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Post Apartheid Concerns in Sindiwe Magona's Beauty's Gift

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Abstract:

This paper interrogated Post-Apartheid concerns in Sindiwe Magona's Beauty's Gift and observed that HIV/Aids pandemic and patriarchal domination are the twin evils that compared to, and to some extent surpassed Apartheid in South Africa. The study was undertaken from the perspective of Cultural Studies. Since culture sets to distinguish between positions in social hierarchy, men seem to be the disruptive influences in the spread of HIV/Aids pandemic predicated on their licentious lifestyles. The effects of this wasting disease were shown in the life of Beauty, one of the Five Firm Friends, who subjected her to be ruled by the way culture structured her life as a submissive wife. She was devastated by Aids and was physically dissipated. Her immoral husband -Hamilton, seemingly healthy because of proper medication, buried her skeleton in an expensive casket and an elaborated retinue of mourners in arrays of customized white Mercedes Cars whereas, during the burial of Beauty's cousin Lungile Sonti, who also died of Aids, the Sonti's mounted up Aids Awareness Campaign, where the speakers addressed needs not met by the government. They identify their self-interests with the interest of others to save the youth from imminent mass death through Aids pandemic. They educated the masses on need to wage war against Aids: the prevention: by abstinence from sex, use of condom, tests, and repeated tests, treatment through antiretroviral which should be made easily available by the government in place arm and ammunitions, and care through proper diet, exercise and medication. On the other hand, since patriarchy has the power to signify events their particular way, they sought to subsume the woman under their traditions. But the educated women use their new found confidence and power to develop assertive techniques to challenge fundamental hierarchy of control in their world. This paper recommends that the government, families and other institutions should sensitize the populace, on the reality of HIV/Aids and provide medications, rather than live in denial. The educated women should create a kind of female community or homo social so that their self-perception will not be ignored if patriarchy seeks healthy societal growth.

Keywords: HIV/Aids pandemic, antiretroviral, caskets, patriarchy, social hierarchy

1. Introduction

Apartheid has come and gone yet the blacks in South Africa seem clouded in Apartheid- like shielding predicated on HIV/AIDS pandemic and patriarchal intimidation. These twofold evils are Magona's outcry on post-Apartheid challenges confronting South Africans. Whereas patriarchal intimidation seeks to stall the growth of society, more so, to break down the woman physically and psychologically based on male dominance; the male makes all decisions and usurp all positions of power and authority in both society and in the family unit. On the other hand, the evil of HIV/AIDS pandemic is no respecter of persons; it ravages male and female, the old and the young, the rich and the poor. It traumatizes all, especially those who are not responsible in their sexual relationships. This infectious disease does not respect class boundaries. It tramps down cultures and traditions. Since the first description of AIDS (Acquired immune deficiency syndrome), first found early 1980s in North America, and the identification of the causative organism HIV, (The human immunodeficiency virus) in 1984, more than 20 million people have died. At least 30 million people worldwide are living with HIV infection (Kumar&Clark:171). Aids weakens the immune system so it cannot fight off common germs, viruses, fungi and other invaders. It is the most advanced state of HIV. But just because a person has HIV does not mean they will develop AIDS. Anyone can contract HIV. The virus is transmitted in bodily fluids that are through blood, semen, vaginal and rectal fluids, and breast milk. It can also spread from person to person through vaginal or anal sex – the most common route of transmission is among men who have sex with men (homosexuals) (National Health:5). It can likewise be contacted by sharing needles, syringes, and other items for injection drug use, by sharing tattoo equipment without sterilizing it between uses. It can also be transmitted during pregnancy, labour or delivery from a woman to her baby, during breast-feeding, through 'pre-mastication' or chewing a baby's food before feeding it to them. It can likewise be contacted through blood transfusion or organ and tissue transplant. HIV can cause changes throughout the body, the early symptoms include: fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes, oral thrush, a fungal infection in the mouth or throat, general aches and pains, skin rash, sore throat headache, nausea, upset stomach, weight loss, skin rashes, etc. (Kumar&Clark:172). The Holy Bible in Deuteronomy 28:27 calls it the "wasting disease," that comes to a people because of the divine cause for disobedience of the laws of Jehovah God.

The paper will interrogate this topic through Cultural Studies. "Cultural Studies addresses situation that occur ear a particular place and at a particular time so that the interests of cultural studies and knowledge can be self-consciously formed in relation to local conditions ..." (Davis and Schleifer:602). Culture is described in many ways but this paper shares the Cultural Critics 'definition of culture: "as a process, not a product; it is a lived experience, not a fixed definition. ... Culture is collection of interactive cultures, each of which is growing and changing, each of which is constituted at any given moment in time by the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, occupation, and similar factors that contribute to the experience of its members"(Tyson:281). In *Beauty's Gift*, Magona portrays the experience of regularities, procedures, and ritual of human life in South Africa as she captures the effects of HIV/Aids pandemic and patriarchal pressures on the people.

Magona presents the death of Beauty, a school teacher, a committed wife and mother, who is ravaged by HIV/Aids transmitted to her by her husband Hamilton, who is "getting some help" (76), but does not extend the 'help' to his wife nor to the other women "since he is still messing around" (75). Hamilton spends "his own money on wine and women and the other things a womaniser's lifestyle demanded" (19). Hamilton's nonchalant attitude at infesting women is predicated on patriarchy's ill-treatment of women generally. He labours to "shut Beauty's mouth towards the end" (95), but for the love Beauty has for her other friends, Amanda, Edith, Cordelia, and Doris, the FFF (Five Firm Friends), she confesses to Amanda to tell others that she has Aids.

Do not die a stupid death, like I am doing! Live! ... Live until every hair on your head turns gray. Even your wrinkles and, damn you, enjoy them! Enjoy every wrinkle and every gray hair on your head. Tell yourself you have survived. Sur-vived ... "Live!" ... "Don't die..." "Don't die like ... like ... this ..." ... "Promise me to live, ...Live to a ripe old age!" ... "And tell the others. Tell them what I say to you now. I have Aids." Beauty whisper. "Aids." (74).

Beauty loves them to the very last. "What a gift" (75). Beauty speaks up to save her friends from similar fate. The FFF begin a collectively elaborated female ritual through which they explore the consequences of their common social conditions as appendages of men and attempt to imagine a more perfect state where all the needs they so intensely feel and accept as given will be adequately addressed.

AIDS is a taboo word among the people. The word is linked with shame and secret. "... the virus is more than just a medical condition. It is also a taboo topic" (<https://books.google.com.ng>), therefore, Nosisa, Hamilton's eldest sister, who speaks at Beauty's funeral on behalf of Mamkwayi, Beauty's mother, refers to the cause of Beauty's death to be TB. "The TB had already advanced to such a stage ... We brought her home. She wanted to come home" (10), though a taboo word but Aids pandemic is claiming the best of the citizenry, incidentally, the black democratic government is squandering the resources of the country on arms and other weapons of war "when the real war facing us demands antiretroviral?" (86), Mrs Mazwi grieves. According to Peter Moss etel, "Highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) has dramatically reduced mortality for those who are able to access care" (Kumar&Clark: 171).

While no one may be praying for apartheid to come back, but the world could have come to the aid of the people over the Aids pandemic, since that would have been genocide. Mrs Mazwi laments:

The world would have condemned the genocide of the poor, perpetuated by the apartheid government, yet a democratically elected government is dragging its feet as people die in their thousands ... Are you going to stand and let Aids do what even apartheid could not do? ... We need knowledge and medicine to fight this war, not guns. And make no mistake this is war! (86).

The people are not only ignorant but cynical and impotent to confront the patriarchal government with this mass murder. The black government's nonchalant attitude to the "genocide of the poor" is envisioned as worse than what apartheid did to the people of South African - the patriarchal nature of the government - that is far removed from the needs and feelings of the people - renders a vote of no confidence on them ineffective. The government is also blind to the fact that in the midst of economic hardship afflicting the country: "biting hardest on the forever economically disadvantaged ... Business had never been brisker for the undertakers" (18), because there were just too many funerals. "Way way too many. Despite government pronouncement that the Aids pandemic was not as widespread as some health experts stated, it was obvious that the township cemeteries would soon run out of space. Families were even beginning to open old graves to bury new corpses over the long dead" (18), yet the government lives in denial of Aids pandemic on the citizenry.

When the FFF first noticed Beauty's ill-disposition, they accused Hamilton, of physical violence on their friend, in spite of Beauty's protest that "For two weeks, ... I woke up each morning with these swollen lips ... and a little swelling around the eyes ... But then it all disappeared again, and for days it wasn't there ... And now, suddenly, it's back" (29), since the swelling does not hurt, her friends cannot confront her with their suspicions, because they are blind and timid and have no understanding of the early signs and symptoms of Aids. But they observe that their friend is wasting away. The effects of this wasting disease on Beauty are beyond expression:

Beauty is so thin now that there's nothing there. The blankets are flat. Flat till where the feet stick up as though disjointed, things with no link at all to the scrawny neck jutting out from the blankets that are hiding the emaciated stick of a body ... When she tries to smile, the effort cracks her lips and they ooze droplets of thin brown blood. She speaks with great effort; her dry lips opening to reveal shrunken gums, even her nods are painful. She speaks in whispers (46-7). Beauty loses the ability to be physically active; she becomes bored and more depressed and incapacitated. There she lies:

... Shrunken and skeletal. Only the head is still the same size – now seeming huge, disproportionate to the rest of her. ... Her eyes are two deeply sunken coals. She is nothing but 'Bone' that is what she has become. Her frail frame. Beauty is exhausted, sitting up is a challenge, every attempt sees her crumpling back in bed, her meager strength fails her.

The skeleton has taken over. Only the voice is strong, as vibrant as before ...Her dimming eyes rove around frantically as she tries to visualize her friends where she has placed them in the room according to their voices(48).

Since Beauty does not have positive living since, she has no counsel on her condition, therefore other opportunistic infections set in. She is physically and psychologically blind: "Those bright eyes burn in vain" (58). To change her up is a major operation, at every touch at the "angry-looking oozing sores," Beauty cries out in anguish.

The hygienic condition of the home has deteriorated and is beyond control, "the stench hits you, grows with each step you take towards the bedroom now the sickroom. The door is closed, but the odour is insistent. It is everywhere, disinfectant, air freshener, Indian sticks, aromatic candles; nothing seems to make a difference, the suffocating smell reigns supreme" (57). Hamilton is said to be "a man of substance ... a man of style" (18). But he is unable to control his spread Aids and he is powerless to quench the insistent stench of Aids oozing from his wife, in his house. For the Holy Bible says: "Though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap" (Jeremiah:2:22), all in vain, the pollution is overwhelming.

As patriarchy, Hamilton isolates Beauty from her friends who should give her the needed emotional and physical affection and care on her sick/dying bed and as such she goes into depression. He chooses when Beauty should be taken to the hospital, where she should be discharged to and who and who should visit her. Of the FFF he only allows Amanda to visit after the first visit of the FFF, and thereby moves Beauty from her parents' home to his house. Beauty suffers from private patriarchy – isolated within the home and tries to silence her by sitting beside her sick bed when others are there. The FFF join forces symbolically and in a meditative way, in the privacy of their individual homes and in the culturally devalued space of leisure activity, they challenge their separation from one another brought about by patriarchal culture because it represents real female needs.

Embarrassingly, Aids pandemic has reversed the order of things; parents, in their grief, in their bewildered and confounded sorrow, were giving their children the funerals, they had hoped to get from them. In their delusion, they make burials become very expensive affairs: "families went out of their way to outdo one another in the extravagance with which they buried their dead. Coffins were far from cheap, but now people were buying caskets, and choosing the most expensive one too" (18), therefore parents in their "observable experience" (Davis & Schleifer), for example, Beauty's parents belong to "a burial society" – they made monthly payments, and so had received a lump sum" (93), for the purpose of burials. What a reprobate society?

Hamilton buries Beauty in "a dazzling ivory casket with gleaming gold handles, - top of the range. The hearse was a white Mercedes-Benz limousine, and behind it, family and close family friends followed in gleaming fleet of ten white Mercedes-Benz cars" (19). He spares no cost on the very expensive casket and he masquerades the casket and orders men to pour cement in the grave before laying the casket: "To prevent thieves from 'recycling' the Casket" (41). "Beauty has been buried in red – a custom-made robe making an unforgettable slash of scarlet in the soft, cushiony white satin inside the gleaming ivory casket. Red crowned with thick jet-black of Beauty's locks. To the very end, her hair had stayed amazingly alive around the gaunt wasteland of her face" (20), this vain glorying cannot bring Beauty back to life and cannot erase the fact that she dies of Aids; a taboo disease. Inversely the FFF develop assertive techniques in a few restricted areas of their lives and thus use their new found confidence and perceive power to challenge the fundamental hierarchy of control in their marriage, therefore, they creatively resist the effect and sanction of the social institutions

As Beauty is laid to rest, one of the Sonti's – Beauty's cousin's – burial is delayed for the next day, while another Sonti's is dying: "The Sonti's are worse hit to bear a pain so huge. One child about to be buried and another on his deathbed" (65), it is a terrible time when relatives are forced to line up for funerals, program them, because more than one home in the same family are busy with the same kind of sad work. It is an unheard-of abomination, that one child is buried another child is dead, both dying of Aids.

While Hamilton shamelessly uses Beauty's funeral to showcase his wealth and affluence, the Sonti's family, instead of being hypocritical or burying their heads in shame at burial of their second son, mounts up an Aids awareness campaign to save the lives of others, since the government immune to the casualties. The Sonti's family is on "a mission United" ...They were not only openly declaring the cause of Lungile's death, they were seizing the chance to educate the community" (83). They distribute pamphlets on HIV and Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases, along with the programs. The burial service is short to make room for speakers to address attitudes and perceptions, sexual behavior, life choices and HIV/Aids.

Nomtha Langa, a member of Vukani, a local NGO, recounts her ten-year journey of living with HIV. "Looking at her, it was evident that there was no way of telling from a person's physical appearance whether or not they were infected." She is a picture of radiant health, even like Hamilton. She stresses the test for HIV positive is not a death sentence. "I am faced every day with a series of choices, choices that could spell life or death not only for myself, but for others ..." (84). Aids is beyond the transfer of knowledge and information regarding it and the prevention thereof. Aids is more than a health issue. It is a lifestyle issue.

Another speaker Mrs Mazwi, a retired teacher and a respected community leader late Lungile's teacher and a teacher to most of the people at the funeral, bemoans the death of the Sonti brothers – both teachers - through Aids. Without mincing words, she calls the funeral "the funeral of the youth, and Aids "your disease" "this is your time of judgement (sic), but it is also your challenge, your call to higher duty" (84), the black youth are walking corpses if nothing is done, and right in time to save them. From a sample question of families without illegitimate children to show by a lift of hand, she draws people's attention to the fact that HIV/Aids are slowly taking that turn. Which means "Africans are doom to die" (85), Peter Moss, etel confirm that: "Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most seriously affected by Aids" (Kumar&Clark:171).

Mrs Mazwi, advocates safe sex with the aid of condom, staying faithful to spouses, and abstinence for the youth. She also strongly advocates sex education as paramount discussion at home with the children on responsible sex, regular tests to know status. "Test and test again" (85). Testing gives tremendous advantage, for the earlier the detection of the virus and administering the right medication, the better for the patient. Again, Peter Moss et al confirm that: "Approximately one-quarter of those with HIV infection ... are undiagnosed and unaware of their infection, which contributes to late diagnoses, poorer clinical outcomes and onward transmission. Late diagnoses are now the most common cause of HIV related morbidity and mortality ... Reducing undiagnosed HIV through wider testing, particularly in patients presenting with clinical conditions that are associated with HIV and in areas with high seroprevalence is critical to both individual and public health" (Kumar&Clark:172). These women are bold and out-spoken because they have worked in the public world to maintain themselves and live symbolically not as the property and responsibility of patriarchy, they identify their self-interest in the interest of others. They see themselves as public sources to be mined by others as they unflinchingly address needs not met by patriarchal institutions

In the attempt to seize on Beauty's gift; and encouraged by Mrs Mawzi's sensitization, the FFF sisters reaffirm their resolve on no condom no sex, no test no sex and this touched off many reactions from their spouses. Zakes and Amanda are engaged in cold war, since Zakes is not interested in testing. He says we're married." (89). Luvo accuses Edith of disloyalty "Luvo was not speaking to me" (89), he wants his lobola (pride price) back, since Edith wants "to wear the pants. He wants to know if I want to be his husband ..." (113), Vuyo gets physical on Cordelia and moves out; she ends up with a black eye: "Vuyo has left me" (90). Selby reluctantly agrees to a test with his fiancé Doris: "Because we're applying for a bond ... we both have to get tested. The bank strongly recommended that we get life insurance, and of course you cannot get cover without being tested first" (91), unguarded sex life is a choice. No one has the right to expose another to Aids, especially when the FFF visualize Beauty's rotting condition, the reaffirm that: "Men who refuse to use condom kill women" (70). The FFF begin to address needs created in them but not met by patriarchal institutions and engendering practices, what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno call "Counter-valuation" or "counter-valuation" – a process of inversion whereby the original socio-economic limitations and devaluation of a subordinate group becomes something of value to that group (Rivkin&Ryan:1043). The FFF become more resolve in their quest for safe sex with their spouses, in spite of the emotional and physical violence they encounter.

Invariably, the gender argument on who infects the other with the HIV/Aids is cyclical; it can be compared to the argument of the chicken and the egg, which comes first? While Moses and his gang and his gang believe that "those girls, the girlfriends of the twin brothers ... they will give this aids thing to other brothers, unless they also die! ... everybody knows that that is how men get Aids" (69). "You cannot blame the men when it is those women who throw themselves at the men" (70). Cordelia counters the argument with men's licentious mind-set: "But if a man sleeps with more than one partner, how can he be absolutely sure his girlfriend is the one who gave the disease to him?" (69) Do women "unzip the helpless men, pull out the diddles and thrust them into their hot kukus?" (70) In her concern for the twins' girl friends she says: "I hope those women protected themselves" (69), with the use of condoms, to which the gang scornfully reply: "The brothers say using a condom is like eating sweets with the wrapper on" (70). It is up to individuals to fight the battle against aids otherwise, before long, according to experts, there will not be one family left untouched by Aids in sub-Saharan Africa.

Aids is not a "Black thing" (71) "After all, beneath the superficial envelope of skin, we are all the same: heir to the same aspirations, emotions and foibles (37), but more Africans are dying leaving behind orphans because they will not stop sleeping around. "Black people are dying like flies of "Aids in South African more than all the groups put together ... Aids will continue to kill us as long as we refuse to take responsibility for our actions ..." (72). "The black man's penis has become a "deadly weapon" ... and only a fool goes to bed with the enemy – an armed enemy at that." (71). Of course, Aids is not a black disease, but unless something drastic happens to change the attitude of men and women, most Africans will be walking corpses. "How many white Aids orphans have you counted lately ... African mothers are dying because of men who will not stop sleeping around" (70). Love and loving are about protecting those you love, it is about caring enough for the one you love, to make sure they are safe. It is about taking responsibility for one's health and the safety of one's partner. The elders may see Aids as "God's judgment" (72), but Aids will continue to be a sentence to the blacks as long as the sexes refuse to take responsible actions in the sex lives. "Love is about the two of us making sure that we will live long enough to see Zingisa's children" (81), Amanda grieves to Zakes. The FFF yearn for an adequate lover-protector, as they reach their sexual and emotional stability/maturity, they reorganize their lives to meet their needs and safety, and begin to resist the deleterious effects of their social situations.

Patriarchy may be said to be a social system and a style of oppression that slows social progress and pressures men and women to behave in a certain way. In Magona's Beauty's Gift, patriarchy is one of the prime obstacles to people's advancement and development, and often seeks to push the women into the domestics and as commodities. Denigrate young men and women abound in society they succumb to patriarchal enticements thus dropping out of school: "becoming parents before they quite finished being children themselves and descending into inevitable, hopeless poverty" (104), because the patriarchal society that exposes them to these evils and has no goodwill for their welfare.

Teenage sexual abuse is a recurrent concern, The FFF witness Mr Magama, the principal of a township high school and a deacon in his church hovering, all soft, solicitous, clinging and gluing to a partially naked sixteen-year-old at a night-club (116). Hamilton is immoral. He is not the only FFF man who cheats, or has ever cheated on his wife, but he is a repeat offender as "... mistresses, young and eager, vying to outdo not just the wife but one another" (25), are hardest to ignore, the FFF refer to him as: 'That dog' (15). A sixteen-years-old dumps a month-old baby with Sihle who is also nursing a baby less than one year old. The young girl claims the baby is Luntu's Sihle's husband; she says she has to go back to school and

her mother refuses to look after the baby" (125). Mandla and Luntu Amanda's brothers have "21 children between the two of them – and only three of those with their wives, Zakes has two sons outside wedlock, but Amanda's mother calls him "a good man" and explains it away as a "mistake" (127), and disdainfully calls the revealer of the secret Sihle, a destroyer of "a happy family" ... and "a witch" (127). Zakes becomes a saint as compared with Luntu and Mandla, her two younger sons, one of Cordelia's brothers has thirteen children from five or six women" (77). J.M. Coetzee in *The Childhood of Jesus* also portrays Frannie co-habits with Senor Daga.: "in fact not a woman at all - he doubts she is older than sixteen ... rather too heavily made up teetering unsteadily on high heels" (183). The younger generations easily yield themselves as victims of dishonor to patriarchy. In K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteenth Cent*, several men, including Mr Lebowits, an Investment Banker (87), enjoys homosexual relationship with a thirteen-year-old Azure (86). In Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, Odili Samalu says: "The trouble with me father was an endless desire for wives and children. ... Right now, he has five wives – the youngest a mere girl whom he married last year. And he is at least sixty-eight, possible seventy. He gets a small family of his present thirty-five children. Of course, he doesn't even make a pretence of providing for the family nowadays. He leaves every wife to her own devices" (32). Patriarchy is witless. Peter Moss et al are emphatic that: "... 33% of 15-year-old in high-prevalence countries in Africa will die of HIV ... influenced by social, behavioural, cultural and political factors (Kumar&Clark:171). It is mind boggling and hallowing that patriarchy sees the younger generation as their source of self-rejuvenation, laws prohibiting teenage abuse will fail them. Their corrupting influence on the younger generation is not a question of good and evil it is a question of power. The infidelity of most men and their stubborn refusal to use condom or undergo tests, and their homosexual tendencies, act as fertilizers for the spread of the Aids pandemic. Again, Peter Moss et al affirm that: "Men who sleep with men (MSM) and culturally diverse heterosexual populations from sub-Saharan Africa, are the two largest groups of people living with HIV ... and accessing treatment and care" (Kumar&Clark:171-2). Patriarchy turns blind eyes on men in adultery and in homosexuality.

But Penrose Phaphama (PP) Amanda's brother, breaks all patriarchal norms to remain true to his wife in spite of not having an heir according to the African culture. He is content with his three daughters and undergoes a vasectomy to save the life of his wife. Spouses' faithfulness is possible in society if men and women are discipline.

Incredibly, most women are so immersed in patriarchy that they have become stooges: Mamndaweni, Amanda's mother for instance, believes: "women simply endured the vagaries of married life – and did so with the mouths shut and smiles painted on their faces. Men were men and would do what men had always done, since the beginning of time" (124-5), there can be no hope in trying to educate her otherwise. Also, Nontu, Zakes mother feels Amanda is wasting everybody's time by initiating a family meeting on her son's infidelity: "So what if Zakes had six children outside their marriage? Was he the first man to do that? Was he the last? Was this a story the world had not ever heard before? No. So why did she want to put his name in the history book? Aargh, these women of today ... and they call themselves wives! Nontu disdains Amanda, Nontu is blind to the inherent dangers in unfaithful relationships" (152). The women are ruled by the way culture structures their lives, because patriarchy has long violated their core values.

Though Zakes sisters acknowledge that their brother erred which is very human: "Show me any human being how doesn't make mistakes? (150, they ask Amanda. "... We all sit over our coals in our own situations ... Marriage is enduring ... a woman sticks it out the best she knows how, that is what we do. That is what our mothers, and their mothers before them did. Stick it out. That is tradition" (151), they emphasis; Her sisters-in-law have also internalized the superiority of patriarchy, so they are blind to their own suffering, blind to the fact that they were living lives devoid of appreciation and respect, they learn to endure suffering to remain married. They were beyond salvation too. There is nothing anyone can do or say that will awaken them to the danger implicit in their attitude. They are ready to lose their lives, to stay married. To them: "That was a respectable thing to do" (151), whereas Amanda is looking for life and not marriage or death. The illiterate women see patriarchal domination as an indisputable ancient tradition that cannot be challenged because men hold primary power and predominate in rules, moral authority, social privilege and control of property; and women are part of these property. Adapting to a dominated position implies a form of acceptance of domination. The safety and protection of traditional marriage should not compromise a woman autonomy or self-confidence. The educated woman sees the opposition between love and the values and those associated with the competitive pursuit of status and wealth, to justify the social placement of women that has led to the very discontent that is the source of their desire. Society seeks to relegate the woman to the arena of domestic, purely personal and keeps the public realm far from her.

Most women stick to their abusive and wayward men because they are the sole source of food, rent, clothes and school fees for their children. These women likewise want to be identified with a man "And the identity of many a woman is so tied up with her husband's, she wouldn't know who she was without him" (115). Luntu, is openly promiscuous and brings in children from outside the marriage from time to time, yet Sihle cannot quit because she has nowhere else to go to. She: is "poor and uneducated, she couldn't see a life without the support her husband provided, tenuous as it was" (126), Sihle sees the role of women only in terms of bearing children, housekeeping and to supporting her husband in nursing all his children including those he brings in outside wedlock.

The love the African man has for the children is in making those children, not raising them. Coetzee reiterates that: "Fatherhood is not only a matter of having intercourse with a woman, just as motherhood is not only a matter of providing a vessel for male seed" (189), fatherhood and motherhood should be real business that should be handled by matured minds, but patriarchy permits child abandons these future generations, Men who father children they fail to nurture are the scum of the earth. Amanda refers to such men as "township he-goat" (136). Most often, the illiterate women see the educated women as threats to culture. The educated women resolve and vow never to let their spouses injure them therefore, they assert themselves and more effectively defend their choices to justify their right to pleasure in spite of men's oppressive control.

Hamilton becomes so obsessed with power he desires to control the social and family situations including his in-laws. He even sets aside even the laws of the land by refusing to attend his late wife's spades cleansing ceremony: "... he wanted the ceremony held at his place, which is contrary to the law of the land: "that the funeral service is held at one place and the then the spade washing ceremony is held at another" (94), he considers himself superior, to his parents and siblings who turn up for the occasion. Since patriarchy must make all decisions regarding finances, he will not contribute to the Ceremony too. But Beauty's parents received "a lump sum from a burial society – they made monthly payments" (93), to foot the bills for the ceremony. The men's rights are always unchallenged in the public spheres of work, politics and power, because it refurbishes the institution,

Therefore, when Zakes reaffirms his love for Amanda, she questions his treachery: "Can your love keep me safe from harm. Can your love cure me of disease, save my life, should you infect me with HIV?" (147). Zakes may not lift a finger on Amanda, but "the thing dangling between your legs, if or when you poke it into any hole that lets you in, may come out of there wearing death, spitting disease ... Disease that could kill me like a thief in the night" (148). I love you, cannot miraculously protect the spouses from the consequences of HIV/Aids infection or from death. Irrespective Hamilton's gift to Beauty: "a posh brand-new car, The Goudini Spa" (38) - expensive place where Hamilton takes Beauty to, to make up for his follies. She is devastated by Aids! Patriarchy seeks to dominate, victimize and firmly tighten the chains of cultural and social oppression on the woman. But Amanda, like the other FFF vow never to let their spouses injure them in similar way Hamilton does to Beauty.

At the Zakes' family meeting Amanda questions the received tradition of the elders:

You, our fathers and mothers, should have left us a better tradition. Children should all have fathers as well as mothers. I am angry and disappointed that my husband has children he does not put to bed at night or comfort when they have a bad dream. I cannot respect a man who sows his seed as though it were not his blood, a man who sires children but is not there to father them ... I respect you, my elders ... but I will never respect lies and dishonesty. And what Zakes has done has killed the last of the respect I had for him (155).

The women oppositional impulse lead to real social change and a potential restructuring of sexual relations. Halifax argues that:

Nothing is more certain than that the human institution will change and the so-called fundamentals of government with them. The divine right of kings, the indefeasible rights of property or persons, and laws which may not be repealed or modified are all attempts to bind the future; they neither can or ought to be effective. Laws and constitutions are made not once but a hundred times. In themselves they can do little and in end they mean just what those who administer and enforce them want them to mean. In the last resort law and government depend upon the intelligence and good will of the persons who conduct them (Sabine&Thorson: 480).

All man-made laws are sanctimonious. The society does not question the institutionalized basis of patriarchal control over women even the emotional consequences, but education is a declaration of independence and a way to say to other, this is my time, my space. Now leave me alone. The educated women show their dissatisfaction in the traditional heterosexual relations. Again, Amanda confronts the elders: "I have forgiven Zakes ... But leaving with him is something I cannot do. We will go our separate ways from now on" (155). Amanda breaks the backbone of tradition by facing up to the elders of her husband's family with her devoice from Zakes. Education allows women to refuse their self-abnegating social role, and rejecting patriarchy's constituent social practices and ideologies on them.

Consequently, when Nontu seeks to frame up Amanda as being responsible for Zakes' death, eye ball to eyeball Amanda for once screams back at her: "How and when did I push Zakes in front of a speeding car? ... I will not take responsibility for Zakes getting killed by a car. I won't. ... I can only be responsible for my own actions not the actions of others" (159). This utterance and action reverse the traditional female limitation because it validates the dominance of domestic concerns and personal interaction in women's lives.

Though Amanda is sad at the death of Zakes but she is not grieving. She attends Zakes funeral to support her son Zingisa, not to bury Zakes and she does not sit with the rest of the family on the dais, but with her FFF: "Neither did she cover her face with a shawl" (165), as culture demands. Radway states that: "Culture is a means of domination, of assuring the rule of one class or group over another, and a means of resistance as such domination, a way of articulating oppositional points of view to those in dominance" (Rivkin&Ryan:1046). Amanda begins to shore up her own sense of her abilities by rejection patriarchal control over her. The educated women begin to refuse the other-directed social roles prescribed for them by their positions in the institution of marriage.

As Luvo seeks to dominate Edith's life, he rapes her. In the process Edith breaks the forbidden tradition of a wife addressing him by his first name: "A Xhosa wife does not address her husband as though he were her son" (171), though Luvo does not take notice. At the end the humiliation he curses her: "Dead fish! You make me sleep with a cold, dead fish!" (171), because Edith goes into passive resistance mode and lies like a log and lets him do whatever at the end of a desperate struggle. According to Radway:

Rape gives the woman a sense of power and control over the fear of it. Although their distaste for 'out-and-out' violation indicates that these women do not want to be punished or hurt as so many has assumed their willingness to be convinced that the forced 'taking' of a woman by a man who really loves her is testimony to her desirability and worth rather than in his power suggest ... is effectively dealing with some of the consequences of patriarchy without also challenging the hierarchy of control upon which it is based. Rape has a rape related behavior on the woman. But by suggesting that rape is either a misstate or an expression of uncontrollable desire may give the woman a false sense of security by showing her how to rationalize violent behavior and thus reconcile her to a set of events and relations that she would be better off changing (Rivkin&Ryan:1048).

Edith does not rationalize this violent behavior as “an expression of uncontrollable desire” for her, but she reconciles herself to the power and control she now has over Luvo and the next day she simply informs him that she has to go away on a holiday: “I need to go away and think about what you did last night. ...” And in a voice void of sentiments she warns: “don’t ever do that to me again” (172). Edith learns to assert herself and as a consequence defends her choices and justifies her right to pleasure as she joins the other FFF sisters on a holiday. The FFF create what Radway calls “a kind for female community” (Rivkin&Ryan:1044) or what Tyson call “homosocial” (308), as women begin to bond to strengthen one other in their fight for the primacy of their values and concerns in their homes and society.

2. Conclusion

In conclusion, the gross effects of HIV/Aids pandemic and patriarchal dominance in South Africa, in Magona’s *Beauty’s Gift* portrays a sick and an unwholesome society, a society where the youth – the future generation - are abused by patriarchy, a society replete with bastard children, a society where patriarchy does reckon with women in decision making, a society where the graveyards are filled and old graves are excavated to bury the new, thus manpower is depleted daily, a society where the government buys more arms for warfare than antiretrovirals for the teaming rate of Aids victims. All these and many more taunt the positive growth of the people. Since none questions the institutionalized basis of patriarchal control over power and women of all ages, Aids pandemic will remain an unending challenge in society. In view of the fact that culture is one of the ways of distinguishing between positions in the social hierarchy, and also a means of resistance to capitalism, only the women empowered educationally like Five Firm Friends are able to project their primary values and concerns as they meaningfully protest patriarchal domination. The FFF are committed to a more perfect social change so they legitimately protest the old social order. They will not concede the fight but encourage it and bring it to fruition because of Beauty’s gift, which is the truth she is dying of Aids infected her by her husband and not of TB as announced at her funeral. Beauty’s condition forewarns others to engage in responsible sex in order to live till ripe old age to see their children’s children. Her message counsels women not to permit men to abuse and push them around, as she submits to Hamilton’s gift of a posh brand-new car, follies at The Goudini Spa, Aids and an expensive casket.

Since Cultural studies views the oppressed people as both victimized by the dominant power structure and as resisting or transforming that power structure, the FFF are triumphant over their successfully opposing their domination of commodity values placed on them by the base/superstructure relationship society upholds; they come to their utopian moment, when they confidently choose between their lives or death within the institutions of marriage to stubborn men who will prefer to give them befitting burials than take responsibility for their sexual attitudes in spite of the women’s protest against the emotional consequences of patriarchal unfaithful actions against them.

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