Hair-stylisation and the "Art-of-living": the case of Tendai Huchu's *The hairdresser of Harare*

Edwin Mhandu

PhD candidate, English Department, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

mhanduedwin@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In this article, I consider the portrayal of hair and hair-stylisation in Tendai Huchu's novel, *The hairdresser of Harare* (2010) as powerful tropes that communicate the 'the Art-of-living' (Veenhoven 2003) and human flourishing. I take a different route from the conventional tradition in which hair-stylisation is seen as site of struggle and contestation, and, by extension, is laden with insinuations of race (Tate 2009; Erasmus 2000). Rather, I argue that hair-stylisation is an expressive genre that conveys meaning to and of the self, the immediate community and the global world. As a form of an extension of clothing, hair styles have the capacity to carry messages that enrich the self in various spaces of dialogue, be they religious, social or political. Conversely, hair styles can also signal the forbearance of sturdy individualism. I explore the centrality of the self, the image, and the body's articulation in various modes. Drawing on Kwame Anthony Appiah's (1998) theory of 'cosmopolitan patriots', I argue that through hair-stylisation processes, black and white women presented in *The hairdresser of Harare* demonstrate the individual capacity to introspect, relate and share "the good life" and versions of human flourishing in a multi-ethnic environment. They extend Ruut Veenhoven's (2003) concept of the "Art-of-living", or 'the capabilities of leading a good life' (Veenhoven 2003:373) to embrace the global visual and aesthetic images typified by black American actresses and singer-songwriters such as Halle Berry and Toni Braxton. Hair-stylisation enables the female characters in Huchu's text to defeat and rezone time-space distantiation, and transfigure themselves into what I interpret as 'citizens of the world' (Appiah 1998). However, in the process, female characters do not necessarily forgo cultural particularities, and this motivates for local cosmopolitanism – a state in which they celebrate the presence of people different to them, and enjoy the pleasures of hybridity as they relate to the global world.

Keywords: the Art-of-living, enjoyment, well-being, human flourishing, Zimbabwe, salon, hair-stylisation.

Introduction

The portrayal of hair-stylisation and the salon in Tendai Huchu's novel, *The hairdresser of Harare* (2010) (hereafter *The hairdresser*) substantiate versions of what Ruut Veenhoven (2003) calls 'the Art-of-living', "the good life" and human flourishing in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Set against a background of hyperinflation, state-sanctioned violence, pillage and wanton expropriation of private property, hair-stylisation is portrayed as one of the ways of "making do" that contains, and at times, subverts the nation-state's narration of Zimbabwean well-being and belonging. *The hairdresser* is a story about Dumisani Ncube and Vimbai's relationship – a relationship that goes through various stages ranging from surprise to admiration, mystification, "love", discoveries, empathy and camaraderie. Recounted by Vimbai, readers learn that Dumisani (hereafter Dumi)[1] finds employment as a hairdresser at Mrs Khumalo's salon where Vimbai, Yolanda, Charlie Boy and Memory work. Dumisani's sharp sartorial style, cheerful character and expertise in hair styling wins him the favour of many clients, much to the chagrin of Vimbai, who has been supplanted by Dumi as the best hairdresser. I explore the salon experiences of clients whose hair is done by Dumi and not Vimbai for a reason. Unlike Dumi, Vimbai's hair-stylisation philosophy is predicated on a stereotype: as she states, 'the secret to being a successful hairdresser … [is that] "Your client should leave the salon feeling like a white woman". Not Coloured, not Indian, not Chinese' (Huchu 2010:3). In contesting Vimbai's standpoint, Dumi believes that hair-stylisation should aim to bring out the best in an individual, or what he calls "natural looks", and it is his ability to work out the best looks for his clients that makes him popular.

Critical works that have been written on *The hairdresser* explore Dumi's homosexuality and the Zimbabwean government's intransigence and persecution of people in same-sex relationships. The theme of queerness in Huchu's text is prevalent in the writings of Gibson Ncube (2013), Anna Chitando and Molly Manyonganise (2016) and Pauline Mateveke (2016).[2] However, there is an alternative reading of the novel. I argue that *The hairdresser* illustrates a specific understanding of the "Art-of-living" and it rehearses "the good life" in the salon through the process of hair-stylisation. I draw on the anthropologist, Victor Turner's (1991) concept of ritual and liminal spaces to argue that hair-stylisation is portrayed as a ritual process wherein identities are forged and celebrated. Turner (1991:15) broadens the definition of ritual from being a referent for a solemn religious practice into a process of creativity in which people 'express what moves them most'. I start from the premise that, 'hair as we know [it] is not just organic matter growing out of [the] scalp that makes us beautiful or not'; rather, 'hair does things and it is a tool which can be used to extend … ourselves beyond our bodies

1. Huchu uses the names "Dumisani" and "Dumi" interchangeably. Dumi is widely travelled and he is homosexual. Vimbai narrates the story of her discovery of Dumi's homosexuality in a society that is deeply conservative and has cultural stigmas that denigrate such an orientation. Vimbai is surprised to note that Dumi is a *ngochani* – a Shona name that is derisively used to define homosexuals.

2. Though the critical works differ in approach, they foreground the trials and tribulations Dumi encounters in his quest to be accepted as a homosexual.

whilst at the same time being drawn back into them' (Tate 2009:13). Amongst the many "things" hair "does", hair-stylisation is a signifier of cultural spaces of well-being and enjoyment into which Zimbabweans, both black and white, withdraw in order to reclaim their individuality against the discourses of inclusions and exclusions propagated by the Zimbabwean nation state.

I examine the portrayal of the salon experiences of three female characters as they interact with Dumi, who works as a hairdresser in Mrs Khumalo's Hair and Beauty Treatment Salon. The women are from different backgrounds, classes and races, and what unites them is that their hair is tended to and plaited in the salon. I argue that the process of hair-stylisation is constitutive of the Art-of-living, enjoyment, happiness and the attendant cultures where people choose to claim their dignity and retain agency in a repressive environment. I focus on an unnamed woman known to readers simply as "Mercy's cousin sister", who works as an accountant for the auditing firm Deloitte & Touche; Trina (a white ex-farmer in Zimbabwe); and Minister M ____ (a black female government minister who is also married to a government minister). Though the three women are not the only ones whose hair-stylisation is artistically captured in Huchu's novel, my choice to focus on these characters derives from a realisation that they are representative of certain traits that can easily be construed as typical in post-2000 Zimbabwe. What connects the worlds of the women under discussion are the diverse experiences they have of Mrs Khumalo's Hair Salon – a salon famed for its customer care. However, it would be premature to take the hair salon as a microcosm of Zimbabwe; rather, it represents one of the liminal spaces through which versions of Zimbabwe are lived through, in, and outside the tumult of politics. I draw from Turner (1991:vii), who argues that in liminal spaces, 'new models, often fantastic, some of which may have power and plausibility to replace eventually the force-backed political and jural models', are created and celebrated. In the salon, the hairdressing and the attendant rituals – which include the enjoyment of music, telling of stories, and buying and selling of scarce commodities in a hyper-inflationary environment – are rehearsals of the good life. Enjoyment of the good life takes place in the salon despite state sanctioned violence and discourses on indigeneity that casts white Zimbabweans as foreigners. Mrs Khumalo's salon is close to the city centre, and is therefore convenient for customers of different races, ethnic groups and nationalities who live in Harare.

Conceptualising the Art-of-living

Veenhoven (2003:373) argues that 'the Art-of-living' refers to 'the capabilities for leading a good life'. Since there are different views on what a good life is, Veenhoven

elaborates that there could also be different capabilities called for in order for one to enjoy a happy life. He distinguishes two main thrusts to the Art-of-living, namely the hedonistic view and the moralistic view. In the moralistic view, the Art-of-living is evaluated against an agent's capability to stick to moral tenets, whereas the hedonistic view centralises enjoyment and pleasure (Veenhoven 2003:373). The Art-of-living is the capability to take pleasure from life. In essence, 'a good life should be "authentic" in the first place, and since everybody is unique it should be "original" ... the Art-of-living is in discovering one's true self and living accordingly' (Veenhoven 2003:375). In a critical survey on the philosophers who have come to be identified with discourses on the Art-of-living, I have found the writers discussed below to be important to my argument.

Joep Dohmen (2003:252) defines the Art-of-living as 'a form of self-direction with a view to good life'. He elaborates that the Art-of-living 'employs a mix of both modern and classical concepts, such as autonomy, authenticity, and "the good life"' (Dohmen 2003:252). Dohmen foregrounds the notion that the Art-of-living falls within the purview of a branch of philosophy that has been distinguished as normative ethics. He notes that there are various versions of this recent philosophy (Dohmen 2003). They range from the pre-modern, stoic version of Pierre Hadot (1995); the virtue-ethic version of John Kekes (2002); and the aesthetic version of Alexander Nehamas (1998). I am particularly guided by Nehamas's philosophy of the Art-of-living, which is based on the aesthetic perspective that is predicated on a particular kind of self-creation. The goal would be 'to acquire uncommon and idiosyncratic character, a set of features and a mode of life that set one apart from the rest of the world' (Nehamas 1998:50). Nonetheless, that in itself would not be adequate to explicate the type of freedom and its latitude in space and time that is captured in Huchu's novel. Thus, I augment the aesthetic perspective with Dohmen's theorisation of the Art-of-living that is based on authenticity. There are various considerations as to why I have made this decision. Authenticity embraces the hedonistic version espoused by Veenhoven (2003), the virtue-ethic version proposed by John Kekes (2002), and the aesthetic value as one discovers one's true self and lives accordingly (Nehamas 1998; Veenhoven 2003).

Research has shown that the hair salon proffers invaluable and multifaceted forms of self-stylisation and self-fashioning, as in it, individuals 'create a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and ways of being so as to transform themselves' (Nuttall 2008:93; Foucault 2003:225). In *The hairdresser*, one way in which the salon creates space that is detached from the nation state induced hyperinflationary environment is through people's determination to keep up appearances and see life as an art form. Although Sarah Nuttall (2009:120) refers to a different context, I propose, in her words, that 'the identities and forms of selfhood projected' in *The hairdresser* 'are compositional' and that in it, subjects aspire to present themselves

as ‘works of art’. In the following section, I foreground the relational aspects in *The hairdresser* through the portrayal of three women. I introduce them not necessarily in the order they are presented in the text; rather their positioning in this article is informed by the patterns and versions of the Art-of-living they exude in conforming to, or through subversion of, the various exclusions and inclusions by the nation state.

Mercy’s cousin sister

Vimbai introduces Mercy’s cousin sister as a ’professional-looking lady with tons of make up on’, who, upon witnessing her cousin’s hair style, visits the salon and says to Dumi: ‘I want you to give me the same style as her’ (Huchu 2010:34). The description is paradoxical in that recourse to the idea that she is a professional woman projects an image of an empowered woman. However, Vimbai’s next comment where she talks of ‘tons of makeup’ conjures up negative images, setting in motion notions where makeup is subject to debate. For instance, Sheila Jeffreys (2005:24) views beauty practices such as ‘figure-hugging, clothing, through makeup, hairstyles, [and] depilation’ as ways in which women collude with being objects of the male gaze. Accordingly, Jeffreys (2005) notes that by wearing lipstick and through other forms of bodily adornment, women occupy spaces that are circumscribed by patriarchy. Jeffreys (2005:6) further argues that beauty practices are time wasting, expensive and painful, and the so-called “beauty standards” confine the body’s spontaneity, posture and gait.

Contrary to Jeffreys’s view, in *The hairdresser*, Mercy’s cousin sister strikes me as an empowered individual who has her own conception of what is important to her. My reading of Mercy’s cousin sister’s visit is informed by theorisations of salon visits by Paula Black (2004:29), who contends that ‘the overarching framework within which beauty salon visits are experienced is that of negotiation between … self-view, world view and appropriateness’. Black (2004) argues that salon visits comprise two related stages namely, getting in and getting it right, and in-between these stages are multiple variables that also play upon time, self-view, worldview and negotiations between the hairdresser and the client. “Getting it right” requires skills, knowledge, experience and performance. What stands out in the cousin sister’s case is the ease with which rapport between the client and the hairdresser is established. Whereas the cousin sister had come with a self-view that considered the other - in this case Mercy - as the model, Dumi, the hairdresser, proposes a different hairstyle for the cousin sister.

Owing to a hairstyle which the cousin sister admires, Mercy becomes the subject of the admiring gaze. Mercy is a person who has access to some secret enjoyment - a factor which pushes her cousin sister to come to the salon. I identify a multi-centred

and multi-directional subject in the portrayal of Mercy's cousin sister. In *The hairdresser*, Huchu (2010) contests the idea of fixed identities. Unlike Slavoj Žižek (1999), who argues that identities are fixed through Cartesian subjectivity which sets a split between the Self and the Other, in *The hairdresser*, characters constantly negotiate their notions of being in diverse spaces that confer identity. When Mercy's cousin sister is in the salon, she is in conversation with the self; she announces to the world that she has a local model in Mercy. However, in addressing the cousin sister, Dumi proposes something completely different. He states: 'You have beautiful eyes and your long hair tilts the balance away from your fine face. Your cheeks are sculpted but your long hair makes it impossible to admire them. Trust me' (Huchu 2010:35). The client listens and agrees to his expert advice in order to minimise the degree of error that may militate against the achievement of an ideal that demonstrates a level of uniqueness.

In reworking her self-view to perfect what she perceives as the Art-of-living, Mercy's cousin sits in the salon to have her hair styled in what I view as a productive process. John Kekes (2002:125) argues that, '[t]he successful practice of the art of life depends on the adoption of a reasonable ideal of personal excellence, on the adoption of a coherent attitude that dominates in one's character, and on avoidance of aberration and other errors that vitiate these endeavors'. The description of the proposed hairstyle is a productive process that makes Dumi a critical role player in the creative process. Dumi's way of flourishing his description, and his notion of enjoyment of the good life 'involves at its core the pursuit of an individual project of excellence' (Harman 1983:312), which necessitates reaching out to others. Vimbai states:

> [Dumi] picked up a large scissors and in one quick movement took a snip from the hair on the left side of her head … He seemed in a trance as he put the final touches to the lady's hair. She slouched in her chair, her eyes closed as he worked his magic. There was fluidity to his movements that I had never seen before (Huchu 2010:35-36).

The agility, care and concentration that Dumi exerts in his job can be interpreted as transformative in that he rejects the old order (old hair style) and asserts a new form of order, which I perceive as a way of conferring a new identity on the customer. Thus, the body becomes a form of dressing for multiple identities, depending on the needs of the customers. After the hairdo, Mercy's cousin sister moves in front of a mirror and, as Vimbai points out: 'she touched her face as if to check if the person in the mirror was really her', saying: 'I look like Halle Berry' (Huchu 2010:36). In complimenting her, Dumi adds that, 'There are some women like Herry Berry [*sic*] or Toni Braxton whose beauty is beyond the ordinary. A face such as yours is a rare thing and it must be shown to the whole world' (Huchu 2010:36). Both Halle Berry and Toni Braxton are black Americans who have scaled world fame through modelling, acting, and in Braxton's case, singing.

In this episode, Dumi becomes the agent who maximises human flourishing (Harman 1983) and the notion of what people in the salon perceive as the good life. Writing on hair politics, Zimitri Erasmus (2000:381) argues that hair is a cultural construct that ought to be perceived as a 'site of contestation, both within black communities and between black and white communities'. Furthermore, she argues that hair implies race and 'styles [have] been socially and politically constructed in a specific historical conjuncture' (Erasmus 2000:385). To some extent, the reference to Halle Berry and Toni Braxton gives credence to Erasmus's observations. Whereas both models are black Americans, Halle Berry's mother, Judith Ann (née Hawkins), is a Caucasian with English and German ancestry, and her father, Jerome Jessy Berry, was an African American (Arogundade 2017). Thus, Halle Berry stands as a typical example of a celebrated hybridised identity. However, the argument that hair implies race is disputable in as much as it can be argued to be valid. Hair in racial politics is a well-researched area (see for instance, Banks (2000); Black (2004); Tate (2009); Latina-Huey (2006)). As Shirley Anne Tate (2009:14) notes, generalising on the racial significance of hair-stylisation or lack of it is a pitfall, given that, 'the meanings of hair are not just formed by white aesthetic concerns but are also constructed out of Black political projects which continue to resonate in Black women's lives'. Even where the hairstyle on a black woman implies race, Tate argues that there is pleasure and fantasy 'produced by the hotcomb' as 'it brings "the elsewhere" of beauty home to the surface of the Black body' … This "homing" releases affective beauty value even though here it is within the parameters of "the straight hair rule"' (Tate 2009:20).

When Mercy's cousin likens herself to Halle Berry, the picture painted is one of a person who is an arrivant in the corridors of embodied beauty. However, something is ironic in this episode. The description of the salon orients the reader's view to the city's infrastructural developments. Vimbai states: 'The building had been crudely extended. A wall had been knocked down to the left and concrete blocks hastily laid to add another seven metres'. From the quotation, one can understand that the building is made of knocked up materials and this shows in its structure, yet people have settled for "making do" or "putting up appearances". It is ironic that in the same building there is, in appearance and stature at least, a "Halle Berry" in virtual time. In spite of the material used for the building, which is cobbled together in an ad hoc manner, Vimbai appreciates the nature of this built environment, pointing out that, 'we were all grateful for the accommodation' (Huchu 2010:2). Thus, the brutality engendered by the Robert Mugabe-led Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) government and the economic hardships are subverted in the salon. It is important to note that Mercy's cousin, who initially had intended to look like Mercy, has undergone what appears to be a transformation. The cousin sister enjoys her new looks and imagines herself as a look-alike to models from faraway places that transcends the borders of nation states. Tate (2009:21) argues that:

> The *feeling* of beauty – both through touch and vision – induces pleasure. Being beautiful is clearly about pleasure in seeing, touching and feeling *differences* on the *body's surface* which make us recognizable within beauty norms. This recognition is important because without it we are excluded from the possibility of beauty.

In applying Tate's observation to *The hairdresser*, it becomes evident that Mercy's cousin is elated with her newly acquired beauty, and the salon experience enables her to go through not only a physical transformation, but also an intellectual one. The rapport in terms of conversation enables her to share with peers and colleagues living in the same political and social environment.

Minister M____

Amongst the clients who frequent Mrs Khumalo's Hair Salon is Minister M____, who is also married to a government minister. Although she is a regular client, the episode in which she opts to have her hair styled by Dumi is significant. She gives Dumi the platform to choose a hair style; he convinces her to go for braids. *The hairdresser*/client relationship is characterised by banter, laughter and rapport. With her trademark "white Mercedes", Minister M____ typifies the affluent political elite that have been brought into prominence through the politics of patronage. As she gets into the salon, her outfit — 'a green African dress with a matching head wrap, both of which had pictures of Robert Mugabe imprinted on them like large polka dots' (Huchu 2010:58) — is significant in the making and unmaking of the Zimbabwean subject in as far as the nation state is concerned. The reader is told, 'it was the design they had used during the last election campaign that had seen the party back into power' (Huchu 2010:58).

Minister M____ is a typical character in Mugabe's land grab politics, given that she and her husband have already amassed eight farms, including the Good Hope farm, which formerly belonged to Trina (a white woman). The non-prescriptive name of the Minister casts the character as an open signifier to be filled in by anyone in the ZANU PF-led government. The pictures of Mugabe on the party regalia she wears are markers of identity; what passes as "good Zimbabweanness" to the ZANU PF government in terms of citizenship, political loyalties and affiliation. In the salon, Dumi uses the hair of the Minister as open space in which identities can be disfigured and reconfigured in ways that suit the client. Dumi chooses braids for the minister. Across Africa and in Zimbabwe, braids were part of hair-stylisation before the dawn of modernity. In terms of significance, the braids serve to re-root the Minister into Shona and African traditional

ethos and beauty aesthetics, given that black people have been having their hair braided before the advent of modernity. After finishing on the braids, Dumi states: 'I am not finished yet. That's just the hair. Now let me give you style'. Readers are told:

> He took the head wrap she'd worn and unbundled it. He grabbed a pair of scissors and cut it in half, right through Robert Mugabe's face … one piece he folded in two lengthwise and placed over her head, tying it round the head, tying it round the back. He cut through what remained of Mugabe in the other piece and rolled both of them … he tied the pieces of cloth around the minister's wrists as bow ties (Huchu 2010:60).

Initially, the reader is told that the Minister was in the regalia that best fits the party's campaign for the election that put ZANU PF into power. However, in the salon, the best fit for a campaign or for winning elections is not the appropriate style for a Minister who should serve the interests of the people. It is tempting to go along with Jennie Batchelor's (2005:3) argument that, 'dress metaphorises sensibility's paradoxical status as both a genuine moral response externally expressed (graceful drap'ry), and a cultivated, possibly fictitious, mode of display (pictured dress) worn by the covetous and the immoral'. The greed with which the Minister and her husband amass farms places her in the latter category, where dress is used to display an affinity for what ZANU PF stands for. Significantly, Dumi does not throw away the head wrap; rather, he opts for innovation and retention through use of the scissors – a tool that is essential in the modification of the design. Thus, leaving the face of Robert Mugabe intact on the head wrap does not serve a purpose in conferring a new hair citizenship onto the minister. Huchu (2010) therefore actively exploits signs to demonstrate how the body self-view, which then metaphorically translates into the nation body politic, can be actively cut through the imagery of the scissors, dismemberment, pummelling and redeployment.

Trina

The image of Trina strolling to her car is significant in that it demonstrates ways in which some white Zimbabweans lived through the ordeal and trauma of losing property. After the hair-do by Dumi, Trina resembles what Jason Raibley (2012:1106) proposes as 'a model of well-being' and 'agential flourishing', where 'an adult human person is doing well at a time to the degree that they resemble the paradigm case of the flourishing agent at that time. The paradigm case of the flourishing agent is a person who successfully realizes their values and is stably disposed to do so' (Raibley 2012:1106). Trina is unperturbed by the circumstances engendered by the nation-state discourse of indigeneity and autochthony as she claims her space and place in the salon. She even shares the same hairdresser with Minister M____, who is on a farm

aggrandisement spree. Starting in the year 2000, white Zimbabweans were branded as Rhodesians who were benefiting from the stolen land and were forcibly removed from it by the ZANU PF-led government. This, in spite of the fact that some white Zimbabweans, like Trina and her husband Dereck Price, were willing to share the land with black Zimbabweans.

Like other clients, Trina feels comfortable as Dumi does his work. 'He shampooed and conditioned her, untangling her frizzy hair. He ran a comb through and tried to style her before … tying a pony tail' (Huchu 2010:46). Thus, when Minister M____ comes to the salon and tries to promote the discourse of Rhodesians, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)[3] and the colonialist/colonised binaries, Dumi lays out the ethics and etiquette of hair citizenship as follows: 'This is not about the MDC, it is not about Black or white or any other kind of division. I'm telling you to respect our clients who are her [*sic*]'. Taken together, hair citizenship becomes a form of Zimbabweanness and an Art-of-living, well-being and human flourishing that also require full observance and respect by the nation state.

The salon and nation spaces

The salon represents a space of conceptualisation, imagination and reflection that is predicated on hair styling as a mode of self-stylisation (Nuttall 2008). Moreover, hair-stylisation is projected as a form of clothing. Renee Baert (cited by Hemmings 2005:175) argues that, 'Clothing is a good second skin, a membrane that separates and joins, that surrounds and divides. Like skin clothing is a border'. In *The hairdresser*, changing looks are perceived as repackaging and changing of identities in the city. The space is enriched by various rituals of politeness, the sharing of scarce commodities (such as tampons), and the openness as displayed in Dumi's distribution of femidoms. Thus the type of life being privileged in *The hairdresser* modifies Erasmus's (2000) argument that hairstyles imply race to a level where they become a form of dressing; they are not masks but rather, outlets to demonstrate the dynamism of identities and preferences.

The reference to Halle Berry and Toni Braxton may mean that the professional lady accountant, Mercy's cousin sister, aspires towards black models or that she has an appreciation of circulating cultures and images that are brought to her via television. She finds it liberating to identify global figures to whom she can relate her local experiences. Kwame Anthony Appiah (1997) relates similar 'glocal' cosmopolitan identities in recounting words from his father about cosmopolitan citizenship. Appiah (1997:618) was told: 'Remember that you are citizens of the world' by which he meant, 'we could surely choose to live anywhere – we should make sure we left that place

3. The MDC is a political party in Zimbabwe that stands in opposition to the ZANU PF.

better than we found it'. Appiah (1997:618) notes that the philosophy of cosmopolitan identities is predicated on 'great love for mankind and an abiding desire to see mankind, under God, fulfil its highest destiny'. The bottom line here is that the content and quality of value addition to the self and self-perception ought to be enriching to the self and the environment.

The warm treatment of Trina in the salon and her participation in conversations with Yolanda, Memory, Fari, Mrs Khumalo and other customers is indicative of a society that has come to terms with its hybridised forms. Therefore, the exclusionary discourse of the Minister (who is also a minister's wife) is viewed with scepticism. She is counselled by people in the salon when she vents her dissatisfaction at the sight of Trina - a white woman. She states: 'If I had known that this salon catered for Rhodesians, I would have closed it down a long time ago. Zimbabwe will never be a colony again' (Huchu 2010:105). Apart from demonstrating deductive reasoning that because Rhodesia was ruled by white people, every white person in Zimbabwe is Rhodesian, the Minister goes on to mimic President Robert Mugabe's campaign cliché as a way of creating exclusions and inclusions. However, ordinary people in the salon tell the Minister that Zimbabwe belongs to all. Thus, the salon is portrayed as ritualised space where various configurations of identities are in the process of reformulating themselves. Turner (1991:6) points out that, 'Rituals reveal values at their deepest level … men express in ritual what moves them most' and drawing from this assertion, I read hair-stylisation in *The hairdresser* as a ritual predicated upon the packaging and reformulation of identities in a city that reconfigures alternative forms of the good life and human flourishing.

In *The hairdresser*, sensitivity to modes of dress and looks broaden the operational cultural spaces in the salon that are constantly being produced, modified and recycled. The salon foregrounds the portrayal of "an expressive subject" who constantly adjusts himself or herself to tap into, create or modify what s/he perceives as the good life and the idea of flourishing. Thus, '[h]air styles can also be seen as expressive genres … and the beauty salon can, by extension, be seen as an important site of cultural production where ideas regarding gender and identity can be discussed and operationalized' (Thompson 1998:239). Far from what Jeffreys (2014) terms 'women-only spaces', the salon exudes the multidimensionality of society with Charlie boy, the barber and several female characters who cut across colour lines and gender preferences.

Moreover, the salon is also a place where people enjoy different forms of music and dance, as evidenced by Mrs Khumalo who 'jiggled her hips in rhythm to the beat and in that instant looked like a young woman again' (Huchu 2010:14). Before Dumi comes in the salon to work as a hairdresser, Mrs Khumalo was interested in rhumba music and lyrics by Papa Wemba, Koffi Olomide and Kanda Bongoman[4] were constantly

played in the salon. With Dumi's arrival, the music changes to urban groovers as he introduces people to local singers such as Maskiri, Willom Tight, Rocqui and Extra Large, amongst others. Music creates a networked world where it is possible to talk of a 'cultural milieu' (Webb 2007). Peter Webb (2007:30) defines 'cultural milieu' as the articulation of 'a set of overlapping levels of meaning, relevance, disposition, and understanding. It then tries to illuminate the complex development of types of cultural activity within the stock of knowledge of an individual operating within a social grouping or number of groupings'. Like music, the salon is represented as having the capacity of carrying universal meanings with local mutations. In *The hairdresser*, the array of salons at the Sam Levy's village – a shopping centre in Harare – Catt's Beaute [*sic*], Devine Touch [*sic*], Goddess Hair and Beauty Salon, Village Beauty and the latest offering, Exclusive, provide a new way of reading the city as cosmopolitan with its particularities. The names of the salons are interesting in that they capture the sensuousness and aesthetic pleasure inherent in having one's hair tended.

Conclusion

In *The hairdresser*, the characters demonstrate novel ways of enjoying and creating happiness for themselves. This challenges the cultural spaces of the good life and enjoyment engendered by the traditional Shona culture in Zimbabwe and the discourse of authenticity predicated on the acquisition of land as championed by the ZANU PF government. I have argued that hair-stylisation is a productive process that generates diverse cultural spaces of enjoyment, the good life and human flourishing outside the politics of exclusions and inclusions that the Zimbabwean nation state privileges. The styles, like music lyrics, are part of circulating cultures that combine Africa, America, Europe and the Caribbean, and these add up to the creolisation of cultures. Thus, in as much as the characters are in the salon, they are actively engaged in negotiating and reworking both local and global circulating cultures, with the sum total becoming an entity that enriches humanity. The salon becomes the pivotal point around which people from different backgrounds, cultures, races, classes and diverse political and sexual inclinations enjoy multiculturalism, creolisation, and the ability to understand difference as good life and human flourishing.

4. These artists are musicians from the Democratic Republic of Congo who are well known for popularising rhumba as a musical genre. Rhumba now has global reach.

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