

AN ANALYSIS OF ROMANCE FICTION AND ITS PROBABLE IMPACT
AMONG YOUNG GIRLS 4

BY

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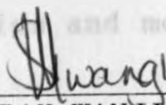
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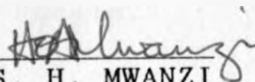
DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.



SERAH WANJIRU MWANGI

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor.



MRS. H. MWANZI

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DEDICATION

For my parents, Mr. and Mrs. C.N. Mwangi, whose respect for education and moral support have brought me this far.

For all they have done, I am truly grateful.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the romance novel and its readership among young girls. The romance novels examined appeal to the adolescent girls, hence form an important sub-genre of literature read by the young.

The study is based on the premise that the ideas and images expressed in the romance novel have a possible influence on their readers. Critical studies in the area of romance are therefore significant, bearing in mind that in the adolescence stage, one is easily influenced by what they read. An examination of the romance novel should lead to a better understanding of the works themselves and their possible impact on the perception of their young readers.

The romance novels are avidly read by the girls and are popular, especially since they address many of the readers' expectations. These include the ideas of romance, fashion and adventure, which are portrayed through the figures of the heroine and hero - the leading characters in the romance novel. The romance novels therefore involve their readers in the world created by a romance.

The thesis further concerns itself with how the girls' worldview is, has been or can be shaped and influenced by ideas derived from the romance novels.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Romance as expressed in the novels read by the girls is defined as "...a love story, especially one in which events are quite unlike real life."¹ The contemporary romance novels form an important subgenre of the literature read by the young. Romance novels are popular and appeal especially to young adolescent girls who read them as a form of leisure. A good number of girls are avid readers of the romance novels and will try and acquire as many titles as possible.

In the contemporary romance novels, the plot revolves around the central figures of the heroine and hero. They are the dynamic centre of the novel, hence ensuring and strengthening identification between the reader and the heroine.

It is to be noted that the most striking feature of the romance novel is the attention given to the developing relationship between the heroine (main female character) and hero (main male character) in the story. A great deal of attention is paid to the circumstances leading to the meeting between the heroine and hero and their initial reaction to each other. This meeting is often characterized by the fact

that the heroine and hero are drawn to each other but neither mentions it nor shows any form of indication of this attraction at the initial moment. The author thus constructs the story in favour of the heroine and hero, manipulating the mind of the reader to identify with them. It is therefore important to closely examine the way in which the main characters are portrayed as this brings to light possible reasons why the identification of the girls with the heroine often takes place and whether this has any possible influence on the girls.

The romance novels, therefore, tend to be concerned with matters relating to relationships between girls and boys. They involve the reader in the world created by a romance. Furthermore, the romance novels vividly portray the social ideals and personal goals of many young readers; in this way they attract a wide readership.

Critical studies in the area of romance are significant bearing in mind that in the adolescence stage, one is easily influenced by what one reads, sees as well as by peers. The adolescents are also trapped between childhood and adulthood. They face the important question of "Who am I" in the effort to develop a personal identity. What they read

influences them and plays a role in their development. An analysis of the works they read contributes towards a deeper understanding of the romance novels themselves as well as their possible impact on the girls. For this reason, this thesis will analyse the contemporary romance novels which are read among the girls. The romance novels seem to project the girls' "aspiration-fantasies", that is their dreams of what they would like: their appearance and their future adult life.

Research on the romance novels read by the girls therefore becomes important. This is especially so since the novels are here within our society and are avidly read by the girls, yet no research has been carried out on them.

The objective of this thesis, therefore, will be to examine the factors that make the romance novels attractive to their readers. It will aim to find out possible reasons as to why the novels are popular among the girls. Investigation as to whether the romance novels address the expectations of the girls will be carried out.

Research in the area of romance is to be justified on the grounds that, despite the regular and avid readership of the romance novels among the girls, no

research has been done on them in Kenya. Many of the critical works tend to concentrate on literature read by younger children, that is, those aged between twelve years and below. Critical studies in the field of romance novel will throw light on some of the literature preferred by the older girls. Furthermore, research in this growing romance literature will enable us to find out whether the girls' worldview is shaped by images portrayed in the romance novels and if they contribute towards the girls acquiring certain traits, whether positive or negative. An analysis of the romance novels should lead to a clear and definite view of the novels and therefore their probable impact on the perception of their readers. Further, as earlier noted, research on the reading of romance novels among adolescent girls has not been carried out, yet they are voraciously read.

In The Romance, Gillian Beer examines the idea of romance expressing the opinion that it:

... absorbs the reader into experience which is otherwise unattainable. It frees us from our inhibitions and preoccupations by drawing us entirely into its own world - a world which is never fully equivalent to our own, although it must remind us of it if we are to understand it at all ...²

She strengthens her argument by observing that:

... The romance rarely attempts to dislodge our hold on reality completely. The comfort of being told a story mingles with aesthetic elation. Part of the delight of the romance is that we know that we are not required to live full time in its ideal worlds. It amplifies our experience, it does not press home upon us our immediate every day concerns.³

Gillian Beer further lists a number of properties she associates with the romance novels. These include the love and adventure theme; a kind of withdrawal from their own societies on part of both reader and romance hero and a happy ending.⁴

In spite of the useful definitions of romance, Gillian Beer does not link these ideas with the contemporary romance novels. Hence, the need to examine the idea of romance and its place in the contemporary romance novels read by girls.

In A Critical Approach to Children's Literature, James Smith observes that in the early years of adolescence, the adolescent is likely to be interested in " ... a literary world of real places and real people, or at least possible ones, a kind of existence that "makes sense" to him."⁵ He further observes that the adolescent reader:

... wants to get from his reading a set of heightened impressions that he can easily relate to his junior high school world of classroom routines, lessons, clubs, school contests, games, the problems of growing up, family problems and jobs ...⁶

Despite the generality of the above observation, it can apply to the romance novels read by the girls. As Asenath Odaga observes in Literature for Children and Young People in Kenya:

... the image people have of themselves and their relationship to the universe, is conceived during their most formative years. That is, when they are still young and their character malleable.⁷

Helen Mwanzi in "Children's Literature in Kenya: An Analysis of Children's Prose" M.A Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1982, also observes that "... literature in general (whether oral or written), is crucial to the mental, psychological and social development of a child"⁸ and that it, "shapes the children's world view,"⁹ making literature important in the process of socialization.

Fred Inglis in The Promise of Happiness: Values and Meaning in Children's Fiction strengthens the argument when he observes that one cannot learn to read without taking in what one is reading.¹⁰ The implication is that a reader consciously or

unconsciously absorbs wholly or in part what he reads. This too applies to the girls reading of the romance novels in that they absorb some of the ideas they read and later tend to emulate them. Hence, an indepth study of the relationship between the readers and their romance novels is carried out. This relationship is examined through the reasons put forward for reading the romance novels and the reaction of the girls to them. The type of images portrayed and how they are received by the girls is also examined.

In Suitable for Children? Controversies in Children's Literature, various scholars discuss literature with particular reference to younger children. A variety of articles discuss the fairy tales, comics and children's classics. Little research has been done on books read by older children, yet, this is an important area bearing in mind that the articles within the book focus on controversies in children's literature. The articles tend to concentrate on what is read by younger children, such as the fairy tales, ignoring what older children read. Yet, what adolescents read is particularly significant in that, it may influence them at that particular moment or in their future life. Articles for this age-group should have been included since they too are part

and parcel of children's literature and further, the scholars do not specify that they are dealing only with the very young.

P.N. Musgrave deals with the boys' school story in From Brown to Bunter: The Life and Death of the School Story. He concentrates on the stories read by boys in the period between the 1860's to 1930, studying works such as T. Hughes' Tom Brown Schooldays and R. Kipling's Stalkyard Co. He touches in passing on the nursery classics, adventure stories, school stories and finally takes a look at the adult novels. He further examines the writers themselves, the middlemen and the expectations of the readers. A similar work dealing with works written for girls, would be a positive contribution towards the criticism of children's literature, hence the need to delve into this field.

In Lillian Smith's The Unreluctant Years: A Critical Approach to Children's Literature, there is a critical analysis of children's literature and the standards by which children's books can be judged. Discussions centre around literature and what it offers children and of what standard it is. The only reference she makes to girls stories is Louisa Alcott's Little Women, of which she observes that it:

... reflects truthfully the memory of childhood and girlhood in an age whose social convention grows more and more remote from the reader. But to the child readers, the emotional identification which they make with the characters, illuminates the pages of a story whose freshness and vitality is re-affirmed for each succeeding generation.¹¹

This is as far as she tackles the issue of works written for girls. There is no discussion of the contemporary stories for girls, yet there is need to keep abreast with the more recently published children's literature, especially in order to analyse the standard of what children are reading in present society.

Fred Inglis in The Promise of Happiness: Values and Meaning of Children's Fiction, tackles the issue of love and death in children's novels. He questions what children should be told about sex and death. He discusses the morals to be learnt by children from what they read, and their reaction to sex and death. Inglis further touches on the question of sexuality in children's literature and debates on what should be said about it, observing that it is "a source of dread in all cultures." He wonders how sexuality is to be presented and valued for children, declaring that the answer to such a question is difficult since:

... the power of sexuality as a source of piety, dread and guilt has ebbed away into some unknown recess these past twenty years ...¹²

He further adds that:

... in adolescent groups, as in industrial culture at large, sex in all its strange guises has become more interesting than grave, more a matter of exploration than ritual, more permeable than fixed, more consequential than moral. In which case, all a novel for a child on the edge of puberty can do is frame the gateway into an uncertain excitement ...¹³

Despite the informative insight into the area concerning sex in children's literature, he does not deal with works read by adolescents, nor does he connect the issue of love and of sex with works dealing with similar issues, such as the romance novels. An indepth study of adolescent literature concerning works dealing with the issue of love and sex will add to the critical studies concerned with the romance novel.

Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig examine girls' fiction in You're a Brick, Angela: A New Look at Girls' Fiction From 1839 to 1975. They observe that as girls grow older, they are more interested in "cooking, poetry and music, as well as contemporary manners and moral codes." They discuss works such as The Owl Service and Red Shift which deal with adolescent

relationships, touching on the plot of the novels but avoid going into an indepth critical analysis. The possible influence and effect that these books may have on the readers is not dealt with, yet it is of great importance in analysing the role of these novels in the reader's lives. Research into the literature read by adolescents, with specific reference to the romance novels will bring to light their role in the reader's life.

In Tales Out of School, Geoffrey Trease examines books read by children outside school as a source of entertainment. He also examines in detail various types of fiction ranging from comics to adventure stories. He devotes a chapter in analysing books read by boys, that is, those dealing with adventure and love for action. He does not similarly analyze, stories read by girls outside school. This is an omission which should be dealt with, especially since he is examining novels read outside school by both girls and boys.

H.V. Weisse in his article "Reading for the Young," observes that some of the literature read by the young acts:

... not only as an inducement to partake of unwholesome mental pabulum, but they unfit the mind for the digestion of anything more wholesome or profitable ...¹⁴

H.V. Weisse is discussing, in general, the various novels read by children. His observation is important and can be tested on specific works read by the very young to the adolescents. However, a more specific study will achieve better results since his statement cannot be applicable to all children's novels.

In A Critical Approach to Children's Literature, James Smith indicates that the reading interests of the very young are different from those of adolescents. The interests of those of approximately seven years and below lie in the familiar everyday matters while those of eight to about twelve years lie in fantasy, fairy tales, myths and tales of adventure while the adolescent wants to read novels that he can relate to his present stage in life, such as, the problem of growing up and school. He further touches on what he sees as domestic fiction for adolescents, such as, physical appearance and vocational preparation. Despite giving us this information, he does not go into details of the adolescents response to such literature, yet there is need to investigate and analyse what they read.

Asenath Odaga in Literature for Children and Young People in Kenya, deals with literature available for children and youth in Kenya, both in the oral and written form. She divides her work into three phases:

the precolonial phase which examines oral literature that was available before the coming of the colonialists; the colonial phase which examines in particular the foreign literature brought in by colonialists and the post-colonial phase in which literature written by Africans to project a more positive African image, especially one with which the Kenyan children can easily identify with, is examined. This in itself is a useful study, but a more specific examination of particular age groups and what they read would yield better results.

In our study, we will examine the romance novel among the adolescent girls. The thesis intends to investigate the hypothesis that the type of text a young person reads has some influence on that person's worldview.

The theoretical framework to be used in the effort to realize the hypothesis will be the sociological approach; that is the theory of the sociology of literature.

Through the sociological approach, literature will be seen as having "... a social function, or 'use' which cannot be purely individual."¹⁵ Further, through this approach "... attempts are made to describe and

define the influence of society on literature and to prescribe and judge the position of literature in society."¹⁶ We will also examine "... the problems of the audience and the actual social influence of literature."¹⁷ The literature will further be seen as intending to communicate certain ideas to an individual or society in general. This approach will enable us to examine the possible role and effect of the romance novel among its readers.

The socializing aspect of the romance novel will also be considered because "... images are value packed, and are, thus, very important in terms of passing on values from one generation to another or from one society to another...."¹⁸ Further, we will observe that "... the young are more directly and powerfully influenced by their reading than the old ..."¹⁹ and "... people may model their lives upon the patterns of fictional heroes and heroines...."²⁰ This becomes important in analysing the role and possible impact of the romance novel on its readers.

Through the sociological approach, a critical analysis of the romance novels will be carried out. This approach also encompasses the idea that "... Art not merely reproduces life but also shapes it...."²¹ It further brings to light "... the problem of the

social content, the implications and social purpose of the works of literature themselves...."22 Helen Mwanzi commenting on the sociological approach observes that:

Analysis of language and word-pictures (images) becomes a crucial step towards understanding the socializing aspect of the given literature.²³

She also observes that "... The writer aims at influencing the reader, giving the reader a particular social stand as well as entertaining him."²⁴

In order to acquire the necessary information, various methods have been used.

First, the primary texts have been examined. These are the romance novels among the Sweet Dreams and Mills and Boon series. The Sweet Dreams are marketed as teen romance novels and have been written for those of twelve years upwards. As they aim for the teen-age audience, they are widely read among the girls. The examination of these novels has further been enhanced by the fact that the Sweet Dreams novels base their stories on teenagers in high school. The Sweet Dreams have been described as:

... fresh, fun and exciting-alive with the flavour of the contemporary teen scene - the joy and doubt of first love. If you've missed any SWEET DREAMS titles, then you're missing out on your kind of stories, written about people like you!²⁵

The Mills and Boon, on the other hand, have been written for a general audience but despite this, the novels are still popular among the Form One girls, hence they too have been examined. They are described as "irresistable" novels with "all the passion and tenderness of today's greatest love stories" and further they are "passports to bring new worlds of love and foreign adventure."

In order to further emerge with a specific study, three romance novels have been selected for analysis. These are Judy Baer's Working at Love and Stephanie St. Pierre's Sun Kissed in the Sweet Dreams teen romance series and Candace Schuler's Sophisticated Lady in the Mills and Boon series.

In examining these novels, we have found out what makes them attractive and enjoyable among the girls' resulting in a regular and avid audience. Further discovered is the nature of the romance through an analysis of the romance novels.

Library research has been used to further enhance the thesis. This is with particular reference to critical texts on children's literature. Any information on children's literature as well as on the romance novel which is relevant to the thesis has been consulted.

Our study will focus on Form One girls, most of whom average thirteen to fifteen years. As young adolescents, the Form One girls enjoy reading the romance novels. To record a diversity of ideas, a cross section of girls' schools have been sampled. These are Kenya High School, State House Girls High, Ngara Secondary School and St. Theresa's Secondary School. These are government run schools. A private school, Loreto Convent Valley Road is also included in the sample. Two of the schools, Kenya High School and State House Girls High School, offer both boarding and day facilities, while the rest are wholly day schools. Girls from different socio-economic backgrounds are found in these schools. As a result, a variety of responses and views concerning the act of reading romance novels emerge.

Other necessary information has been acquired through fieldwork. The interview method has entailed informal interviews and conversations with individual girls and groups of girls in Form One in selected Nairobi schools. By conducting the interviews at both the individual and group level, a wider perspective on the romance novel and its probable impact among the girls has been acquired.

In the questionnaire method, general and specific questions concerning the reading of the romance novel and on the romance novels themselves have been asked. These have then been distributed among the Form One girls in the selected schools involved in the study. This has enabled the collecting of diverse responses which greatly enhanced the study.

Discussions have formed part of the means of acquiring relevant information. Open ended discussions in which the girls discuss matters concerning the romance novels they read, have been engaged in. This has enabled the collecting of extra information on the romance novel and its readership among girls.

In analysing the information, a qualitative study of thirty girls has been used. The sample of thirty girls has been taken from the different schools used in our study. Further, they have been selected on the strength of their reading of the romance novels. The girls responses to the questionnaire as well as those to the interviews and discussions, have then been examined and taken as representative sample responses arising from the readership of the romance novels among the Form One girls.

REFERENCES

In this chapter, we have introduced the problem to be investigated in this thesis. We have traced the need to investigate the romance novel and its readership among the Form One girls. We have further looked at the objectives, justification, literature review, hypothesis, theoretical framework, scope as well as the methodology to be used in our study.

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2. James Smith, *A Critical Approach to Children's Literature* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), p. 21.
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4. Kenneth Osoya, *Literature for Children and Young Adults in Kenya* (Nairobi) K.E.S., (1985), p. 41.
5. Brian Swanzi, "Children's Literature in Kenya: An Analysis of Children's Prose Fiction", M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1982.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
7. Fred Inglis, *The Promise of Humanism: Value and Meaning in Children's Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 189.
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16. Ibid., p. 94
17. Ibid., p. 96.
18. Mwanzi, op.cit., p. 42.
19. Wellek and Warren, op.cit., p. 102.
20. Ibid., p. 102.
21. Ibid., p. 102.
22. Ibid., p. 96.
23. Mwanzi, op.cit., p. 43.
24. Ibid., p. 3.
25. Judy Baer, Working at Love, (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), inner back cover.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF THE ROMANCE NOVEL

In the previous chapter, the problem to be investigated in the thesis was introduced. Also examined were the objectives, justification, literature review, hypothesis and the theoretical framework and methodology used in our study. The need to examine the romance novel and its readership among the Form One girls was looked at.

In this chapter the romance novel will be analysed. The analysis will entail comments or explanations on the aspects being analyzed, accompanied by examples from the three selected novels. The aspects to be analysed are characterization, themes as well as a look at the stylistic techniques. Each aspect will simultaneously be analyzed within the three texts before moving on to the following aspect. This method has been necessitated by the similarity of aspects occurring in the romance novels.

The selected texts are to be found among the Sweet Dreams and Mills and Boon series. The titles to be examined are Baer's Working at Love and St. Pierre's Sun Kissed in the Sweet Dreams series and Schuler's Sophisticated Lady in the Mills and Boon series.

As seen in the previous chapter, the main focus of the romance novels is the relationship between the heroine and hero. The circumstances preceding the relationship as well as those leading to it and its final outcome form the foundation of the romance novel.

In Judy Baer's Working at Love, the story centres around Marli - the heroine and Shawn - the hero. In this story, Marli breaks up with her boyfriend due to his overpossessiveness and the fact that he is critical of what she does especially in matters concerning her friends. As a result, their relationship eventually ceases to be. However, events turn out for the better as there is soon a budding relationship between Marli and Shawn who is employed in the boutique Marli runs. Their relationship develops into one in which they both grow immensely fond of each other and all turns out well for them.

St. Pierre's Sun Kissed focuses on Jessie and Steve. The novel introduces us to the fact that Jessie had broken up with her boyfriend on discovering that they had no common interests and were bored with each other. However, Jessie misses her ex-boyfriend so when offered the chance to go on vacation at her grandmother's place in Florida, she takes the opportunity and visits. In Florida, she delights in

sightseeing, swimming and generally enjoying her holidays. Her greatest thrill however, is when she meets Steve who eventually becomes her boyfriend and constant companion.

In Candace Schuler's Sophisticated Lady, Samantha is introduced as a single, successful model. She is employed by Gavino Industries to market their beauty products and is soon successful and famous. Furthermore, she meets Nick, the owner of Gavino Industries and a friendship develops between the two, which deepens with time until each declares their love for the other.

It can thus be seen that in all these novels, the idea of a relationship between the heroine and hero is also a business deal and thus a successful business. Each deals with a love story which explores the developing relationship between a man and a woman up to its final stage. Intermingled within the development of the relationship is adventure. This makes characterization in romance novels a factor of great importance. The central dynamic characters of the romance novel are the heroine and hero who are essential if the story is to take place and develop.

Working at Love opens with an introduction to Marli, the heroine of the novel. She is introduced as a student at Lansdale High and this is further verified by the fact that she has just completed her school day

and is on her way home. She is thus firmly rooted in the novel at the very beginning. Her centrality within the novel is thus established.

Marli is further depicted as an attractive, slim girl with white blond bangs, greenish eyes and "... looked as though she had a fifteen inch waist ..."¹ She is described by others with compliments such as pretty or chic. Her best friend, Christie, describes her thus "You're great, you know that? Independent. Smart. And best of all, nice ..."² Her boyfriend, Shawn, refers to her as beautiful and "... looking extremely chic."³ Her character is further emphasised by the fact that apart from being a student, she is also a business girl and runs a successful boutique business. The Funk Chic Boutique, funded by her parents, deals in vintage clothes and is highly popular especially among the teenagers as it deals in clothes for all occasions whether fancy dress or formal wear. Her teenage years are a further advantage in that she easily understands the needs of the other teenager and is thus able to rally support from them in the running of her boutique.

Marli is also put forward as intelligent, obtaining "A" grades in her school work. She is portrayed as intent, self confident and determined to succeed:

... she could do or be anything she wanted if she put her mind to it. The Funk-Chic Boutique was a pretty good example. After all, how many sixteen-year old girls ran their own business?⁴

Her confident and dynamic personality enhances her character and position as the heroine of the novel.

In Sun Kissed, Jessie, the heroine, is introduced to the reader while having a meal in the school cafeteria. This indicates to the reader her status - that of a high school student at Middletown High. Her early introduction in the novel implies her importance in events that will occur in the novel. It further enables early identification of the reader with the heroine.

Jessie is further portrayed as:

... one of those lucky girls who always looked great with golden brown eyes, just about the most incredible in Middletown High ...⁵

Her friends also comment on her beauty, and Taryn, a school friend, describes her as "... a pretty high school sophomore ...,"⁶ while Steve, her boyfriend compliments her on "... looking terrific."⁷

Jessie's character is further enhanced by the fact that she is a good sportswoman and can ably play a variety of games such as volleyball, netball as well as

swimming. At the same time, she is portrayed as the "... studious, serious type. She was not good at small talk and flirting"⁸ She is thus enhanced by her different capabilities.

As in Working at Love and Sun Kissed, the heroine in Sophisticated Lady is introduced at the beginning. She is introduced while in a party and is described as overwhelmingly beautiful with "... ice-blond hair, huge grey eyes and pale, ivory complexion...."⁹ The idea of beauty compliments her career of a professional model employed by a reputable, successful company, Gavino Industries Limited. She is further described thus:

Her skin had a translucent quality, as if light had somehow been trapped beneath its alabaster surface. Her bone structure was heart-breakingly pure; the angled line of her jaw sharp and clean, her nose small and straight, her chin slightly pointed. Her brows arched sharply over widespread grey eyes. Her high cheekbones were just a tad too wide, giving her face that small imperfection necessary for real beauty.¹⁰

Samantha is also differentiated from the "common golden girl sort of glamour" associated with most models and is portrayed as professional model capable of "... conveying everything from the remoteness of a convent-

bred schoolgirl," to a high-society debutante"¹¹ Attention is thus focussed on her as the central figure in the novel.

As seen in the characters of Marli, Jessie and Samantha, the heroines in the romance novels are usually considered by others to be good looking. Marli, Jessie and Samantha are further brought out as being unaware of their attractiveness and the manner in which it often affects others. As a result they are not "stuck-up" or distant toward others. At the same time they do not overemphasize their beauty, so as to attract attention to themselves as well as from the opposite sex. Instead, their beauty as seen, is often pointed out to them by others. The idea of portraying beauty thus corresponds with the readers' needs to identify with someone attractive.

The hero is a significant character in the romance novel. His role runs side by side with that of the heroine. As the heroine is characterized by her femininity and beauty, the hero is characterized by his masculine nature and handsome features.

In Working at Love, Shawn, a student at Lansdale High, is introduced to the readers as one who is cute with "... auburn hair, green eyes, wide shoulders"¹² and a charming smile to crown it all.

He is further portrayed as a hardworking and responsible person. His determination to be successful in life is demonstrated when he is offered a job at the Funk-Chic Boutique. He observes:

"Well, I definitely want the job. My dad has already said he can't afford to send me to college, so I'm saving every dime I can. I figure that with an after-school job and a scholarship, I can make it. The hours are perfect. I can earn a little money and still have the evenings to study. When do I start?"¹³

He further observes that "... school and work have to come first"¹⁴

In Sun Kissed, Steve is portrayed as:

... especially attractive when he smiled. His grey eyes lit up and dimples appeared in his tanned cheeks.¹⁵

He has a job as a handyman in a holiday resort camp in Florida. Further he is a sportsman, capable of playing a good game of volleyball or hockey. His helpful nature can also be seen when he helps Jessie and her friend adjust to their new environment by being friendly to them or when he administers first aid on Jessie when she falls sick. He is thus put forward as a character with admirable qualities, one whom the the readers can admire.

Nick, in Sophisticated Lady, is described as handsome and that:

He stood six foot three, at least and his skin was a deep golden colour that owed nothing to the sun, she decided, and everything to his obviously Latin ancestry. His profile - a strong chiseled nose, angular cheekbones, firm sensuous lips, and an even firmer chin - was classically Italian ...¹⁶

He is also portrayed as a rich and powerful magnate with a successful company - Gavino Industries, dealing in cosmetics. His determination to be wealthy as well as a known personality ensures he continually works hard, thus his company succeeds.

The idea therefore of portraying beautiful heroines and handsome heroes is that the readers readily identify with them. The girls tend to identify with that which is pleasing. The author thus presents attractive characters since she knows that the readers expect this.

Other minor characters play a role in the romance novels. In Working at Love, Sun Kissed and Sophisticated Lady, the heroines are depicted as having very close friends, often ladies. These ladies are often constant companions of the heroines and further they act as the heroines' confidantes. In Working at Love, Christie is portrayed as Marli's friend while in

Sun Kissed, Taryn is Jessie's constant companion. Despite their closeness to the heroines, very little information is given on them, hence their relegation to minor characters.

In Working at Love, Christie, is portrayed as one who likes idling around and taking life easy. For instance, she believes that as one who has a joint business venture, she can afford to run the business as she pleases. She observes "What's so great about owning your own business if you can't be late getting there?"

This same attitude of idleness can be seen in Taryn. She loves an easy and enjoyable life and is depicted as "... an irresponsible flirt and completely boy-crazy"¹⁷

The minor characters are therefore portrayed in a less attractive form than the heroines and heroes, thus they are not in the limelight. They act as contrasts to the heroine and hero as well as aiding in the action of the story.

Turning from characterization to the plot, we observe that romance novels share a similar type of plot. They focus on the meeting of the heroine and hero and the inevitable development of a relationship between the two. In Working at Love, we see the meeting and developing relationship between Marli and

Shawn, while in Sun Kissed and Sophisticated Lady there is one between Jessie and Steve, and Samantha and Nick, respectively. This romantic relationship is the core of the romance novel.

The romance novel can therefore be seen as based on a shared narrative structure. Three stages are found in the romance novel. There is the beginning, the final situation and the intermediary stage which describes and explains the changes taking place between the initial situation and final transformation.

The beginning of the romance novel is usually characterized by some form of insecurity. It often opens with a situation in which all is not well. The heroine is experiencing a particular problem - frequently an emotional one concerning her relations with the opposite sex. There may have been a quarrel between the heroine and her boyfriend or an agreement between the two to end their relationship since they discover that they are not suited for each other. Consequently, the heroine is portrayed as being lonely and depressed. This opening becomes the basis of the story. The heroine's eventual relationship with the hero stems from this.

Working at Love portrays Marli as worried about her boyfriend's behaviour, especially his sense of overpossessiveness which creates conflict between them.

This causes them to eventually separate, setting the base from which the romance story will develop. There is the eventual introduction of Shawn the hero of the novel which has to be realistically portrayed in order to be credible. A realistic situation is created by the author in that the workload at Marli's Funk-Chic Boutique becomes excessive, so in order to cope she has to hire extra help and Shawn is the choice. Hence, he is introduced into the situation in a manner which is both imaginable and convincing.

Sun Kissed opens with the emotional turbulence that Jessie is experiencing after breaking up with her boyfriend Adam. Her sense of insecurity and emotional upset is described thus:

... Jessie had no right to feel jealous, she and Adam had broken up two weeks before. Still, the sight of him with someone so soon, while she was still missing him, really got to her.¹⁸

Jessie's loneliness sets the foundation of the story. Her loneliness opens the gateway to the possible friendship she can have with those of the opposite sex. Further, she is invited by her grandmother for a holiday in Florida so as to relax, enjoy herself and forget about her ex-boyfriend. In Florida, she totally enjoys herself and meets Steve, her boyfriend to be.

At the beginning of the romance novel, the reader also gets to know about the hero before he is introduced as part and parcel of the action of the story. One knows about him through other characters in the novel. Hence, through these views and opinions, the reader is made aware of the hero and the type of person he is. This enables the author to introduce to us, the hero, as well as explore his characteristics from different viewpoints.

In Working at Love, Marli and Taryn are discussing school life and they mention Shawn, whom they observe is cute and " ... when he smiles, - it practically lights up the room. Everyone is always trying to make him laugh because it's so great to listen to him."¹⁹

In Sun Kissed, the hero is mentioned through a conversation between Jessie's grandmother and Jessie. Jessie's grandmother declares that she has met a terrific, handsome boy whom Jessie will like. She observes:

His name is Steven and he works here on the grounds crew. His uncle manages the clubhouse for Palm Estates and Steve does odd jobs after school.²⁰

She continues:

" ... he's very nice He sounded like he'd really like to meet you, too I told him all about you. He was especially interested when I told him you were a volleyball player. He thought you might like to play on the beach ...²¹

In Sophisticated Lady mention of Nick comes from Samantha's television impression of him in which she observes that she had retained of him:

... an impression of height and darkness, an air of rather formidable power and the unexpected sound of a rich vibrant laugh ...²²

Early mention enables the reader to gather more information about the hero at the same time making it simpler to identify him when one comes across him in the story.

The mood of the romance novel is therefore often set at the beginning of the story. The intermediary stage, on the other hand, is characterized by the events surrounding the growing relationship between the heroine and hero. The time they share happily together as well as their conflicts, form the base of the intermediary stage. The times they spend enjoying themselves are brought out. However, the conflicts occurring before the final transformation are given prominence. They thus form the basis of the theme of mistrust and separation.

In Working at Love, the theme of separation is well described in a conversation between Shawn and Marli, where Shawn declares to Marli that "... we've been seeing too much of each other and... we should see less of each other."²³ This initial view prevents the cementing of the relationship.

In Sun Kissed, Jessie feels annoyed and cheated, especially when she sees Steve talking to his ex-girlfriend. She observes "... How could she have been such a fool to think that Steve cared about her, or that she had fallen in love with him? ..." especially when Steve's ex-girlfriend accompanies Jessie, Steve and the rest of their friends on a trip. Hence, in order to enrage Steve as well as to feel less rejected, Jessie flirts with other boys, yet deep down she cares about Steve:

... Jessie kind of enjoyed being center of attention, but she kept looking around for Taryn. These guys would be perfect for her. But the only familiar face Jessie saw was Steve's and he was glaring at her as if he had a right to be jealous. She smiled brightly at the boys clustered around her pleased by how glum and angry Steve looked. Serves him right, she thought to herself.²⁴

However, the cover shows how although he does not Steve too likes Jessie, but he does not openly admit it to her at the beginning. Hence, their misunderstanding of each other's actions keeps them apart.

In Sophisticated Lady, Samantha and Nick quarrel about Samantha's stepbrother Robbie, especially since he dislikes Nick whom he views as a "womanizer." This causes conflict between Samantha and Nick as Samantha believes in supporting Robbie while Nick speaks ill of him. This eventually builds up causing them to separate. Hence in a majority of the romance novels, conflicts which lead to a final happy ending are common.

One therefore observes that in a majority of romance novels, the relationship between the heroine and hero is not cemented in the first instance. Mistrust of each other keeps them from deepening their friendship. Each is suspicious of the other. The heroine is unsure of the hero's intentions while the hero does not want to admit that he admires the heroine. Further, each believes the other is out to make fun of them and hurt their feelings.

In Working at Love, Marli at first does not trust Shawn especially since he has a girlfriend who is always with him. Marli believes that Shawn cannot possibly like her since he has another lady friend. However, he cares about her although he does not readily admit it to her.

In Sun Kissed, Jessie at first does not trust Steve and assumes that he only likes her because her grandmother has asked him to look after her. She observes to her friend Taryn that:

My grandmother had to pay those boys to meet us ... They probably thought the whole thing was a big joke and that we were just a couple of jerks. How could you possibly want to go out with somebody knowing that he was only spending time with you because it was his part-time job?"²⁵

In Sophisticated Lady, Samantha is wary of Nick's attentions to her, especially since he is known as a "lady killer" and his passion for ladies is shortlived and fades away after some time. Hence, her fear of becoming involved with him especially since she is not sure of his intentions.

The mistrust between the heroine and hero in all the three novels initially prevents them from strengthening their friendship. At first, they do not explicitly indicate or reveal their feeling for each other. However, as their relationship develops with its ups and downs, they resolve their differences and are finally united. The final situation in the romance novel comprising of the "happy ever after" ending is the norm.

In Working at Love, Shawn and Marli bring to the open their admiration for each other with Shawn observing that "... I've been waiting for this moment a long time."²⁶ The novel concludes thus:

As Marli rested her hand in the crook of Shawn's strong arm, she knew for sure that she was the happiest girl in the universe. Some things were definitely worth waiting for!²⁷

This happy ending also occurs in Sun Kissed.²⁸ The declaration of love between Jessie and Steve is described thus when Steve declares his love for her:

"... I think I loved you the moment I saw you. Crazy, isn't it? It was like ... like we were just meant to be together".

"I thought ..." Jessie said, breathless. "I hoped ..." Steve's lips touched hers and Jessie closed her eyes. She was so happy she thought she might explode. She kissed Steve back and for a long time they held each other. "I hoped, but I wasn't sure," she mumbled.²⁸

The novel concludes thus:

"I love you!" Jessie sighed. "Oh, Steve, I really do!" They kissed again, and overhead one lone flamingo, its wings tipped with the colour of sunset, made a graceful arc through the sky.²⁹

In Sophisticated Lady, Nick declares his love to Samantha:

"God, I love you," Nick said, amazed and delighted at how good it felt to say it. "I can't say it enough." ... "I love you!" He nearly shouted the words ...³⁰

Samantha in return declares her love "...I know you do, darling. I love you, too."³¹

In the end, all turns out well in the romance novel. The heroine's needs are met and a perfect solution occurs for her, as well as the hero. Hence, part of the attraction of the romance novel to the reader is the fact that conflicts and problems arising within the romance are resolved in the final analysis and a feeling of satisfaction and happiness is achieved. The reader's similar needs are therefore symbolically represented and successfully met and satisfied within the story. The reader, like the heroine in the story, wants constant assurance from her boyfriend that he cares for her as this will prevent her from wrongly interpreting the meaning of her boyfriend's actions and behaviour. What the heroines and even the readers want, is an understanding and caring male.

The declaration of love between the heroine and hero therefore raises and strengthens the reader's need to trust her boyfriend, eventually leading to a more secure relationship. By portraying a successful and satisfactory relationship, the romance novel instills

hope in the reader that successful relationships are still possible and not a thing of the past. Hence, the romance may make the reader examine her present or future relationships, trying to make them as satisfactory. The romance novel thus functions as a kind of wish-fulfillment through which the reader imagines herself as happy and content as the heroine is.

A prominent theme of the romance novel which is popular, is the careful and detailed attention paid to ladies fashions and beauty. Comprehensive and careful descriptions of the style of clothes and their combination, and that of hairstyles and facial make up are given. The female world of glamour and fashion is evoked.

In Working at Love, Marli is described as pretty, with blond hair and a good figure. Among her wardrobe, she has an extra lovely and fashionable dress which is short and shimmery with an accompanying satin hat with a silk rose attached.³²

In Sun Kissed, Jessie is described as looking great without any effort at all. Further, she wears modern, dashing clothes such as fuschia and acid tie-dyed pants with a denim jacket, while her friend Taryn loves flair, and one of her outfits is described thus

"- straight short skirt, a big soft sweater and a long sparkly scarf worn as a hairband . Even her lip gloss was pink ..."³³

More detailed attention is given to style in Sophisticated Lady. One of Samantha's outfits is described thus while preparing for an evening out:

... Samantha reached into the closet, pulling out a sleek emerald green jacket and slim black skirt... She slipped the knee-length skirt on over sheer black stockings and buttoned the form-fitting collarless jacket to her throat. Large square silver earrings, ornamented with a faux emerald in one corner, adorned her ears. A triangular silver pin with a slash of green crystal running through it like a lightning bolt was fastened to her left shoulder. High heeled black suede pumps made her legs look impossibly long and slender. She sprayed herself with a cloud of the Sophisticated Lady daytime fragrance, tucked a flat, black patent envelope bag under her arm and took a deep breath. She was as ready as she'd ever be ...³⁴

She is also described thus on a different occasion:

... She'd settled on a softly gathered, mid-calf skirt and in hot pink cotton gauze with a turquoise tank top tucked into it and the matching pink short-sleeved shirt worn open as a light jacket. Her narrow waist was wrapped with a wide woven leather belt. She wore flat-heeled, leather sandals with thin straps tied that around her trim ankles, an armful of silver bangle bracelets and big silver loops in her pierced ears ...³⁵

The descriptions are enjoyed by the readers and may sometimes provide useful hints on the idea of style and dress.

Despite the descriptions, the clothes are not significant in the developing action. They are commented upon momentarily and the main action continues. This, however, does not mean that the descriptions are not important or necessary. They depict the idea that, like the readers, the heroines in the fictional romance world are interested in fashion. This makes heroines more realistic to the readers. The authors therefore base their ideas on the conventions that assume that ladies all over the world are characterized by their interest in clothes. Hence, the descriptions of fashion and beauty are welcomed, especially since the readers can identify with them.

In the romance novels, one also observes that the theme of romance is often accompanied by that of adventure. The heroine is often transported into situations which are fun-filled and exciting. She is depicted as capable of being adventurous as well as enjoying herself away from the dull and mechanical routine of her daily life.

In Working at Love, Marli manages her own boutique. She believes in working for what she wants, but at the same time, having fun. The Funk-Chic Boutique, for her, is a good example of her idea of adventure into something new. She observes "... After all, how many sixteen year old girls ran their own business?..."³⁶ She continues to observe that "... the store was doing so well and she was having so much fun with it ..." ³⁷

In Sun Kissed, the theme of fun and adventure manifests itself in form of a holiday. Jessie is invited by her grandmother for a holiday in Florida. She is overjoyed at the prospect of spending her holidays at the sunny coast of Florida observing "... she'd have two weeks to lie in the sun and play in the ocean ..." ³⁸ In Florida, every minute of her vacation is filled with fun - sightseeing, swimming, games - and she meets Steve who soon becomes her boyfriend. Hence, the vacation fills her with joy and is wonderful. As she observes: "... it was great to feel so happy herself. The vacation was turning out to be wonderful." ³⁹

In Sophisticated Lady, every minute of Samantha's life is filled with excitement. She travels around the world, modelling, sightseeing and generally having fun. Further, she is accompanied by her stepbrother and close friend, Robbie. For instance, in London she happily declares the places she would like to see:

... the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace, the Tower of London, Big Ben, Hyde Park, Westminster Abbey, Trafalgar Square, Harrods Department Store ...⁴⁰

Her job as a model enables her to travel, at the same time enjoy herself. She observes that:

She was being treated like a star by the Gavino Cosmetics staff, and everything - the makeup and wardrobe consultations, the test shots, the conferences with advertising people, the location shooting at the Trump Tower and the Empire State Building and in Central Park - was wonderful and exciting. She was having the time of her life, and no matter how she tried to downplay it, it showed.⁴¹

Hence, the sense of adventure often goes hand in hand with the idea of romance. It provides a sense of glamour and excitement to the world of the heroine, one which the reader can easily identify with especially since she too would like a similar life.

The romance novels do not therefore present a dull story as this will often lead to rejection by the readers. The world of the heroine is filled with a sense of adventure and glamour. It is fast-paced, breath-taking and hardly has any boring moments. At the same time, it captures the excitement, intrigue and emotion of the heroine's world, bringing out the love and romance involved. Hence, the world as

portrayed by the romance novel is fun and exciting in spite of the conflicts or failures that may occur. It presents the reader with a sense of hope, that even she too, can create fun in her life, as well as being determined in all she does.

Turning to the language of the romance novels, one notices that it often elicits responses from its readers. The reading of the romance novel evokes in the reader, the aspect of identification with the heroine, in which the reader identifies with the activities of the heroine. In order to understand the romance story and be more deeply immersed in it, the romance story involves the reader in the process of constructing the romance world through the words on the page. Hence, the reader adopts the language of the text as her own. The fictional world created in reading the romance has some relationship to the world the reader inhabits, since it draws largely on the language used in reference to the real world. The authors of romance novels therefore represent acts that are often familiar to the reader, hence the novels may seem to appear to the readers to be about the world they inhabit. The readers imaginatively create a relationship between the romance world and the world they live in.

To initiate and achieve a close relationship between the romance story and its reader, the author uses simple stylistic and linguistic techniques that ensure quick and immediate comprehension of the story by the reader. The romance story has vocabulary which is easily understood, and simple language and sentence construction. Easy and quick reader understanding of the plot is therefore possible due to the simple and familiar nature of the language of the romance novel.

A further prominent feature of the romance novel is its use of simple syntax. The simple nature of the syntactic formation such as "Saturday arrived crisp and clear" or "Come on - it's already 2.40. We're going to be late!", enables the majority of readers to quickly and immediately understand the story, hence follow its development.

To further enable the reader to quickly and easily comprehend and visualize the story, the author uses the same words or phrases within one book or in different romances. For instance, romance novels characterize the heroines as "beautiful", "stunning", "pretty" or "attractive" while the heroes are often "handsome", "cute", or charming". These are the characteristics used to describe most heroines and heroes in the romance novels. Hence, repetition within one text and among different texts is a main technique used by many

romance authors. This builds up familiar descriptions and stereotypic characterizations which readers may expect when they read the romances. This device of repetition enables the reader to quickly comprehend and interpret subsequent romances after reading her first romance novel. Hence, once the familiar words and phrases are encountered, they usually evoke within the reader a similar emotional response in subsequent readings of the romance novel. Therefore this type of style which is often used in romance novels, ensures that the reader does not spend too much time in the task of interpretation. Repetition is thus a technique which governs the romance novels.

The romance novel also uses the technique in which there is the creation of an initial situation which is riddled with uncertainties, hence, presenting the future with various possibilities of resolution. The reader is therefore exposed to the uncertainty of what will happen as the story unfolds, but at the same time is continually assured by various incidents that the ending she suspects will occur, does indeed take place. The reader is also carried through the various possible solutions by the heroine or a narrator. In the romance novels Working at Love, Sun Kissed and Sophisticated Lady, each presents possible endings and the reader is invited to project these endings, especially through the heroine or a narrator. At the same time, while the

major or central situation is still unresolved, other minor events are presented and eventually solved within a short span of time. For instance, in Working at Love, a crisis arises when Christie who helps Marli run the Funk-Chic Boutique, breaks her leg and can no longer work at the boutique. As a result, it seems as if they have to close the boutique, since Marli cannot run it without Christie's help. However, a solution is immediately found in that, Shawn, the hired help volunteers to help in running the boutique and doing all the work that Christie was doing. Hence, a suitable solution is found and the crisis is resolved within a short time span. This is also seen in Sun Kissed, where Jessie has broken up with her boyfriend and is depressed, especially when she sees him with another girl. The author immediately offers a solution for this unpleasant situation by sending Jessie for a holiday to Florida, which is filled with fun and excitement. Hence, these minor issues are quickly resolved. As a result, the reader is not distracted from the central issues concerning the heroine and hero.

A further technique commonly used in the romance novel is that of foreshadowing. With the use of foreshadowing, the gap between what may occur and the actual occurrence that confirms the reader's expectations is reduced. After the first warning, the

expected event soon occurs and it is then interpreted by one of the characters or the narrator. In Sun Kissed the mistrust and arguments between Jessie and Steve are foreshadowed by the lack of understanding and communication occurring between them and soon after this initial warning, a major fight between them erupts which leads to a temporary break-up. Also in Working at Love, the relationship between Marli and Shawn is tacitly foreshadowed by the events occurring between them, such as, the hiring of Shawn to help in the boutique, their working together alone and the free and friendly atmosphere between them. Eventually, there is the final outcome which had been foreshadowed in which they both openly declare their admiration for each other. This idea of foreshadowing is further seen in Sophisticated Lady, where Samantha and Nick are portrayed as deeply impressed by each other although they have only met once. Their thoughts indicate that each admires the other - where Samantha thinks of Nick as handsome and charming, while Nick sees Samantha as beautiful and fashionable. This foreshadows events to come - the budding of love and a marriage proposal. Hence, the technique of foreshadowing implicitly hints at the likely happy ending of most romance novels.

These different stylistic practices such as repeated vocabulary and simple syntax therefore create a story which can be understood by many readers.

further, since the plot is familiar, the meaning is more readily available to the reader. The style and language of the romance therefore communicates to the reader.

The popular romance novels can therefore be seen as 'retelling' a story familiar to those who choose to read them. The romances 'retell' a story whose ending the readers suspect. However, each romance tells a "different" story in the sense that the characters and events portrayed are not similar. Each romance patterns its development in a different way. It is the use of familiar descriptions, words, phrases and stereotype characters that indicates to the reader that the fate of the heroine and hero is already determined.

The romance novel is given a further touch of realism in that the opening pages make it clear on the temporal setting of the story it is about to relate. Unlike the fairytale, it does not place characters and events in a timeless, mythical kind of world. A setting for the story, in which the reader can participate is established. The opening of most romance novels is one which the readers can relate with. This can be seen in the opening paragraphs of the romance novels in which the characters and events taking place are rooted in time and space. The opening paragraph of Sun Kissed reads thus:

Jessie Statler stared at her half-eaten lunch. She knew she'd be starving by the middle of trip if she didn't eat, but ever since she'd seen Adam walk into the cafeteria with his arm around Linda Watson, Jessie hadn't been able to swallow. It seemed as if everywhere she turned, she caught sight of Linda and Adam. Jessie had no right to feel jealous; she and Adam had brown up two weeks before. Still, the sight of him with someone else so soon, while she was still missing him, really got to her.⁴²

In Working at Love, the beginning reads:

"Come on - it's already 2.40, we're going to be late!" Marli McKenzie took a quick look at the large, round watch on her wrist and increased her pace from a fast walk to a run. Her white-blond bangs fell in her eyes as she hurried and her blue eyes were intent.⁴³

The opening paragraph of Sophisticated Lady is also one the readers may identify with:

The little shiver of anticipation dancing its way down Samantha Spencer's elegant spine was the only thing that kept the party from being a dead bore. That and the lavish buffet table. It was decorated in rich emerald green and sparkling silver to match the packaging for Gavino Industries' new line of Sophisticated Lady cosmetics and was loaded down with a tempting array of mouth-watering pâtes and imported crackers, a dozen different kinds of canapes and an indecently large crystal bowl of iced caviar with all the proper accoutrements. Samantha's mouth hadn't stopped salivating since she'd caught sight of it.⁴⁴

This sets the events in a realistic mode especially since it makes use of things found in the real world, and as a result, the reader can comprehend and the identification process is made greater. Hence, the use of what is familiar in the real world enables the reader to imagine events and characters who may have similar needs as she, and it further indicates to her that events as occurring in the romance, are still possible in her life.

The romance story therefore suggests to the reader that the imaginary world has some similarity to the real world, hence portrays events which may occur in a life such as hers. Therefore, unlike the fairy tale which creates a distance from the real world with its "once upon a time" opening, the romance novel lessens the gap between the fantasy world and the real world by blending events which may occur in the real world with elements of fantasy. The romance novel skillfully provides the escape into the "fantasy-reality" type of world that the reader desires.

The reader knows that through the romance novels such as in Working at Love, Sun Kissed and Sophisticated Lady, she is being transported to a world in which she can share similar experiences. The written structure uses the simple patterns of daily

speech. They focus on the spatial and temporal peculiarity of the moment such as life in the Funk-Chic Boutique, the holiday in Florida or the launching parties for the cosmetics marketed by Gavino Industries. This emphasizes the specificity of the scene and suggests to the reader that the imaginary world depicted in the romance novel is moulded on hers and events occurring in the novel might also occur in a life such as hers.

The romance novels in the Sweet Dreams and the Mills and Boon are therefore the most popular series among the girls with Working at Love, Sun Kissed and Sophisticated Lady being among their favourite titles. However, despite all the similarities occurring, a marked difference occurs between these two series.

First and foremost the Sweet Dreams novels use teenagers as their main characters. In Working at Love, and Sun Kissed, both Marli and Jessie are high school students in Lansdale and Middletwon High respectively. The Mills and Boon on the other hand, make use of adult characters. In Sophisticated lady, Samantha is twenty three old and further, she has a career of her own.

The cover pages of the romance novels are attractively designed and presented. Each publishing company presents covers designed in a manner which

captures the potential readers attention. This can be seen in the Sweet Dreams and the Mills and Boon which are presented differently.

In the Sweet Dreams series, the cover has the photograph of a teenage girl. As earlier seen, the Sweet Dreams are written specifically for teenagers. The cover photograph of a teenage girl portrays the specific image of a teen romance. The photograph further complements the romance story in that if the heroine of the story is a blonde, the cover photograph will be that of a blonde. For instance, in Working at Love, Marli the heroine, is described as having 'blond bangs' and the cover photograph is that of a blonde teenage girl. This encourages more readers. The teenager is attracted by the photograph of a girl who is close to her in age, arousing her curiosity and interest in the novel. Further, there is the reader identification which often leads to the purchase of the romance novel.

In the Mills and Boon series, the covers have beautiful paintings of couples. An attractive woman and a handsome man grace the covers. The colourful and seductive cover automatically attracts the reader's eye. Since the lady on the cover is beautiful, the girls reading the novel will identify with her especially since they too dream of being as attractive

as the romance heroines. Further, the idea of presenting an attractive couple enhances the idea of the romance in the story, which is anticipated by the potential reader.

The importance of the covers of romance novels therefore cannot be ignored. Each romance novel has a cover which is designed to project a specific image with which the readers may identify. By identifying with the lady on the romance cover, the readers are encouraged to model themselves after the ideological image the romance novel projects. The producers thus emphasize cover photographs and paintings as potential sources of reader identification, hence reinforcing the importance attached to their selection and presentation. Further, attractive covers are important so as to continually appeal to regular readers and as potential attractions to new readers.

One also notices that most romance novels have offers which attract readers. In the Sweet Dreams, a free newsletter - Loveletters - which is described as a "hot-off-the press" newsletter is given. It gives the new titles of the forthcoming romance novels thus keeping the reader well informed and upto date. All the reader has to do is fill in a coupon and she will receive free newsletters several times a year.

The Mills and Boon have a wider range of offers. They have competitions, as well as free copies of romance novels and gifts. For instance, in Sophisticated Lady which falls under the Mills and Boon series, there is a free books coupon in which four medical romances are sent to the reader free of charge plus a cuddly teddy bear as well as a surprise mystery gift. Further there is a song competition in which one completes the title of the song and if drawn as the lucky winner could win five thousand pounds. The caption as found in Sophisticated Lady reads thus:

Win £5000 and make your dreams come true. Have you ever...dreamed that you could fly anywhere in the world to lie on a golden sandy beach, being bronzed by the hot sunshine?.....dreamed of a wardrobe full of dresses from top designers to shame Alexis Carrinton?....dreamed of the ideal home furnished exactly the way you always wanted? Bring your dreams to life by entering our Dream Song Titles Competition to win £5,000⁴⁵.

The alluring language and attractive offers are part of the advertising scheme which ensures greater sales and captivation of a new audience, hence the continued survival and thriving of the romance novel.

In this chapter we examined the more popular series of romance novels among the girls that is the Sweet Dreams and the Mills and Boon series. We analyzed aspects of the romance novel such as the language, setting and characterization. We saw that these romance novels can be seen as addressing the girls needs. They cover most of the issues that are of interest to the girls such as romance, fashion and glamour. They can therefore be seen as advertising a way of life for which the girls aspire. Hence as long as the romance novels cover issues which interest the girls, they will continue to remain a popular genre among the girls. (2001), p.10.

10. Ibid., p.10.
11. Ibid., p. 10.
12. Beer, op.cit., p.3.
13. Ibid., p.20.
14. Ibid., p.26.
15. St. Pierre, op.cit., p.18.
16. Schrier, op.cit., p.8.
17. St. Pierre, op.cit., p.18.
18. Ibid., p.1.
19. Beer, op.cit., p.3.
20. St. Pierre, op.cit., p.18.
21. Ibid., pp. 18 - 20.
22. Schrier, op.cit., p.8.
23. Beer, op.cit., p.105.

ENDNOTES

1. Judy Baer. Working at Love (New York: Bantam Books, 1989) p.97.
2. Ibid., p.20.
3. Ibid., p.135.
4. Ibid., p.9.
5. Stephanie St. Pierre, Sun Kissed (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), p.4.
6. Ibid., 4.
7. Ibid., p.77.
8. Ibid., p.4.
9. Candace Schuler, Sophisticated Lady (Surrey: Mills and Boon, 1990), p.16.
10. Ibid., p.10.
11. Ibid., p. 16.
12. Baer, op.cit.,p.8.
13. Ibid.,p.30.
14. Ibid., p.56.
15. St. Pierre, op.cit.,p.38.
16. Schuler, op.cit., p.8.
17. St. Pierre, op.cit.,p.4.
18. Ibid., p.1.
19. Baer, op.cit., p.8.
20. St. Pierre, op.cit., p.19.
21. Ibid.,pp. 19 - 20.
22. Schuler, op.cit., p.8.
23. Baer, op.cit.,p.105.

24. St. Pierre, op.cit.,p.98
25. Ibid., p.51.
26. Baer, op.cit.,p.135.
27. Ibid., p. 135.
28. St. Pierre, op.cit.,p. 134.
29. Ibid.,p. 135.
30. Schuler, op.cit., 219.
31. Ibid., p. 220.
32. Baer, op.cit., p.95.
33. St. Pierre, op.cit., p.6.
34. Schuler, op.cit., pp. 203 - 204.
35. Ibid., p. 142.
36. Baer, op.cit., p.9.
37. Ibid., p. 86.
38. St. Pierre, op.cit.,p.11.
39. Ibid., p. 73.
40. Schuler, op.cit., p. 28.
41. Ibid., pp. 29 - 30.
42. St. Pierre, op.cit., p. 1.
43. Baer, op.cit., p. 1.
44. Schuler, op.cit., p. 5.
45. Ibid., front inner cover.

CHAPTER III

THE ROMANCE NOVEL AND THE READERS' WORLDVIEW

In the preceding chapter, an analysis of three selected romance novels was carried out. We observed that the romance novels are popular and voraciously read by the Form One girls. In this chapter, our intention is to investigate some of the reasons leading to the popularity of the romance novels among the girls, basing our argument on the responses of the study collected from the readers themselves.

A quick study of the psychology of the adolescent will lead to a better understanding of the ideas being investigated in this chapter. During the adolescent years, both girls and boys undergo some developments in the non-physical aspects of growth. Changes occur in what the adolescents are interested in. These include their interaction with other people, as well as in the academic and vocational sphere. One therefore observes that these changes are universal, occurring among adolescents all over the globe. They express the shared needs and aspirations of adolescents all over. As Elizabeth B. Hurlock in Developmental Psychology observes:

There are marked changes in the adolescent's social interests and behaviour, as shown by increased peer-group influence, new patterns of

social groupings, new values in the selection of friends and leaders, and characteristics that lead to social acceptance or rejection.¹

She continues to observe that:

The adolescent develops new interests related to recreation, social activities, his appearance, independence, religion,² education, and his future vocation.

The above statements can be applied to the adolescent girls in Kenya. They develop new interests especially those concerning their appearance. They aspire to look beautiful and be fashionably clad. They further desire recognition and acceptance from their peers. The idea of romance and love appeals to many of them and they strive to look attractive and capture the attention of the opposite sex.

At the same time, this being a transitional phase, instability and a sense of strain and stress occur in the adolescent. The adolescent has to undergo changes from childhood to adulthood. Henry Angelino observes that apart from these changes:

Adolescents spend a large portion of their time in establishing themselves in their own society. Their desire to "belong", to be accepted by their peers, is so great that peer group influence can supplant the influence of parents and other adults. Adolescents have resorted to extreme behaviour in order to gain recognition of their peers. Conformity is a most accurate

description of the attitude of the young adolescents who would rather do anything than deviate from his group norms.

One tends to agree with the above quotation and its applicability in the Kenyan society. Among the Form One girls, the peer group influence can be readily observed. The reading of romance novels among some of the girls arises out of influence from friends. A number of the girls are persuaded by their friends to read the romance novels while others decide to read them so as to be like the other girls and thus be accepted as part of their group.

At this time, many of the adolescent girls dream about their future. Many aspire to be chic, attractive and at the same time, dream of the ideal boyfriend and eventually the ideal marriage. They attempt to look attractive by wearing modern and up to date fashions, facial make up and fancy hairstyles. Further, they aim to gain popularity among both girls and boys their age, by being social and conforming to the norms of their group.

During this stage, many of the girls also begin reading romance novels. They find the romances exciting and many fulfil their expectations of romance, beauty and fashion. One therefore observes that the authors of these novels know what their readers expect, and they present it to them in the romance novels.

The romance novels therefore have a regular audience. A large majority of this audience are those of the female sex who enjoy reading the romance novels, especially the idea of love and eventually the desired ideal marriage. The authors are usually women who understand the expectations of their fellow women and hence style the novels accordingly. However, one must realize that the primary audience of the romance novels read by the Form One girls are those in America and Europe. The authors pattern their novels according to the lifestyle found in these places, thus the society and culture they portray is quite foreign to the Kenyan audience.

The Form One girls are secondary recipients of the romance novels. By reading these romance novels which are characterized by a foreign setting and culture, the girls are "transported" from the familiar to that which is different. The society presented to them is one which is glamorous and in which people are free to do whatever pleases them, as well as being in possession of all that they require. This tends to be alienating for the schoolgirl in that it causes many of them to aspire for a totally different lifestyle from their own. The free and fun-filled society of the romance novels "transports" the girls from the realities of their own life where all is not glamour, wealth and

freedom to one which is. Hence, they are exposed to a wholly bourgeois western culture, internalizing its ideas and consequently being alienated from their own environment.

The romance novels therefore cash in on the girls' aspirations and fantasies. They exploit the girls' ambition to look attractive, fashionable and have wealth. Those importing the romance novels will thus be playing a role in the alienation process. The importers are aware that they will have readers whose expectations are similar to those of the Americans, hence will continuously import the novels as they have a regular audience.

In spite of the foreign images in the romance novels, they still enjoy great popularity among the Form One girls. Many are introduced to the romance novels by their friends who are already voracious readers. A common comment among the girls is "I saw many of my friends reading them and I was curious to know why they were so popular and on reading, I found them interesting, and have been reading them ever since." Hence, peer influence is very strong. The desire to belong and share common interests as well as the idea of entertainment can be seen in the reading of the romance novels.

Entertainment is first and foremost the prime goal in the girls' minds. They derive pleasure from reading the novels; they become a doorway into the world of fantasy, glamour and excitement, which are important features in the adolescent girls' lives. The novels cover these features hence partially fulfilling the girls' desires to know more about the glamour and fulfilled life. The girls are entertained and derive pleasure in reading the romance novels.

One also finds that for a majority of the girls, the idea of romance and teenage relationships is something new and exciting. They are curious as well as anxious to discover more about the "boy-girl" relationships. The romance novels play a role in this especially since they deal with matters concerning romance and love. The girls will voraciously read the novels so as to find out more concerning the relationships and will be totally engrossed in the story. At the same time, the story will entertain them. Through reading about protagonists of their own age and how they conduct their lives, they too are likely to act in a similar manner or pick out ideas they consider suitable for themselves.

The romance novels, therefore, serve the girls' needs in different ways. As such, these girls have various reasons for reading them, and have different

reactions to the novels. This in itself shows the great popularity of the romances among the girls.

Some girls observed that their parents were against their reading of romance novels. As one girl observed, "If any of my parents sees me reading a romance novel, they immediately take it away."⁴ As a result, the girls' curiosity is aroused and they become anxious to discover exactly what it is their parents are hiding from them. They therefore acquire the romance novels from friends and on finding them interesting and entertaining, they continue reading them although away from the watchful eye of their disapproving parents.

A majority of the girls also indicated that romance novels are an invitation to relax and to escape real-life boredom. These novels help them to temporarily disregard one's real life problems and boredom and surrender oneself to the fantasy world of the romance with its attractive and exciting people. At the same time, the girls vicariously take part in the thrilling and fast moving romance world, especially through identification with the heroine. Hence, the reading of romance novels becomes a means of relaxation. The romances do not tax their minds since they are easy and light reading, hence enjoyable especially after spending a large portion of their time

on demanding school work. The romance novels are therefore a temporary means of escape from the exhausting school work and a way to spend their leisure time.

The romance fiction further helps the girls to "escape" their routine type of life. They "escape" into a fantasy type of world. Furthermore, they "escape" from their frustrations and conflicts and seek aid to their problems in the romance world which is exciting and often has solutions to all problems. As some of the girls indicated, concerning romance novels: "They help relax my mind when I am tired and they are enjoyable to read for leisure. They cheer me up when I am sad."¹ "They are every girl's dream and even if we know that they are just fantasies, it is nice to dream"² and "They are the only ones that keep me busy when bored and also they are quite interesting as you are in a completely new world when reading them."³ Many of the girls had similar answers. One can therefore observe that the romance world with its "happy after" ending satisfies the reader and makes them identify with the romance world.

The romance novels therefore stimulate the imagination and give a certain sense of security to the readers. Since the romance novels tend to offer satisfying solutions to problems encountered, the girls

hopes and expectations are lifted by this. They too expect to find solutions to problems they may be encountering. Hence, they become less depressed and are able to tackle issues with a "lighter" heart and greater expectations.

The romance novels are further read since they help the girls to learn about other people elsewhere and how they live. In the Sweet Dreams series, which is written especially for teenagers and base their stories on the lives of teenagers, the girls learn about teenagers in the United States and how they conduct themselves. The Form One girls observe that the reading of romance novels helps them towards understanding people with different cultural backgrounds and keeps them in touch with social life in other countries. Some even imagine themselves in situations similar to those portrayed in the romance stories, while others believe that characters in the romance stories such as the heroine reflect the way they feel about different issues. Hence, the romance novels provide the girls with some form of ideas which they can use in their social environment.

The reading of romance novels also includes a certain amount of social involvement. The girls who begin reading romance novels, purchase or own them

are able to acquire more friends since they can exchange titles or borrow the romances from each other. This can be seen in some of the opinions given about the romance novels, which include "Because I heard my fellow students in Form One saying how interesting they were, so I borrowed one and have been reading and exchanging with friends ever since."⁸ A further comment often cited by many of the Form One girls was "My friends started reading them and when we went out for break, lunch, I would hear them talk so much about characters, habits, manners of the people concerned in some books. I really felt that I should read them so that I could feel the way they felt and not be left out of talks."⁹

Further opinions which indicated the social involvement were, "Because I saw others reading and exchanging the romance novels and they told me new and exciting things,"¹⁰ while another observes "Influence from friends. Listening to stories among my friends, and the urge to find out what they were about".¹¹

The reading of the romance novels is therefore one which involves the exchanging of views as to the most interesting romance novel and the recommendation of titles. Hence, it sometimes becomes a socializing aspect among peers.

The authors of romance novels therefore preoccupy the readers by giving them what they want to know about, for instance, romance and fashion. They advertise a way of life and hence manipulate the readers by exploiting their minds.

The romance novels read by the girls can thus be seen as playing a role in the girls' lives and their possible influence and effect cannot be ignored. James S. Smith in A Critical Approach to Children's Literature bases his ideas on the assumption that:

... children have desires and they try to fulfill them by, among other things, reading and listening to stories and poetry, and that all children's reading fits into various need categories - the need for security, for knowledge, for social acceptance, for laughter, for play, for beauty, etc.¹²

These desires include those that children recognize as well as the unrecognized. Reading becomes a means of trying to satisfy these needs, for instance, the need for laughter and enjoyment can be satisfied through the reading of comics.

The Form One girls therefore satisfy some of their aspirations through the reading of romance novels. They identify with the characters whom they admire. As Nicholas Tucker in Suitable for Children observes, the young reader can:

... identify with the main action, and books become ways in which he explores himself and the world around him; his feelings, dilemmas and some of the situations he may soon face, or is already facing ...¹³

Children identify with the main characters in the story, especially if they too are young. They will identify with situations faced by the main characters and more so if they too have faced them. The children therefore tend to enjoy stories with characters who have a role in the story, as well as, the ones whom they can identify with. This too occurs in the identification of the Form One girls with the romance heroine. The effect of empathizing with characters in the romance stories could be detected in the girls' worldview, attitudes, conduct and the expression of their beliefs and desires.

While reading the romance novels, most of the girls are drawn to identify with the main lady (heroine) in the story, wishing to be like her. In the romance novels, the heroine is portrayed as attractive, fashion conscious and good natured. She is beautiful, alluring and with the "perfect figure like a model." Hence, there is the preoccupation with fashion and beauty which is associated with girls. Therefore, what Bob Dixon in Catching Them Young 2 sees as applying to

girls' comics can also be seen as applying to the romance novel. This is the idea that as in the comics, as is also in the romance novels:

... the stress is, overwhelmingly, on fashion and cosmetics, how to package oneself for the romance market, how to meet boys, how to conduct oneself on dates ..., how to behave - what to do - to be accepted and sought after....¹⁴

Hence the Form One girls are fashion and beauty conscious and would like to be like the beautiful heroines in the romance novels. A typical description of the heroines in the romance series is, "pretty, blue-eyed with blonde hair", or "good looking, with dark blonde hair and magnificent golden-brown eyes."¹⁵ The heroine who is overwhelmingly attractive can be described thus, as seen in Candace Schuler's Sophisticated Lady in the Mills and Boon series "... ice-blond hair, huge gray eyes and pale, ivory complexion"¹⁶

The preoccupation with dress and appearance is also common among the Form One girls. The romance novels tackle the issue of fashion in detail and this intrigues the girls. For instance, the following type of descriptions concerning fashion are common in the romance novels: The female character can be described as wearing a "straight short skirt, a big soft sweater and a long sparkly scarf worn as a hairband"¹⁷ as seen

in Stephenie St. Pierre's Sun Kissed. In Sophisticated Lady, Samantha's style of dress is described thus: being

with the person she came to find who came for her to
... Black and bare, it was made of bias-cut silk to lovingly hug every slender curve of her body from bust to knee. The bodice was low and scooped shoestring straps studded with rhinestone secured it over her shoulders, criss-crossing over her bare back. Her heels were high and black too, with tiny rhinestone buckles that fastened around her slim ankles.¹⁸

addition, those involved in the teen romance novels are
Many of the girls find these descriptions of dress in high school just as the readers see. Further, the admirable, especially since they appear to be smart and girls in the romance novels range between thirteen and sixteen years, a similar age as those in Four One, are "fashionable and up-to-date." For them to be in a similar position among their peers, that is dressed with style and flair, will gain them admiration, popularity as well as envy hence they strive to imitate the American youth and their style of dressing. Consequently, even if the clothes are daring and outrageous such as the mini-skirts, the girls will wear them so as to keep up with the latest fashions. As a result, they are regarded by their peers as "up-to-date" and accepted as "one of the crowd."

One therefore observes that the reading of romance novels is an experience which the girls enjoy. Through reading romances, the girls indulge in a fantasy world attractive to them where they encounter an ideal man for themselves. Hence, if a girl reads a romance novel

identifying with the heroine and the happy ending in which the heroine finds satisfaction and joy by being with the person she cares for and who cares for her in return.

The identification and fulfilment process is even greater in the teen - romance series - the Sweet Dreams. The girls can easily identify with the success and failures that their fellow agemates encounter. In addition, those involved in the teen romance novels are in high school just as the readers are. Further, the girls in the romance novels range between thirteen and sixteen years, a similar age as those in Form One, hence the identification and emulation process is further strengthened.

A further important observation is that some of the girls on discovering how their fellow agemates behave as portrayed in the romance novels, attempt to imitate their behaviour. The change is worthwhile to them especially since the heroine in the romance novel is one whom they consider fashionable and attractive and at the same time they admire her and identify with her.

For the Form One girls, the lifestyle and actions of the characters in the romance novel are more attractive than those they encounter or can think of for themselves. Hence, if a girl in the romance novel

is portrayed as hugging and kissing a "guy" in the street, the reader may eventually imitate this as it is daring and exciting. Further, it is not condemned. This imitation of characteristics and behaviour manifests itself in the actions of the girls, both at school and among their peers and even on the streets. The characters in the romance novels can be seen as acting as "models" for the form One girls. They adopt the behaviour and characteristics of the "glamorous romance world" characters.

Hence, in romance novels the heroine and hero are usually attractive. The girls like reading about these type of characters and they do indeed favour beautiful women and handsome men. This can be seen in some of the answers given by the girls to the question "What qualities do you like to find in the main lady (heroine) in the romance novel?" One of the replies was, "She has to be beautiful, have nice eyes and hair. She has to be desired by men but not an easy person."¹⁹ In reply to the question "Why do you prefer/like these qualities" the answer given by the girl was that "I would like to be like the heroine, that is, beautiful attractive, have a figure and be admired by men".²⁰ Another girl observed that the heroine should be a "rare beauty, romantic, witty, intelligent, modern, fashionable and that she falls in love with the right man - one who is kind and considerate"²¹ and she

preferred these qualities because she felt that, "that is what a woman should be. She should have a say in society." Another suggestion was that the heroine should be "pretty, honest and have feelings for other people",²³ and these were preferred as they would make her "a trustworthy person who is nice and lovable." A further observation was that the heroine should be "pretty, decently dressed and always sure of what she says and does."²³ This particular girl preferred these qualities in the heroine because she believed that in having them, the heroine would be "respected by the opposite sex and she will feel proud of herself."

The girls also had their views on the qualities they would like to find in the hero and why they preferred those particular qualities. One observed that he has to be "attractive, strong, muscular, gentle, know how to treat a lady with gentle passion and must not be aggressive or hostile towards her"²⁴ and she liked these qualities since that is what "she will expect from the man who loves her, or when married, she expects her husband to have these qualities but most of all to love her." Another observed that the hero should be "handsome, considerate, protective, brave, have a great taste for clothes and believes in equality between man and woman"²⁵ and she preferred these qualities because she

would "like her husband/boyfriend to have them." A further observation was that the hero should be "handsome, understanding, serious in what he does and says, and hardworking" since with such qualities, he would "not cheat girls, would be respected by society and prosper in life."²⁶

One therefore observes through some of the answers, that the most important aspect in the romance heroine-type beauty archetype is someone attractive whom the girls could identify with. The qualities they would not like in the heroines and heroes are "ugly, cruel and unromantic." Many of the girls observed that they would not like an "ugly, plain, shapeless heroine who was not fashionable." This is because, as most observed, they too would not like to possess such qualities. Instead, they would like to be admired and approved of by their peers. Further, they would not like heroes who are not handsome, and who are aggressive, brutal and self-centered. The girls dislike such qualities because they cannot desire or be attracted by such a man since he is ugly and further he is hardhearted and only cares about himself and his needs.

One therefore observes that at this particular stage and age, the girls tend to identify with what is pleasing. The heroines portrayed in the romance novels

are usually "beautiful, slim with the perfect figure." Many are often described as attractive and "looking great without any effort at all." This prototype of the ideal beauty is based on the western view. In the west, terms such as beautiful, stunning, pretty are used to refer to the facial features of ladies while slender or slim refer to the built of the "perfect beauty." Other features often used as indicators of western type beauty are the complexions, such as, ivory or peach, the hair, for instance, blondes or brunette and the colour of the eyes especially blue or golden brown eyes. The romance heroines are based on these "model type" images.

In Working at Love, for instance, Marli is described as "beautiful, with a lovely sun-tanned complexion" while in Sun Kissed, Jessie is "attractive, with the style and figure with the perfect figure." In Sophisticated Lady, Samantha is portrayed as "outstandingly beautiful with incredibly blue eyes."

The above descriptions portray the idea of the ideal and admirable western beauty. All are either beautiful or attractive, while their hair is "white blond", "thick blond" or "ice blond" implying that these are admired qualities in the west. Further, the

ladies are epitomes of success. Their success, especially with boys due to the fact that they are beautiful and slim, makes them heroines of the stories. They thus act as role models for the readers.

The romance novels may further play a role in the selection or preference of boyfriends among the girls. The boys depicted in the teen romance novels are "handsome, charming or gentle". In Sun Kissed, Kevin, a high school student, is described as a football player who is "friendly, popular and really cute"²⁷ Further to this, he has his own car. He emerges as the image of the ideal and successful man. Being "handsome, muscular, friendly and with charming manners" makes him popular especially among the girls thus making him an admirable person. His popularity with the girls combined with his ideal qualities makes him emerge as a hero.

The idea of the ideal hero is alienating in that it leads some of the girls into searching for the same qualities among their male friends, as can be seen in some of their ideals. A common observation concerning the qualities the girls would like the men to have was: "He has to be cute, well built, with a dazzling smile." These are the qualities of my dream

guy."²⁸ while another stated "Handsome, romantic, good physique, high class standard and with a lot of money."²⁹

Further observations were: "Handsome, working class, rich, romantic, fashionable. This will enable him to take me to many places like big hotels,"³⁰ while another indicated: "He should be very handsome, tall, muscular, high class and living in a posh place and driving a posh car."³¹

These ideals found among the girls seem to be influenced by ideas drawn from the western culture. Their expectations, for instance, of the ideal man, can be seen as similar to those of the romance heroes. This is unfortunate in that it contributes towards the alienation process in that the girls base their expectations on images found in the west. For instance, a young rich man who possesses his own car, is a rare phenomenon in the Kenyan society.

The romance novels are thus socializing the girls into a culture different from their own, hence playing a role in the contribution of high and false expectations among the girls.

In spite of descriptions of various types of characters in the romance novels, one notices the silence on the poor and often ugly. They are not given

prominence in the novels. Usually the popular characters are from rich backgrounds or upper middle class. This unfortunately gives the impression that the poor are inferior and have no place in society and further they are not important. There is the implication that the rich should be imitated as the ideal. Their lifestyle is depicted as glamorous, fun-filled and well catered for. Unfortunately, this gives rise to negative results in that it creates a sense of inferiority among those who are not very wealthy, or encourages the girls to aim for a rich type of lifestyle which may not be available to them.

The girls high expectations leads some to reject boys who do not have the ideal qualities since they are aiming for a handsome wealthy person. As a result, they are alienated from their agemates since the probability of them being wealthy are not likely. For some, the older men whom are rich become the solution since they can afford to buy for the girls expensive gifts and take them to high class places. This leads to moral decay in the affected youth.

The captivating and entertaining plot of the romance novel gives further rise to their popularity. In anticipation of what may happen in the romance novel, the girls are carried through the events of their main characters. Suspense and excitement are

raised within the girls as the relationship between the heroine and hero begins, its various stages of development and how it fares are described. Thus, while reading romances, the girls have certain expectations and respond in line with these, often deriving pleasure and satisfaction. If the romance story deviates from its usual happy or satisfactory ending, the girls express their disappointment. Hence, the violating of the conventions is not taken positively.

The girls are therefore content to read about the heroines and it is easy to identify with them. At the same time, they are choosy about the manner in which the leading ladies are portrayed in the romance stories. They do not believe in the heroine being overdependent on others, proud and of loose morals. One of the girls declared that she dislikes women who are portrayed as "Being self-centered, being too naive and relying on the man to help her out of difficult situations all the time"³² while another disliked "A proud woman who shows off to others. A woman who is easily dominated by a man."³³ Some two other observations which commonly occurred concerning the qualities disliked in the women found in the romance story were "naive, dependent on others, plain, one who is always suspicious"³⁴ and "ugly, untidy, easily swept off her feet, not able to think for herself."³⁵

The girls dislike such a personality especially since they would not like to possess it and further because such women are seen as foolish by others. The girls therefore cannot identify with such a character in the romance novel. They believe that the most important characteristics the heroine should have are intelligence, independence and integrity. They admire these qualities because they too would like to have similar qualities and they work towards achieving them.

There is therefore the need for the heroine to be intelligent and independent especially since with these qualities, she will be capable of planning her life and achieve her goals. The girls tend to empathize with such a heroine. Hence, for instance, they identify with a heroine who is respected by other people. This, to many of the girls is the ideal figure of what they would like to be. The romance novel therefore provides a kind of emotional nurturance by prompting identification between the reader and heroine in the story.

Despite the fact that the girls are striving for some form of independence, they are still at the stage in life where they do not know exactly who they are and where they belong. Many are caught up in trying to build up a personality as well as trying to be feminine and attractive. Maxine Nunes and Deanna White observe that:

... At a time of life when both males and females are under great stress socially and physically, a teenage girl copes with the extra burden of defining herself as a female as well as a person. Not only must she adjust to her physical femininity but she must also develop the appropriate mental femininity as laid down by the culture. The adolescent girl is constantly aware of her need to behave in a "feminine" manner and to be attractive to boys....³⁶

They further observe that:

... For most teenage girls, the overriding obsession is to be always feminine. And to be feminine is to be linked with a man. The pressure to conform to the expectations of others, begun early in childhood continues into adolescence - the 'others' this time being men....³⁷

The above statements are applicable to the Form One girls and the romance heroines. At their adolescent stage, they aspire to look attractive and be admired by boys, hence dress and make themselves up with utmost care. To have boyfriends with whom they can socialize and go out with to meeting places of teenagers such as movies and parties is desired and admired.

Hence, while reading the romance novels, the girls pick up ideas on how to dress, behave and how to act towards teenage boys. The actions of the heroine in the romance novel are thus of importance to the girls.

At the same time, the depiction of an independent heroine does not mean that the heroine should not have someone she trusts and cares for, and who cares for her in return. The girls believe in loving and being loved in return. They, therefore, argue that the heroine can be with someone who loves her and respects her as a person. They too would like to fall in love sometime during their lifetime. The girls further admire the happy endings in the romance novels where the hero and heroine declare their love for each other. In Sun Kissed, Steve the hero, declares his love for Jessie at the end of the novel "I think I loved you the minute I saw you. Crazy, isn't it? It was like ... like we were just meant to be together."³⁸ This romantic and happy ending is one which the girls enjoy.

The girls can therefore be seen to believe that in life the man should try and understand the lady and respect her. They however maintain that he should not be weak, overbearing or proud. A popular observation among the girls was that they do not like men who "cheat ladies or move around with all the ladies." They further indicated that they did not like men who are "hostile and brutal towards the lady involved." Many of the girls also disliked weak men who are effeminate and openly display fear. They declared that such a man may not be a suitable boyfriend or husband,

especially if he lets others control his life. Hence, a man who is able to make his own decisions and plan his life is more admirable, than one who is not.

The act of reading the romance novels is therefore of some significance to the girls. A number of them observed that reading romance novels provides some form of "escape." It becomes a means of releasing tension built up through daily living. Further, the romance novels are rarely depressing and therefore they seldom leave the reader feeling sad inside. Instead, the romance novels often lift the girls' spirit, leaving them in a happier state. They "escape" the pressure around them by being transported into a world which they find is full of excitement. Through the fun-filled and optimistic world of the romance novel, the girls can momentarily relax by identifying with the romance heroine who is the centre of a handsome and loving man.

Hence, through reading the romance novels, the girls feel more relaxed and enjoy themselves. The fantasy world of the romance meets some of their expectations. There is an escape to an utopian kind of state through identification with the heroine and the romance world. Through this, some of the girls' expectations are temporarily met. The romance novel

therefore has similar qualities of "Fantasy, Recovery (or a fresh sight of the too familiar). Escape and Consolation ...³⁹ as the fairy tale for children.

In spite of the satisfaction the romance novel offers, its utopian world together with its always foreign setting alienates the Form One girls. As seen earlier in the chapter, the primary audience of the romance novels read by the girls are the Americans. This is further strengthened by the fact that the romance heroines are "western beauties" as can be seen in Marli, Jessie and Samantha in Working at Love, Sun Kissed and Sophisticated Lady respectively.

The author therefore writes with her primary audience in mind. This in itself is already alienating in that the author knows what the American based audience expects and she will pattern her story accordingly. Other aspects such as the setting and values transmitted will also be foreign based.

One can therefore see that the importation of the romance novels contributes towards alienating the girls from their immediate environment. In importing the romance novels, the importer is introducing something foreign to the Kenyan market and to the potential buyers. He contributes towards the alienation process

in that the books are stacked in bookshops and are eventually bought and read, resulting in the emulation of foreign values.

The worldview presented will be greatly different from the one to which the girls are used. For instance, in the Kenyan society, permissiveness is frowned upon. Furthermore, in relationships between the girls and boys, self discipline and the control of external manifestations of affection are not encouraged. Virtues such as purity and modesty are admired. This is unlike in the western societies where permissiveness is at a high scale. Hence, some of the negative aspects of the western culture and its values may be transmitted through the romance novels, resulting in confusion among the girls.

It is therefore unfortunate that the girls pick negative ideas from the romance novels which they are likely to apply in their lives. This is especially so with ideas concerning relationships between men and women especially in matters concerning sex. The Mills and Boon novels apart from depicting the love between the heroine and hero go further to depict the sexual contact between the two. Explicit descriptions of sexual relationships are given. This captivates the girls curiosity and may lead to disastrous

consequences. This is especially so since the girls may want to experiment with the idea of sex. Lester Crow in Adolescent Development and Adjustment observes:

The behaviour of growing girls is as unpredictable as that of their brothers, if not more so. They also struggle for self-realization, usually in more subtle ways than boys. Since a girl tends to mature earlier than a boy, she is likely to become sensitive sooner to changing relations between the sexes. Her tentative attempts to attract boys' attention may take various forms such as coyness, affected mannerisms and speech, day-dreaming, apparent indifference to boys or rudeness in their presence, extremes of dress, make-up and hairdo, or even encouragement of, and participation in, more or less serious petting activities.⁴⁰

Some of above assumptions can be observed in the behaviour of some Form One girls. They attempt to attract boys in various ways whether in groups or individually. One observes that they take painstaking care in matters of dress while others may giggle, smile or effect shyness on seeing boys so as to attract their attention. This can also be observed in characters portrayed in the romance novels. In Sun Kissed, for instance, Taryn is depicted as slaving over her looks and dieting so as to attract boys and is further portrayed as always flirting with boys.

Unfortunately, the influence of the romance novels and that of peers leads some of the girls into immoral behaviour such as sex. This will often have negative consequences in that the girl loses her sense of direction and purpose in life, and in the case of premarital sex, may result in an unwanted pregnancy, thus ruining the prospects of a bright future. Hence, the romance novels have a negative impact on the girls' outlook.

The romance novels can therefore be seen as contributing adverse ideas to the young girls. This is so in the Mills and Boons which do not condemn the idea of sex before marriage. Hence, the romance novel perpetuates negative values among the girls whose end result is often negative.

The romance novels further alienate the girls from the real world and "transport" them to a world of fantasy, glamour and romance where everything is beautiful and solutions are found for all problems. Some of the girls "carry forward" the romance world into the real world expecting an easy and romantic life full of wealth and glamour but unfortunately, the harsh realities of the world they live in - the real world - does not permit this, hence shattering the girls' expectations.

who see their role models. Hence, through reading the romance novel the girls are exposed to a foreign and artificial type of society resulting in negative consequences.

girls from their societies is further affected by the foreign society as portrayed in the romance novel which emphasizes western values, as seen in the Sweet Dreams and Mills and Boon Series. The western culture is put in the limelight. The girls are "separated" from their society hence cannot totally fulfill themselves in a familiar environment and as a result, alienating them from their environment as well as themselves.

Saving Tabloid recreation centres such as amusement parks, theatres and discos where the young west and therefore occur. The girls are exposed to the western culture and hence admire the whites and their culture, portrayed as possessing all they require hence living a satisfactory and fun-filled life. Through the romance novel, the impression thus given is that in the foreign time, they are fashionable. The girls strive to be like them as they are perfectly portrayed. As a result, an inferiority complex is created among the girls. They view the whites as perfect and possessing all they want so they emulate them as portrayed in the romance novels. This leads to the use of skin lightening creams so as to have a "pale complexion"; the use of excessive makeup and the perming or curling of their hair so as to acquire the "long, wavy texture" of European hair. This to the girls will place them as close as they can get to their romance novel heroines

who are their role models. Hence, through reading the romance novel the girls are exposed to a foreign and artificial type of society resulting in negative consequences.

Through reading the romances, the girls are exposed to the American society, hence a different cultural and societal setting from Kenya. The girls are exposed to the American way of life which is portrayed as glamorous and exciting as opposed to their own society. The American society is depicted as having fantastic recreation centres such as amusement parks, theatres and discos where the young meet and have a great time. The Americans are further portrayed as possessing all they require hence living a satisfactory and fun-filled life. Through the romance novel, the impression thus given is that in the foreign lands, life is smooth, easy and comfortable. The girls reading the novels thus long for the kind of lifestyle portrayed while rejecting their own. They will strive to imitate aspects of the foreign lifestyle, therefore being further alienated from their own society. Hence, one sees that unlike the oral literature, which socialized and integrated the people of a certain society into their own society, the romance novels alienate the girls.

Since the girls cannot dress as they please in school. Further, in reading the romance novels the girls are exposed to new and foreign ideas. In the teen romance series, the girls are exposed to the American school system, which is different from the Kenyan one. In the American system, the concept of school uniform is unheard of, hence students can wear whatever pleases them. The teen romances thus describe some students as wearing "fuschia, acid green tie-dyed pants and denim jackets." Further, the American school girl is permitted to wear makeup and fancy hairstyles to school. This often leads many of the school girls to long for this kind of lifestyle in their schools.

Some of the Form One girls thus indicated that it was unfortunate to wear uniform as it was ugly and dull, unattractive and untidy and it further prevented them from wearing whatever pleased them. Hence the American school system influences some girls into hoping that they too can do away with the "drab" school uniform and wear the latest fashions. This, to a large extent, alienates them from the reality that school uniform is part and parcel of the school system and the chance of it being scrapped is highly unlikely. These hopes and aspirations of the girls cannot be fulfilled as they have no relevance in their society. Instead, they are foreign based and have relevance only in a foreign society.

Since the girls cannot dress as they please in school, they do so outside school. When they are given pocket money, many will try and imitate the American teenage girls and may buy similar clothes and dress in a similar manner. Hence, one will often see girls dressed in miniskirts, teeshirts with fancy permed or curled hair. They struggle to imitate aspects of the American lifestyle therefore becoming alienated from their own culture. The romance novels are thus sometimes a source of ideas on how to dress.

The kind of lifestyle enjoyed by the American teenagers is carefree and merry. In the Sweet Dreams teen romances, many of the high school students are portrayed as owning cars or bicycles by which they go to school or for other leisure activities. For instance, in the Sweet Dreams series Sun Kissed, Kevin, a high school student is portrayed as having a car. The owning of a car by high school students is portrayed as a common occurrence in the United States. This is as opposed to Kenya where the owning of a car by adults is not very common and for teenagers, it is virtually unheard of. This has negative connotations in that it encourages the girls to demand for expensive items which their parents cannot afford.

The romance novels can therefore be seen as introducing the idea of class and wealth. Those who are rich can afford cars unlike the majority who

cannot. The idea of the social divisions - the rich as opposed to the middle class and the poor is introduced. The rich are the ones who possess all they want. Further, the poor are not mentioned in the romance novels. This implies to the girls that, the poor are not capable of enjoying themselves and being happy. The romance novels therefore introduce a way of life in which the aspect of wealth is important. The characters portrayed are wealthy, for instance, they all own cars. This type of idea contributes to the class and wealth issue making the girls admire and long for an affluent life that they cannot acquire and neither can their parents. This can result in enmity being created between the parents and the children. The children will demand what the parents cannot afford and may look down upon them and the parents on the other hand will find them too demanding and rude.

The authors of the romance novels want the reader to see the world from a particular angle - the world of wealth, glamour and beauty where all is possible. The romance novel brings out the best possible kind of world. Hence, in striving to identify and emulate those in the foreign romance novels, the girls are being alienated from their own society with its cultural values. The girls begin to dislike their own society arguing that it is not as affluent and

interesting as that described in the romance novel. Hence, the romance novels contribute towards transmitting distorted values which eventually shape the girls' character and worldview.

The young girls are therefore alienated from their immediate environment while being socialized into a foreign one through the reading of the western based romance novels. Literature can be seen as transmitting values, thus, the romance novels transmit their values to their readers.

In this chapter, we examined the readership of the romance novels among the Form One girls. We looked at the reasons which lead the girls into reading romance novels and the possible influence and effect they have on the girls. We observed that they are alienated from their own environment while being socialized into a foreign one. Their significance among the girls was therefore an important aspect examined in this chapter.

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 7. State House Girls High School.
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 17. St. Pierre, op.cit., p. 6.

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23. State House Girls High School.
24. State House Girls High School.
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CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, we set out to analyse the romance novel and its probable impact among young girls. A sample study comprising of Form One girls from a cross section of girls' schools in Nairobi was used in helping achieve our objectives.

The thesis has consistently stressed the idea that what young people read has a possible influence on their worldview. We have also observed that the manner of presentation of images in the romance novel shapes the outlook and beliefs of the readers. Furthermore, we have indicated that the romance novel may shape the characteristics of its readers. This we saw was because many of the readers tended to identify with romance characters especially the heroine, whom they often emulate. We have noted that the girls at this age and particular stage in life have certain fantasies and aspirations. These are especially the need to be noticed and accepted by the peers as well as the need to appear attractive and fashionably clad. This has contributed to their identifying with the heroine who has been depicted as attractive.

The romance novels have been seen as having a socializing role among the girls. The thesis has demonstrated that the authors of the romance novels mould their stories in a manner which persuades the readers to view society from a certain angle. The girls' outlook and attitude to their society is hence affected whether negatively or positively. Hence, we have seen the focal point that what the young read has a probable impact on their characteristics, attitudes and outlook towards their own society and the world in general.

The thesis has further examined the romance novel and its role among the readers and their worldview. We have observed that the romance novels are avidly read among the young girls and a variety of reasons have been given for this. These have ranged from the influence of peers to interest in the world of romance and adventure.

The romance novel has also been seen as addressing a number of the girls' aspirations. Through romance reading, we have observed that the girls have caught a glimpse of the romance and adventure-filled life which they may not encounter enough of in their daily life. Hence, through reading of the romance novels, the girls attempt to imagine a more perfect state where their aspirations could be adequately met. The girls tend to

identify with the heroines who are usually attractive and are surrounded by a bevy of admirers. Furthermore, the romance novel heroines may become role models for the Form One girls.

The thesis has therefore attempted to investigate the reasons as to why the romance novel is widely read among the girls. The factors that make the romance novels attractive to their readers have been discovered. These have included the idea that the girls enjoy reading entertaining as well as interesting novels. Further to this has been the idea that the novels provide a means of relaxation for the girls as well as an escape from the routine and boredom of their daily life.

The romance novel has further been seen as addressing the expectations of the girls. For instance, the girls expect beautiful heroines and handsome heroes to grace the romance novel and this indeed is often the case. The authors as we have noted, depict attractive heroines and heroes in their stories, especially since they are aware of the expectations of their audience and will try and satisfy them.

The issue of the popularity of the romance novel and its addressing of the girls expectations has been met through the girls' responses to the questionnaire

as well as to the interviews and the ideas emanating from the discussions. Hence, field research has ensured the meeting of the objectives.

The thesis further set out to investigate the hypothesis that the type of text a young person reads has some influence on that person's worldview. The hypothesis has been realized with the aid of the Form One girls. The girls' responses during the interviews and discussions on the romance novels have revealed the possible impact of the romance novels on their worldview. Many of the girls interviewed admired the image of fashionable, attractive ladies and handsome men. For instance, admiration for the handsome and well-off heroes was usually followed by an expression indicating a wish to have boyfriends like the heroes portrayed in the romance novels.

An analysis of three selected romance novels has also been carried out in the thesis. We have examined various aspects in the novel such as themes and characterization.

A study of the romance novels has provided us with a deeper insight into the reasons for the popularity of the romance novels. A captivating and exciting storyline that is comprehensible has

This thesis covers only a fraction of the field of encouraged voracious consumption of the romance children's literature in Kenya. Hopefully, other areas novels. The plot of the romance novel has further been in children's literature will be investigated. seen as formulated in a style that is easily accessible to the reader, in that, the reader can make inferences which are soon confirmed in the story.

The presentation of the romance story has therefore been noted as influencing its readers.

Through the patterning of events and characters, the author communicates her worldview, manipulating and influencing the reader to observe the world from a particular angle. The reader consciously or unconsciously absorbs these values and they may become part and parcel of the reader's life. Consequently, the romance novel influences the readers' worldview and eventually has an effect on it.

The methodology used in acquiring the necessary information thus proved relevant. Library research provided useful information on the nature of the romance novel. Further, works on the nature and role of children's literature enabled a better understanding and evaluation of the romance novels. The fieldwork proved relevant in that it yielded direct responses from the girls themselves. This further enabled the avoidance of obvious presumptions as empirical evidence was provided.

This thesis covers only a fraction of the field of children's literature in Kenya. Hopefully, other areas in children's literature will be investigated.

A probable area of investigation is the literature popular among the boys. One can investigate the literature available either for the very young or for older boys and note the possible impact it may have on them.

An examination of the growing trends of Kenyan literature and African literature in general can be carried out. A closer analysis of the literature available from the local market will reveal the relevance of the literature in present day society.

The place of the media as well as the audio visual and visual in children's literature, should not be forgotten. Hence, an exploration into these and other aspects of children's literature in Kenya and the world in general, will largely contribute to the field of literary studies.

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UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE

QUESTIONNAIRE

THE ROMANCE NOVEL AND ITS READERSHIP AMONG FORM I GIRLS

The following is a questionnaire concerning the romance novel and its readership among Form One girls. Please read through the questionnaire and express yourself freely in the questions asked.

Your co-operation is highly appreciated.

1. When did you begin reading for pleasure e.g comic books (class and age).

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2. Which kind of books were you reading then e.g comics, Enid Blytons, etc. (List 3 types).

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3. When did you begin reading romance novels e.g Mills & Boon (class and age).

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4. What led you to start reading romance novels? (State as many reasons).

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5. What is your present age?
6. Why do you like reading romance novels? (State as many reasons)

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7. Which kind of romance series do you read, e.g Sweet Valley High, Harlequins, etc. (State 3 types in order of preference).

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8. Why do you prefer the series stated in the above question?

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9. Which are your 3 favourite romance novels? e.g Carole Mortimer - Unwilling Desire (Mills & Boon).

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10. Who are your 3 favourite romance authors?

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11. What qualities do you like to find in the main lady described in the romance novel, e.g beauty, fashionable, etc. (State as many).

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12. Why do you prefer/like these qualities?

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13. What qualities do you like to find in the leading (main) man described in the romance novel? (State as many).

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14. Why do you prefer/like these qualities?

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15. Which qualities would you not prefer in the main lady?

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16. Why is this so? (State as many reasons).

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17. Which qualities would you not prefer in the main man?

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18. Why is this so? (State as many reasons).

19. Do you think the characters and events appearing in romance novels resemble those in real life? (Please tick only one of the following).

An identical (exact) resemblance

A close resemblance

No resemblance at all.

20. Give reasons for your answer to the above question.

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21. How do the romance novels influence (affect) your life, i.e. what role do they play?

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22. Do you learn anything from romance novels?

If the answer is yes - state what

If the answer is no - state why not

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23. Briefly, describe what makes you enjoy reading the romance novels.

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24. Are there some romance novels you do not enjoy? (State the reasons why).

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25. Do you read other type of novels apart from the romance novels?

If the answer is yes - state which type and why

If the answer is no - state why

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