with the demise of his body and empire he fails to apply those principles that had made him a winner in life because they could not sustain his new identity as an HIV positive man. He fails to look beyond his present calamities and thus disaster stuck and he ends up being buried like a pauper just like his mother. It shows that he had more in common with her than he was able to discern. In running away from her he was unable to change the route of fate and destiny built and sustained by an unstable past that goes on to haunt or trouble his new found self later on in life. In the case of Stella she is also a strong woman who succumbed to HIV but she is not able to get the medication needed to save her life. Chiedza in times of the HIV crisis folds but it can be noted that her firm family background helps her achieve a stable identity even though she had to deal with the same stigma and discrimination that led to the demise of her fiancé. She is able to construct a new identity that is based on acceptance of her HIV status

Society's formations of masculine and feminine identities has fuelled cases where women are at the receiving end and men have adopted toxic forms that have made them unable to deal with crisis situations in times of HIV&AIDS. True masculinity is always perceived as

something which stems from men's bodies and that true masculinity is engraved in the male body. Men's fighting and winning spirit seems to desert then in times of crisis like HIV and one can note that formations of gender identities have been instrumental in creating these men whose ideas of what a man have been warped out of shape by HIV which demands that conceptions of how a man is supposed to behave should change accordingly in order for an individual to be safe. Men should map new forms of masculine identities that recognize the need to look before they leap, to abandon their dare-devil attitudes and to be ever mindful of dangers lurking in all places where they have been taught to exploit without regard. Men should take all measures to protect themselves as well as their future partners in the context where an HIV positive person could be anyone whose body looks healthy and even yourself. Women's identities, on the other hand, have been constructed from a subaltern position where men speak for them and label them. In the end women lack the voices that articulate stronger images of themselves. She is forever dancing to other people's tune in this case she exposes herself to HIV because she lacks the drive and capacity to take control and revolt from her subordinate position creating spaces where it becomes easy for them protect themselves from infections in the homes as wives and as girlfriends.