

The Nollybook Phenomenon — A Vindication of Popular Culture

by

Dawn Felicity Kohaly

submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the subject

ENGLISH

at the

University of South Africa

Supervisor: Prof Deirdre Byrne

Co-supervisor: N/A

26 January 2015

To my romantic hero Ilan who made me believe in fairy-tales

UNISA LIBRARY

2015 -08- 19

CLASS

ACCESS



0002347839

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my mentor and supervisor, Professor Deirdre Byrne, for her constant guidance, professionalism and unwavering support. She assisted me in transforming my original concept into reality and I am most grateful for her expertise. Thank you Deirdre for sharing your incredible knowledge with me and so generously guiding me. You selflessly devoted many hours to me and never tired of my calls and emails. I am privileged to have had you as my supervisor.

I would like to thank my employer, the University of Johannesburg, for granting me sabbatical leave in the second semester of 2014 so that I could complete my dissertation. A heartfelt thank you is extended to Ms Roashaine Pather, Head of the Department of Applied Communicative Skills at the University of Johannesburg. I appreciate her continuous support, encouragement and confidence in me. I would also like to extend my thanks to Dr Isaac Mndawe, lecturer in African languages at the University of Johannesburg who willingly assisted me to translate the isiZulu and Sesotho dialogue from *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* into English.

I would like to thank my patient and supportive family especially my dearest parents, Mannie Zar and Shirley Zar, who believe in constantly learning, no matter one's age. To my exceptional husband and sons — Ilan, Yariv David, Yonatan and Gilad — no words suffice to thank you for your complete support and love. I appreciate your selflessness in understanding my time constraints and allowing me to immerse myself in this study. Ilan, it is no coincidence that I chose to study the romantic formula. As we celebrate our silver wedding anniversary, you are proof that heroes and heroines do live "happily ever after".

Above all, I have profound gratitude to God Above, for His continual blessings and assisting me on my journey, especially when days were challenging and overwhelming.

Abstract

This dissertation looks at four samples of Nollybook bookazines published by MME Media in South Africa in 2010. These are *Finding Arizona*, *Looking for Mr Right*, *Unfashionably in Love* and *Lights, Camera, Love*. It examines the plots, characters, language and gender portrayals in terms of the romance genre and discusses them as being reflective of popular culture. Whilst such literature has traditionally been denigrated as inferior, I argue that the Nollybooks should not be marginalised since they reflect contemporary issues and provide a satisfying reading experience to young Black women. Furthermore, this dissertation looks at the adaptation of three of the samples into the e-TV television series *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, *PhD* and *Game On* which were broadcast in 2012, whilst *Label it Love* was aired in 2014. Since there is little existing research on the contemporary South African romantic novel, I add my voice to the debate about its worth.

Key Words

South African romantic fiction; Nollybooks; gender stereotypes; women readers; popular culture; text to television.

I declare that

The Nollybook Phenomenon— A Vindication of Popular Culture

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



SIGNATURE
(Ms)

26-01-2015

DATE

Introduction

“Come to me my Cinderella straight to my wishing well

And you’re the one I’ll love forever”

(lyrics from *Cinderella* by Lionel Richie)

Background to the study

In 2010 a small South African publishing company, MME media, published a series of South African “chick lit” bookazines called *Nollybooks*. These short paperback novels were defined as “books that think like magazines” (*Nollybooks* 2014). They are short, light, entertaining romances that are set in South Africa and aimed at young African women. They were sold predominantly at branches of CNA and Shoprite at the affordable price of R49.99 each. Initially, in 2010, they were available from CNA and through the book clubs of *Real*, *Move* and *True Love* magazines. From June 2011, twin packs, consisting of two titles each, were sold for R69.99 from Shoprite and CNA. They were marketed bearing the slogan “twice the spice at a far better price” (Carolyn 2011).

Media24 partnered with MME media in selling the books as they believed in a Nollybook phenomenon, namely that these books would be well received by book consumers. Jonathan Harris, the general manager of Media24’s Developing Marketing Division, commented on the company’s partnership by saying that “The launch of our romance series of books, in partnership with Nollybooks, through both Shoprite and CNA, is a first for a South African media company”

and “It represents this division’s most serious push into the book market and also the beginning of what I expect to be meaningful growth in this segment” (*Double the Romance from Nollybooks* 2011). Dora Sithole, head of the Books Division at Media24’s Developing Market Division, elaborates on why Media24 believed in the concept: “These fabulous novels have already been available through CNA and will now also be available in Shoprite outlets, increasing our market reach ... all of them are excellent reads, written by South Africans for South Africans” (*Double the Romance from Nollybooks* 2011). The key marketing strategy here was glaring; reader identification. The media strongly publicised the creation of a series aimed at young South African women aged between 16 and 24 to “reflect the lives and aspirations of the people who will read them” (*Nollybooks* 2014). However, publishers also understood shifts in the global marketing of books away from selling books exclusively at book shops. Janice Radway noted that in America, supermarket chains soon realised that there was a community of female romance book readers who would welcome the availability of good reads whilst purchasing their general supplies. As Radway explains, “not only do the chains make books even easier for American women to obtain, but they also set up their stores so that the experience of buying a book in a bookstore seems no more threatening or out-of-the ordinary than that of picking up a paperback while waiting for groceries to move down the conveyor at the market” (Radway 1991:38). I made my first purchase of a twin pack of Nollybooks whilst purchasing groceries from Shoprite in June 2011 for R69.99, without realising that I was on the brink of discovering a remarkable phenomenon that would pave the way for this study.

Definitions

The Nollybooks were named by the creator and publisher, Nigerian-born Moky Makura. She acknowledged the huge success of the Nigerian film industry which is commonly referred to as Nollywood and so the idea of using the neologism “nolly” was born. Makura realised that the Nollywood film industry reflected local Nigerian content and she similarly wished to create a series in which uniquely South African lives were portrayed. As a report in CNN’s *Inside Africa* recounted in 2011, “The success of Nollywood movies has shown that Africans hunger for their own stories and home-grown heroes, and Makura says it’s time books provided them” (Mabuse & Wither 2011). Makura surmised that if the Nollywood film industry could thrive in Nigeria, so too could the Nollybooks thrive in South Africa, provided she could produce popular, cheap romance literature aimed at young, Black women. Makura continued this notion of Nollywood by creating her alter ego, “Sis Nolly”, the fictitious editor of the Nollybooks. The word “sis” derives from the word “sister” or, in Nollybook parlance, “sista”, which is a common colloquialism used to denote friendship between women. So “Sis Nolly” is presented as the reader’s friend who will interact with her both through the texts and on the Nollybook website.

The word “popular” is used as an adjective defined by *The South African Concise Oxford Dictionary* as “liked or admired by many or by a particular

person or group” (Kavanagh et al 2005:909). This adjective describes widely-read romances such as the Mills & Boon series, an incredible publishing success which have been translated into 26 languages and are available in 109 countries (De Waal 2011). The second definition provided by *The South African Concise Oxford Dictionary* of the word “popular” is applicable to the title of this dissertation, namely, “intended or suited to the taste or means of the general public” (Kavanagh et al 2005:909).

The word “popular” must be read as a phrase together with the word “culture”, meaning that the Nollybooks are indicative of the general tastes of a particularly South African culture as defined by the first and second definitions of “culture” in *The South African Concise Oxford Dictionary*. First, culture is defined as a noun referring to “the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively” and, second, as “the customs, of a particular nation, people, or group institutions, and achievements” (Kavanagh et al 2005:282). The first definition allows the Nollybooks to be acknowledged as an important part of South African literature, whilst the second definition focuses more on the reflection of a uniquely South African experience. Here these two meanings are linked by the important word “vindication”, which means a justification regarding the Nollybooks as important works of literature in that they reflect an essential part of South African society, namely the values and beliefs of young urbanised Black women. The word “phenomenon” is closely connected to both the words “popular” and “vindication” in that the Nollybooks’ success has been both widespread and remarkable.

Motivation

In the same year as my discovery of the Nollybooks, I was challenged by my students' increasing negativity and resistance towards reading English for pleasure. As they were second- or third-language English speakers, they were generally not motivated to read English books, despite my continual encouragement. This resistance to reading English texts, or aliteracy, was perplexing as I noted that these students possessed a reading ability but consciously chose not to spend their time reading. Unlike illiteracy, where there is an inability to read, aliterate readers can read but make the conscious decision not to do so.

As an experiment to encourage reading in my first-year Communication Skills class, where students were studying towards a Diploma in Metallurgical Engineering at the University of Johannesburg's Doornfontein Campus, I requested Mr Miller, the owner of *Testcraft*, the campus bookshop, to sell and market the Nollybooks at the same price as Shoprite and CNA, at R49.99 each. These students had initially showed no interest in reading- they were apathetic and aliterate - and I was interested in whether they would be receptive to simpler reads, such as those offered by the bookazines. I had read various positive reviews about the Nollybooks in the media, so I was prompted to buy further

titles out of my own curiosity. I soon discovered that the Nollybooks were light, enjoyable reads which reflected South African romantic storylines with characters that my students could possibly relate to. Furthermore, the appearance of the Nollybooks was not daunting as they were short mini-paperbacks with pastel covers, printed in a large font text and so appeared to be accessible reads. Described as “bookazines”, a mixture between a book and magazine, they bore the slogan “so much more than a book” because they included book club talking points and vocabulary exercises.

The Nollybook website provided me with much more information about the Nollybooks that developed my idea of creating a non-compulsory, informal reading programme in which I read excerpts from various Nollybooks in class. I informed the students that should they wish to read these bookazines, they could purchase them at the campus bookshop. It was not compulsory nor was it related to their official syllabus so there was no pressure to participate in the Nollybook reading experience. The unexpected and astounding success of the Nollybook sales actually presented the initial idea for this study when Mr Miller, surprisingly, reported brisk sales of these bookazines. This was even more remarkable coming from an academic bookshop which had never before sold romance novels.

Clearly there was a demand for the Nollybooks, as reflected in the purchasing habits of first-year Communication Skills students. Furthermore, I noted that female students began to swop and share Nollybooks and so formed informal

book clubs. As I noted the enthusiasm of these readers, I began to realise that the Nollybooks deserved closer scrutiny. Something new and special had occurred and I soon realised that this was in fact a phenomenon — a Nollybook phenomenon. Dora Sithole’s description of the Nollybooks was spot-on. These books reflected worlds very close to the students’ worlds and most definitely there was reader identification with the characters, locales, language and issues. They could most certainly “empathise with the hero and heroine and buy into the romantic dilemmas of the storyline” (Lewis 2011). In an interview for the *Global Post*, Makura declared in 2011 that the Nollybooks were “Mills & Boon set in South Africa” and a “Sowetan version of *Sex and the City*” (Carolyn 2011). And so, in a period of several weeks, a revolution had occurred in the students’ attitudes to reading and reading habits. The Nollybooks had become popular in the classroom, but something more profound was happening as I acknowledged that the students strongly identified with the scenarios played out in the books and that the Nollybooks did in fact portray popular culture which was very much part of their frames of reference. I had to agree with publisher Moky Makura’s sentiment in the *Mail and Guardian*, when she said that the Nollybooks aimed at “making reading cool” by “blending the features of magazines with quality writing while telling South African stories” (Hoffman 2010).

The quality of reader identification provided the spur for this study to take place and for me to investigate what it was that made readers flock to read the Nollybooks. In exploring the Nollybook phenomenon, I have chosen to focus on the following four Nollybooks: *Finding Arizona* written by Michelle Atagana, *Lights, Camera, Love* by Bronwyn Desjardins, *Unfashionably in Love* by Sabina

Mutangadura and *Looking for Mr Right* by Cheryl Ntuny. In examining these works, I will explore why readers today, in a post-apartheid democratic South Africa, still enjoy and choose literature that follows the romantic formula by conforming to traditional plots, clichéd characterisation and sexist gender stereotypes.

The romantic formula and feminist responses

The main premise of my study is that the Nollybooks conform to the traditional fairy-tale fantasy that is deeply ingrained in the female psyche. South African readers have been exposed to Western culture through television and the media and have, to a certain extent, imbibed the fairy-tale formula in which an ordinary girl is transformed into a desirable princess through the presence of a hero. Like Cinderella, the downtrodden, undervalued heroine is spectacularly transformed into a princess by the most sought-after, handsome prince who singles out the heroine as his chosen destiny. It is important that the hero is physically attractive. Shezi, the heroine in *Finding Arizona*, idolises the appearance of the hero by referring to him as an “Adonis” (Atagana 2010:137). But the heroine’s attraction becomes much more serious as she regards him as perfect in every way. Shezi reflects on this at one point in the story when she muses: “*Is there anything you can’t do?*” (Atagana 2010:94). Together the hero and heroine discover the deepest love and embark on a new life, living, as the fairy tale narrates, “happily ever after”. The reader identifies with the heroine and her knowledge of a guaranteed blissful ending feeds on her deepest desires that she, too, may one day be rescued from the arduousness and tedium of her real life. She is also comforted by the

belief that there is a hidden, uncontrollable magical direction, known as fate or destiny, which directs both the fictional heroines and her own future.

Janice Radway's book *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (1991) is central to my discussion of the romantic fantasy, since, like Radway, I locate myself within a feminist literary-critical paradigm. I will frequently draw on her theories; at this point, I wish to stress her identification of the happy ending as a crucial component of the romantic formula. She says that "without its happy ending, the romance could not hold out the utopian promise that male-female relations can be managed successfully" (Radway 1991:73). Radway's research is largely based on a group of romance-reading American women in Smithton in the 1970s, led by Dorothy Evans, an expert on the Smithton women's reading tastes. Evans, a maven on the romance genre, wrote influential book reviews and letters for book stores and editors, and many New York editors clamoured for her favourable reviews.

In analysing the answers to her key question: "What do romances do better than other novels today?" (Radway 1991:87), Radway noted that the Smithton women read for pleasure, relaxation and the often-repeated word "escape". For her, escapism could be seen on two levels. First, readers escaped from the present as they became totally immersed in the stories; and second, they found escape through identifying with the heroine although their lives were far removed from the heroine's world. Romance readers today might view the process of reading romance differently to the Smithton women, who largely saw it as a private

privilege away from their domestic responsibilities, or as a “special gift a woman gives herself” (Radway 1991:91). Yet contemporary readers, too, might view romance reading as an escape from different pressures. The Nollybook heroines and readers also want stories that distract them from their daily worries and they delight in the promise of a happy ending. There is a deeper interpretation of Fikile’s words in the very first chapter of *Unfashionably in Love* (Mutangadura 2010). After telling the hero that her mother abandoned her to chase after a man when she was six, she states “I’m determined to make sure my story has a happy ending” (Mutangadura 2010:17). This happy ending will not be restricted to her success, despite being motherless. It will ultimately be measured by her attaining the ideal man. The reader, similarly has such deep-rooted hopes. What is important is “the vicarious emotional nurturance” (Radway 1991:113) that the reader thrives on. Radway explains that, in identifying with the heroine, the reader imagines herself as the cherished heroine. This has a psychological function and elevates the reader’s self-esteem as:

this attention not only provides her with the sensations evoked by emotional nurturance and physical satisfaction, but, equally significantly, reinforces her sense of self because in offering his care and attention to the woman with whom she identifies, the hero implicitly regards that woman and, by implication, the reader, as worthy of his concern. The fictional character thus teaches both his narrative counterpart and the reader to recognise the value they doubted they possessed (Radway 1991:113).

It is obvious then, that the reader will hanker after this type of recognition. Although vicarious, she believes that she has been chosen as the recipient of the most idealised, coveted and prized emotion — the gift of true love.

The reader who picks up a Nollybook has certain expectations of the genre. “Sis Nolly”, in the introductory editorial that opens each Nollybook, presents a co-text that primes the reader’s expectations. The reader thus, through metonyms (a telling detail), is encouraged to bring certain attitudes and beliefs to the novel. Each Nollybook editorial contains a teaser in which the romantic formula is alluded to although it is not mentioned directly. In this way the editorials adumbrate and reinforce the message of the passive heroine’s magical transformation. Mostly the formulas resonate with those of the Harlequin romances. However, the Nollybooks differ in their city settings and the heroines’ financial independence. So the heroines of the Nollybooks are usually “young South African women entering work or at an early stage of a career” (Warnes 2014:162). It is also important to note that all four heroines in the Nollybooks under study meet their heroes in work-related contexts. This is as a result of an awareness that the Nollybook reader, unlike her mother or grandmother before her, possibly has great ambitions regarding her career. South African women are becoming noticeably more independent and self-determining in the post-apartheid era. Probably, the Nollybook reader is part of the fledgling democracy in South Africa, where the workplace might be a daunting landscape as she faces huge competition, whilst simultaneously familiarising herself with post-apartheid employment equity legislation. Warnes notes that the limited success of equity programmes might create difficulties and anxieties for Black women entering the workforce and, by inference, the readers. However, these readers are inspired by the strength and successes of their role models, namely the heroines. If Arizona can find success as an investigative journalist in *Finding Arizona*, Fikile can become a successful fashion designer in *Unfashionably in Love*, Cassandra can

establish her own successful bridal gown enterprise, and Thuli in *Lights, Camera, Love* can not only be a superb personal assistant to a Hollywood film director but can also spontaneously become an actress, then no job is beyond the reach of the Nollywood reader. Christopher Warnes says that this is important as “in this respect, the popular romance performs a different, quite specific empowerment function, articulating for its reader a clear vision of ideal working conditions” (Warnes 2014:166). So the fantasy, although centred on capturing the attentions of a most desirable hero and attaining everlasting love, delves much deeper. It also encapsulates the type of lives the heroines lead and this will frequently be expanded on in the study, especially in chapter three, where the television series *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, an adaptation of the Nollywoods, provides a rich visual representation of the Nollywood lifestyle.

Theoretical approach

In general, I have adopted a feminist literary-critical approach to the texts. However, feminist literary criticism is a vast field of scholarship and it is necessary to specify my approach more precisely. Like Radway’s discussion of the Smithton readers of romance in her book *Reading the Romance women, Patriarchy, and Popular Culture*, this study focuses on a particular group of Nollywood readers, namely young female Black South African romance readers. I am conscious of the fact that texts cannot be read apart from their contexts and that this is particularly true in post-apartheid South Africa. I also define my theoretical approach as “materialist-feminist” as identified by Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt who assert that “the social and economic circumstances in

which men and women live — are central to an understanding of culture and society” (Newton & Rosenfelt 1985: xi).

My analysis is cognisant of gender power imbalances and the stereotyping which is so often related to social and economic circumstances. I have embarked on a structuralist investigation of social phenomena, dissecting the plots, characters and language of the four Nollybook samples. I have drawn on numerous second and third wave gender theorists and have purposely selected samples of women-authored texts as many gender theorists such as Judith Fetterley and Elaine Showalter have suggested that women readers’ alienation from male-authored texts immediately creates estrangement for women.

The phenomenon

Christopher Warnes, in his article “Desired State Black Empowerment and the South African Popular Romance” (2014) notes the prolific rise of the South African romance between 2010 and 2011, as evidenced by the publications of both Sapphire Press and the Nollybooks, which, together, published twenty-seven romances. He added his voice to my view that something unique was happening and acknowledges that, although South Africans have always read romances, “these novels represent, in a striking way, a new departure in South African writing: the arrival in prose form of the mass-produced fantasy for black women” (Warnes 2014:154).

I soon discovered that, despite prevailing negative attitudes to the romance genre and chick lit from literary experts, there seems to be a significant demand for such literature and, in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, the Nollybooks have fulfilled this demand. The creators of the Nollybooks identified a viable market by defining the Nollybooks bookazines as “a series of easy-to-read, chic-lit romance fiction titles with South African storylines and characters that reflect the lives and aspirations of the people who will read them” (*Nollybooks* 2014). Certainly, the Communications Skills students fell into this category; but then, by inference, I wondered whether the Nollybooks had a broader appeal. I also wondered whether they would be a fleeting reading experience that would soon be forgotten or whether the students’ discovery of romantic fiction that resembled their own lives was indicative of something far deeper.

Astounded and delighted by my students’ responses, I asked myself various questions. What was it about the Nollybooks that appealed to these students? Why were my students, many of whom were studying with assistance from NSFAS (National Students Financial Aid Scheme), prepared to spend their scarce resources on these short, simple love stories? Could these cash-strapped students really relate to the stories and identify with the characters, who were mainly successful and financially independent? Did the texts’ formulaic recipes facilitate the reading process so that reading was no longer seen as a difficult task? Most importantly, why was there a definite shift in the students’ attitudes as they actively participated in reading for enjoyment? Before I deal with some of these questions, I would like to elaborate on the problem of aliteracy.

Aliteracy

The initial problem of aliteracy in my students, which provided the germ for this study, is currently of epic proportions in South Africa. On SABC's Morning Live on 1 September 2014, presenter Leanne Manas interviewed Siphiwe Mhala, Head of Books and Publishing in the Department of Arts and Culture, and Elitha Van der Sandt, CEO of the SA Book Development Council. They represent the partnership between government and the private sector to tackle the problem of little or no interest in reading in South Africa. As they were about to embark on South Africa's National Book week from 6-13 September 2014, Van der Sandt provided the startling figure that only 1% of South Africa's population buy books (Van der Sandt 2014). One of their initiatives to promote reading is through their mascot, Fundabala, who handed out free books on their road show throughout the country. Van Der Sandt commented that, in many rural areas, these free books might be the very first books that South Africans would own. The South African Council of Reading Development has various projects and one in particular, "Masifunde Sonke", has as its mission statement; "to engage the whole nation in a dynamic effort to build a sustainable culture of reading that affirms South African history, values and development" (sabookcouncil 2013) and one of its objectives is "To achieve a national consciousness of the value and benefits of reading" (sabookcouncil 2013).

The founder of MME Media, Moky Makura, echoed the viewpoint that South Africans do not read and it is to this aliterate population that she targets the Nollybooks. Referring to the success of the newspaper the *Daily Sun*, launched in 2002 and now South Africa's most read newspaper, Makura noted that this newspaper drew on the new market of aliterate readers: "Like *Daily Sun*, Nollybooks seeks to attract readers with a low price — R50 a book, between half and a third of the cost of a conventional novel and content that speaks to their lives" (Alexander 2011). She also drew on the Nollywood film industry as a business model, noting that the success of the Nigerian film industry was largely because it reflected local content. Not only were Nollybooks planned to convey South African stories, but their physical appearance, structuring and formatting were aimed at making reading more accessible to the aliterate population. The fact that the plots and characters follow certain romantic formulas, for example the story is told from the heroine's perspective and is adapted to a South African urban setting, makes the stories instantly recognisable. Like the international franchise, *Mills and Boon*, the reader is given a guarantee of romance. Makura hoped that readers would fall in love with the brand, Nollybooks. She stressed how she hoped that the brand would become familiar and recognisable amongst young Black women:

With Mills & Boon you don't need to remember any authors' names, you just need to remember the brand. Because we know our audience doesn't know about books what we're saying is all you have to remember is one name and that's Nollybooks. We want to build a trusted brand and want our readers to know each

time they buy one of our books, they'll be entertained regardless of who the author is. (De Waal 2011)

This version of popular literature as residing in a brand name is a far cry from the idea of 'high' culture with individual literary artists creating their own masterpieces. In the microcosm of my classroom, I saw this occur as the Nollybooks became a recognised and sought-after brand.

In view of the fact that many readers do not own or use dictionaries, the Nollybooks include a glossary of complex words used in each bookazine. Makura not only campaigns about the benefits of reading but, instead of preaching, employs her alter ego, "Sis Nolly", the hypothetical editor of the Nollybooks (but also the brand's custodian) as a messenger confronting aliteracy. "Sis Nolly" quotes Chris Rock, the American comedian: "if you want to hide something from a black person, put it in a book'. Let's prove him wrong and let's get reading sistas" (Alexander 2011). "Sis Nolly", a 36-year-old from Soweto, describes herself as "an incurable romantic" who loves "the idea of being in love" (*Nollybooks* 2014). She encourages an interactive relationship with her readers and invites them to email her with their comments about the Nollybooks. But she goes further as she befriends the reader by inviting her to divulge personal information regarding her own romances. "Sis Nolly" herself tells her readers that she is seeing a "very special man" (*Nollybooks* 2014) who makes her very happy. Besides writing on her website, "email me with any comments you might have on Nollybooks", she also writes, "most of all I want to hear about your most romantic moments. How did you meet your man? What have you done for him

lately? What has he done for you — romantically speaking of course! All of this could end up in one of our books!”(*Nollybooks* 2014). Flattered by such comments, the reader regards the Nollybooks not only as a source of pleasure and entertainment, but also as a forum where she may share her own romantic journey which, incredibly, might be captured for other readers to marvel at. It is most likely then, that she would agree to “Sis Nolly”’s request to befriend her on Facebook and follow her on Twitter and, without realising it, the previously aliterate reader could become fully engaged in the Nollybook phenomenon.

History of the romance

It is important to situate the Nollybooks in the historical context of their genre. The popularity of the romance novel is well known. The widespread popularity of romance novels is evident in the prolific output of Harlequin, a company based in Toronto Canada. In 1971, Harlequin purchased Mills and Boon and became the largest global publisher and distributor of romantic fiction. In 1972, Harlequin introduced the category ‘romance novel’. By the late 1970s Harlequins were bestsellers and, by 1989, series romances accounted for 60% of American mass market sales (Bereska 1994: 36). Harlequin publishes romances in 20 languages in 100 countries. The Nollybooks followed Harlequin’s lead by marketing their titles initially in supermarkets and other retail stores. Harlequin’s massive popularity attests to the enduring appeal of the romantic formula.

Because of the success of the romance novel, publishing houses targeted teenagers or the young adult population as a serious market in the 1980s. Scholastic was the first publisher to address this market with the new series, “Wildfire”, and other publishing houses followed suit, so that “by the mid-1980s, there were approximately 12 teen series romance lines available” (Bereska 1994: 36). In South Africa, the emergence of teen series romance literature can be seen in the Nollybooks, published by MME media, and Sapphire, published by Kwela.

In her article, “Adolescent Sexuality and the Changing Romance market”, Bereska argues that, after the initial success, there was in fact a decline in the consumption of teen romances by the end of the 1980s. She says “although the sales for adolescent series romances had initially been staggering, by the end of the 1980s very few of the twelve lines present in the mid-1980s were still in print” (Bereska 1994: 37). Her study investigates why many teen series are now out of print after experiencing huge popularity. Her content analysis shows that the decline in popularity of teen romance books was a result of content with diminished sexuality or with content as “sexuality absent” (Bereska 1994: 39) or “consciously denied” (Bereska 1994: 39). In the failed or unpopular teen romances, kissing was the most explicit sexual behaviour and, when did occur, it was rare and lacking in detail. Readers preferred the more detailed and explicit sexual content in the *Sweet Valley High* series and adult series romances.

Bereska understands this shift to be the result of two phenomena. First, she attributes it to a change in the young women readers, who lived in a changing

sexual world where adolescent girls were becoming more sexually active and sexually educated. This could be a result of the increased visibility of sex and sexuality in the mass media as well as the widespread awareness of AIDS. Secondly, the increased divorce rate resulted in adolescent girls with divorced mothers becoming more sexually aware. Bereska discusses many possible reasons for this but the main point is, sexuality became a more openly discussed issue amongst adolescents from divorced homes as they became more concerned with their own future relationships and the sex-love connection. The significance of these factors to this study, which attempts to identify reading tastes, is that, as Bereska says, “denying sexuality in adolescent series romance novels was denying adolescent reality” (Bereska 1994: 42). She further elaborates: “As issues of sexuality were reality for adolescent girls in the 1980s, their absence in the series romances made identification with the various heroines difficult for adolescent readers” (Bereska 1994: 42). This would mean that adolescent girls could not identify with the earlier unsexualised heroines.

Surprisingly, the Nollybooks do not contain any descriptions of sex, and chapter four will elaborate on this deliberate decision taken by the publishers. It is debatable whether this decision has in fact diminished the Nollybook phenomenon. Certainly if the Nollybooks are reflective of popular culture, this aspect ignores a major component. According to Bereska’s explanation of the decline in popularity of certain romances, one could argue that the Nollybook phenomenon will be short-lived. This could be open to further study, perhaps a quantitative study or survey of contemporary South African adolescent girls to

gauge whether the Nollybooks' sexual portrayals are accurate and satisfying to the reader or not. It could focus on why their adaptation into a television series for e-TV, *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, which ran for two seasons was deemed more profitable than expanding the Nollybooks range. At this point in 2014, the publication of further Nollybooks has been put on hold, but twelve titles are currently available, both in hard copy or electronic format.

Promotion of the romance genre

Although this study began with a classroom experiment, I see no reason why the Nollybooks should not be widely disseminated and also be included in contemporary libraries. I propose that school and university libraries increase their purchasing of South African romantic fiction and, in particular, the Nollybooks. Despite the distaste for the romance novel amongst many academics, it is clear that the romance novel is here to stay and the Nollybooks, as a product of post-apartheid romance fiction, have a definite appeal to the born-free generation. Warnes comments that, although Sapphire and Nollybooks have a "superficial engagement" with history and politics, "on closer inspection they reveal themselves to be products of their place and time, implicated by their nature in complex relationships with discourses of gender, race, change, and power" (Warnes 2014:155). If this is true, then the Nollybooks are small slices of South African contemporary life and Warnes's assertion further vindicates my research, which largely investigates gender and power relationships.

Vassiliki Veros's article (2012), "The Romance reader and the public library" proposes a strong case for the inclusion of the romantic novel in public libraries. She speaks of romance authors and readers as being "Routinely marginalized, in spite of their significant role in contemporary popular culture" (Veros 2012:298), and laments the lack of this genre in Australian libraries. She reflects on the patronising comment made by Rudolph Bold as late as 1980 in *The Library Journal*: "I do not urge dropping any of our literary standards, but do urge that librarians realize that for many in our community those standards are idealistic and practically unattainable. Let us practice a humanistic tolerance and allow our philosophy of literary esthetics to broaden and include in our public those of 'lower' taste as well as those intellectual wastrels who prefer lazing in the backwaters of low quality literature'" (Veros 2012, 299). Despite the fact that sales figures prove that romance fiction is the most popular genre, the stigma associated with romance reading has produced condescending responses such as the one above. Ironically, there is an Australian Romance Readers' Association consisting of a passionate group of romance reader members, yet the romance novel has not been searchable in library catalogues. In 1995, the Romance writers of America gave the Veritas Award, an award that affirms the positive side of romance writing, to Shelley Mosley, John Charles and Julie Havir for their article "The librarian as effete snob: Why Romance?" These writers boldly asserted "the bottom line is, even if you don't like romances, you have a professional obligation to defend the rights of others to read them" (Veros 2012:300). Veros notes that Australian libraries are moving to enlarge romance collections but browsing catalogues are still problematic. When it comes to ebook technologies, the romance novel has been extremely successful, with publishers like Harlequin,

Mills and Boon, Carina Press and Samhein offering digital publishing. The RITA Award for 2012 for best contemporary single title was awarded to Fiona Lowe's *The Boomerang Bride*, a digital imprint (Veros 2012:303).

Not only has social media promoted the spread of the genre, but popular face-to-face encounters have also been valuable in marketing. "Focus on Romance", a 2011 article in *Publishers Weekly* in America listed many romance writers, conferences and conventions where authors, publishers, editors and readers could network, such as the Romantic Times' Booklovers Convention and the RomCon. The annual Romance Writers of America Conference (RWA) is usually sold out and is attended by thousands in the industry. There are advisory panels, marketing teams, editors and book signings, and publicity is aimed more at writers than readers. It is the highlight of many publishers' calendars and has been referred to as "the Oscars of romance" (Brusso 2011). This conference includes awards such as the Rita Award, which recognises outstanding romance novels, and the Golden Heart Award, which is given to unpublished manuscripts. There are also many, smaller regional conferences across America which many prefer, as it is at these that connections between authors and readers are made. Radway mentions the *Romance Report* of December 1981, a newsletter of the Romance Writers of America, which had an article with the headline "Romance Survey—Finally! A Survey in our favour" (Radway 1991: 219). This showed radically changed female perceptions about the genre. Importantly, the message was that, although romances traditionally depicted traditional sexist gender stereotypes, feminist messages are now being conveyed and welcomed.

In South Africa, whilst there is less publicity regarding the romance novel compared to America and Australia, the Franschhoek Literary Festival in 2011 and Cape Book Fair in 2012 punted the Nollybooks to an audience who were probably unaware of their existence. As publishers are always in search of a new profitable lines and the romantic novel is still in its infancy in post-apartheid South Africa, I predict many new offerings in the future. When I began my study in 2010, there were four Nollybooks in print; today as I write, the bookshop on the Nollybook website is selling twelve Nollybook romances at R69.99 each and www.kalahari.com is selling electronic Nollybooks at a cost of R40 each. E-TV has screened two seasons of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, with the first totally based on the Nollybooks and the second partially based on the Nollybooks. Having set the background for my study, I will now outline the structure of my argument in more detail.

Structure of the dissertation

Since my approach is largely gender-based, each chapter relates my discussion to gender roles in the Nollybooks. Each chapter deals with a different theme — plot, characters, television transmission and language — related to the four texts, namely *Finding Arizona* written by Michelle Atagana, *Lights, Camera, Love* by Bronwyn Desjardins, *Unfashionably in Love* by Sabina Mutangadura and *Looking for Mr Right* by Cheryl Ntuny.

In chapter one, I discuss how the plots of the Nollybooks conform to traditional formulas of the romantic narrative. I identify and apply Radway's typical romance narrative structures in the Nollybook samples. I refer to the conventions of the romantic formula and comment on how the Nollybooks conform to these. I draw on a variety of theorists in this chapter, including Dugger, Fetterley, Narunsky-Laden and Rabine. Ruthven is helpful in unpacking the fairy-tale myth that is so central to the romantic fantasy. Carolyn Heilbrun's theories provide deeper insight into the psychology of traditional gender roles. These lead on to my discussion of characterisation in the Nollybooks in the following chapter.

In chapter two, I elaborate on the discussion on the Nollybooks' formulaic core by analysing the Nollybook characters with reference to the theories expounded by Hubbard, Vivanco and Juhasz. My discussion will focus on the development and transformation of the characters of heroes and heroines concurrent with the unfolding of the plot. I will debate whether there is real progress in conveying more enlightened gender portrayals as the characters evolve. Bereska's argument regarding the lack of sexual content in the Nollybooks will be expounded upon. I will observe the tension in forming conclusions about the character transformations since they vacillate between traditional stereotypes and modern unconventional versions. Paradoxically whilst traditional stereotypes are questioned to a certain extent, they are also reaffirmed. This is also apparent in the film versions which are discussed in Chapter three.

Chapter three continues the formulaic thread but diversifies in that I examine the transference of the Nollybook formula into the e-TV series *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. The adaptation of the Nollybooks for the screen as indicative of popular culture is worthy of investigation and analysis. In her article, “Visual methodologies through a feminist lens: South African soap operas and the post-apartheid nation” (2008), Sarah Ives emphasises the importance of visual discourses. She says “the visual can reveal meanings at times hidden from language” and that “in South Africa, the majority of people use visual media, and television in particular, over most other media forms” (Ives 2008:246). Certainly, if television reaches most of our population, many of whom are illiterate, it is important then not to disregard the fact that the Nollybooks have been adapted not once, but twice, for television audiences and aired on e-TV. As further discussion of the Nollybook phenomenon, I shall also examine certain e-TV programmes from *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. These are: *Game on*, *PhD* and *Label it Love*. The creator of Nollybooks, Moky Makura, who, together with Fireworx Media, produced the series, emphasised her belief in the success and popularity of the romantic genre in an interview with *City Press* on 13 July 2012. She summarises the main formulaic concept by saying: “We all know the line, ‘I’m just a girl standing in front of a boy, asking him to love her’ from Notting Hill. That’s what these movies are about” (*Book Review-Nollybooks Romance* 2011). As I write this study, a third series has been released in June 2014. This series has been modified from its predecessors and is not based on Nollybooks. It is now called *Mzansi Love: Big City Love* and produced by Red Pepper pictures. It consists of eight serialised episodes, all set in an advertising agency in Johannesburg. It stars local celebrities Khanyi Mbau and Phumi Mncayi.

Although not in its original format, its high viewer ratings attest to the popularity of the genre.

Samples from two seasons are analysed; the first was aired in 2012 and the second in 2013/2014. Comparisons are made between the Nollybook texts and the television adaptations, but the unifying fact remains that the romantic fantasy underpins both mediums. Since Moky Makura described the Nollybooks as “almost having a soap opera in your hand” (Mabuse & Wither 2011), I also examine the Nollybooks in relation to South Africa’s most popular soap opera, *Generations*. The film versions draw on South Africa’s linguistic diversity and multicultural audience and set the scene for my discussion of language in the final chapter.

The final chapter, chapter four, examines the language and physical presentation of the Nollybooks. My main point here is that the simplified structures of the style facilitate easy reading which is an important factor in contributing to the Nollybooks’ popularity. Code-switching is identified and applied to both the Nollybook texts and *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. This is important in understanding that the Nollybooks are a reflection of a multilingual society in the New South Africa. I delve into the language which reflects a hybrid culture and a multiplicity of identities. This develops the argument that the Nollybooks are a vindication of popular culture. This chapter also considers the limited representations of sex in the Nollybooks and relates this to unrealistic and archaic gender portrayals. Finally, this chapter considers the gendered nature of language, using specific

examples from the Nollybooks by referring to the theories of Lakoff, Cameron and Showalter.

Defending enlightened gender stereotypes and rewriting the romantic formula

The overall finding of my research is that the Nollybooks promulgate a conservative gender ideology, despite superficially embracing women's empowerment and agency. Many critics have explored the ambivalence of the romantic genre in relation to gender equality. Deborah Cameron's book, *The Myth of Mars and Venus*, is scathing in attacking the glut of popular books that perpetuate gender myths. She suggests that instead of these books, which have enjoyed a "warm reception from the educated western middle classes" (2007:172), more realistic titles would be, for example, *There's no great mystery about the opposite sex* and *We understand each other well enough most of the time* (2007:164). Her point is that we must stop perpetuating stereotypes and that "the sharp differentiation of the sexes which was once all-pervasive in society has weakened significantly. In their aspirations, their opportunities, their lifestyles, and their outlooks on life, educated men and women are more similar than different" (Cameron 2007:172). If this is so, then the "happily ever after" endings of the Nollybooks may still be a possibility albeit with plot, character and linguistic modifications.

Christopher Warnes' article, "Desired State Black Empowerment and the South African Popular Romance" (2014), identifies the Nollybooks' heroines as unusual in that they are all independent, twenty-first century, urban working women. His point is that the Nollybook heroines are financially independent women and this immediately sets them apart from traditional romantic heroines. Warnes says that "reader identification with these heroines and the successful outcomes of conflict over gender roles affirms on a micro level what the constitution of the country and employment equity legislation endorse on a macro level, namely gender equality" (Warnes 2014:164). Arizona is free to travel across the globe, Cassandra is satisfied that she can manage without a wedding ring, Fikile states that she wants to pursue her relationship with Joe "one step at a time" (Mutangadura 2010:147) and Jake needs Thuli as much as, if not more than, Thuli needs him.

But Warnes and Radway both make the point that the romance is based on a contradiction. Whilst they raise pertinent, topical issues, such as questions about stereotypical gender roles and post-apartheid working conditions for Black women in South Africa, these concerns are never developed in the narratives, as the texts focus on the "happily ever after" endings. Warnes succinctly expresses the bookazines' failure to make any substantial comment on socio-political factors by stating, "because the romance narrative is structured so obsessively around the redemptive qualities of romantic love and because each text must end on a note of happy heterosexual union, these mass produced fantasies always evacuate any of the doubts or ethical concerns raised in the course of the narrative" (Warnes 2014:169). If this is so, then topical issues as well as progressive gender

portrayals are stunted in the Nollybooks. Whilst I have acknowledged the success and popularity of formulaic romances, I also believe that the Nollybooks could do better. Inspired by Roald Dahl and Ella Westland, I believe that the urbanised, worldly Nollybook reader of 2014 would welcome turning traditional gender myths on their heads and would be open to alternative narratives, providing a different version of the submissive, passive princess waiting to be rescued by the handsome prince so she could marry and live happily ever after.

In 1982 Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes*, a parody of traditional fairy tales was published. Cinderella was rewritten in a humorous, poetic register:

I guess you think you know this story.
You don't. The real one's much more gory.
The phoney one, the one you know,
Was cooked up years and years ago,
And made to sound all soft and sappy
Just to keep the children happy

Like the traditional heroine, Cinderella dresses up for the ball as a ploy to capture the prince's attentions. As Dahl writes:

Done up like that I'll guarantee
The handsome Prince will fall for me!

So the esteemed prince is ensnared by Cinderella's beauty and is rendered speechless:

The Prince himself was turned to pulp,
All *he* could do was gasp and gulp.

But the plot changes as a stepsister plants her own slipper in place of the iconic shoe that was left behind. She insists that since the shoe fits her foot, the prince must marry her, so he chops off her head and then does the same to the second stepsister. Cinderella, upon witnessing such violence, is appalled and decides that she couldn't possibly marry such a violent man. The fairy tale is completely destroyed with the realisation that there will be no "happily ever after" ending. The prince then refers to Cinderella as a "dirty slut" and wishes to decapitate her as well. So Cinderella reaches the realisation that wealthy princes are a bad choice and she asks her fairy godmother for a simple man who will supply a much better "happily ever after" ending:

Oh kind Fairy.
 This time I shall be more wary.
 No more princes, no more money.
 I have had my taste of honey.
 I'm wishing for a decent man.
 They're hard to find: Do you think you can?
 Within a minute Cinderella
 Was married to a lovely feller,
 A simple jam-maker by trade,
 Who sold good home-made marmalade.
 Their house was filled with smiles and laughter
 And they were happy ever after.

This book has had widespread popularity despite rewriting the traditional fairy tale and has amused both children and adults who enjoy the alternative version. However, on 28 August 2014, Aldi, an Australian supermarket chain withdrew *Revolting Rhymes* from its shelves as a response to customers' protests about selling children's literature with the word "slut" in the text. This prompted a barrage of online social media attacks on Aldi, with 92% of respondents voting against Aldi's decision. The poll entitled "Did Aldi do the right thing when it pulled *Revolting Rhymes*?" had 21 843 respondents (Howden 2014). This episode demonstrated the huge popularity of *Revolting Rhymes*, despite the complete distortion of the original stories.

Ella Westland's study, "Cinderella in the Classroom. Children's Responses to Gender Roles in Fairy Tales" (1993) shows that children do not merely absorb the traditional fairytale myths that they are force-fed. Interestingly enough, she alludes to them as resisting readers and, through research based on 100 children aged nine to 11, she notes that girls' pictures and stories surprisingly "favoured 'upside-down' fairy tale scenarios that gave their heroines independence" (Westland 1993:237). She cites the tale of "The Practical Princess" who, when imprisoned in a tower proactively makes her own plan: "'Now then, pull yourself together,' she said sternly. 'If you sit waiting for a prince to rescue you, you may sit here forever. Be practical! If there's any rescuing to be done, you're going to have to do it yourself'" (Westland 1993:238). Her research findings are extraordinary in that many girls showed a preference for strong minded princesses whilst many boys were more satisfied with the traditional portrayal of the heroic, protector prince. Hence, she declares in her conclusions: "On this evidence, we should be worrying about the effect of fairy-tale stereotypes not upon our daughters but upon our sons" (Westland 1993:245). So, she advises not to withhold traditional fairy tales from children, but to encourage discussion on alternative gender images.

The Nollybooks may also inspire questions amongst readers about alternative gender roles. Such questions could include: "How would people perceive plot or character changes? What if Kagiso and not Cassandra had a marriage obsession in *Looking for Mr Right*? What if Thuli in *Lights, Camera, Love* was true to her

inner voice and refused to be the forced replacement actress in Jake's film? What if the heroes in *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* were not attractive, rich Black males and favoured simple cars over fancy sports cars? What if the brands they selected were not Gucci, Lacoste, Rolex and Calvin Klein, as mentioned in chapter two, but instead they were decked out in clothes sold by low end retailers such as *Mr Price* and *Pep* stores? And suppose that the heroines were hairy, toothless or obese? What if the female heroines were not the perfect portrayals of female beauty as prescribed by the various experts who write handbooks on writing romance as discussed in chapter two? What if Cassandra, Fikile, Shezi and Thuli were more expressive about their sexual needs? The hypothetical questions are endless, but necessary for a thorough investigation of contemporary gender norms.

In her book, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, Judith Fetterley acknowledges that readers and critics cannot obviously rewrite great literary works such as Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, but the reader can become a "resisting reader rather than an assenting reader" (Fetterley 1978: xxii) and relook at texts from a fresh, female perspective. In this way Fetterley believes that the reader may "begin the process of exorcizing the male mind that has been implanted in us" (Fetterley, 1978: xxii). Like *Cinder Edna* by Jackson and O'Malley (1994), in which a different Cinderella worked hard to pay off the lay-by for her dress for the ball, the Nollybooks' heroines and heroes might also be revised. In chapter four, I make the point that the Nollybook website actively recruits Nollybook writers. Although this process has presently been put on hold as MME media turns its focus to television production, I would like to write a

new type of Nollybook with different gender portrayals. As part of a future study, I would be most interested in readers' reception of Nollybooks that feature stronger, more sexualised heroines. Returning to my original classroom experiment, I propose to take my research further by conducting quantitative research on university students' reception of the Nollybooks, with a particular interest in the shortcomings of these bookazines.

Juliana Claassens understands the necessity of relooking at stereotypical portrayals of female heroines. In her article entitled "To tell or not to tell: Feminist Fairytales?" (Claassens 2014), she is appalled to discover a bible for girls, called the "Princess Bible", which depicts female biblical characters as Disney princesses. She explains: "Bound in pink, this Bible sets out to teach little girls what it means to be a princess 'G-d's princess'" (Claassens 2014). Claassens is quite certain that she won't be reading this bible to her daughter, but she does acknowledge the importance of the magical world of fantasy, so will read the classical fairy tales to her daughter. However, she will also embrace newer versions. She clearly explains her wish for her daughter to be a thinking fairy tale listener when she says: "I also hope to tell her some of the fruits of the feminist revisionings of these stories, which by means of creative engagement with the classic stories, imagine the female lead characters to be strong, assertive, accomplished, talented and not obsessed with beauty or outer appearance" (Claassens 2014). So Claassens challenges her "feminist friends to write some as well" (2014). I would like to answer this challenge in writing my own Nollybook in the future with heroines that are more representative of female students in South Africa in the twenty-first century.

Christopher Warnes surmises that the Nollybook reader might provide “elements of recognizability and reassurance” (2014:164), but also makes the point that ethnographic studies of “readers’ responses to these romances is urgently needed” (Warnes 2014:164). I sincerely believe that this study will be one such response and hopefully it will be carried further. At the time of writing, the online bookshop selling Nollybooks remained tremendously popular. On 6 October 2014, I recorded the exact number of “hits” on the 2014 Nollybook website which is indicative of reader interest in the Nollybooks. *Finding Arizona* had 6158 hits, *Unfashionably in Love* had 3548 hits, *Looking for Mr Right* had 2666 hits and *Lights, Camera, Love* had 5807 hits. The most popular Nollybook is a newer Nollybook entitled *The Perfect Holiday Romance* with 13 470 hits. I also note that in June 2014, a new series called *Mzansi Love: Big City Love* was aired on television. This third series is not based on the Nollybooks and is radically changed from the first two series. Whilst the earlier Nollybook adaptations were short stand-alone stories, this series is an ongoing drama with the narrative centred on an advertising agency, but the roots of this drama remain based on the discussion in this study. Unquestionably popular culture demands local romance, both in the written and televised forms.

Chapter 1: Plots

“This is the story of a girl...”

(lyrics from *Absolutely (Story of a girl)* by Nine Days)

The first chapter of my dissertation will investigate the plots of four Nollybooks, namely: *Finding Arizona*, *Looking for Mr Right*, *Unfashionably in Love* and *Lights, Camera, Love*. I will argue that, to a large extent, the plots reflect commonalities, leading me to conclude that the books follow a formula for plot development, and I infer that formulaic writing creates satisfaction in Nollybook readers. However, I will also highlight that these bookazines are examples of innovative South African romantic popular literature in that they reflect a particular historical and cultural context. In my analysis of Nollybook plot structures, I will draw mainly on Janice Radway’s theories, outlined in her pioneering work *Reading the Romance* (1981). Other theorists whose work will be explored are Carolyn Heilbrun (1988), Julie M Dugger (2014), Judith Fetterley (1978), Sonja Narunsky-Laden (2010), Leslie W. Rabine (1985) and K.K. Ruthven (1984).

It may be argued that the Nollybook plots are not very profound as they barely allude to the most pressing current issues facing black South Africans and women in particular, such as rampant unemployment and HIV/AIDS, and that their focus is exclusively on love relationships. However, I believe that the Nollybooks, as

topical and original publications, are worthy of study and reflective of popular culture.

Furthermore, in promoting reading amongst receptive readers, I acknowledge that there is a dire shortage of English South African romantic literature as many romantic novels are written in Afrikaans. Sapphire Press, appreciating the gap in the South African market, under the Kwela Publishing label, launched a range of romantic short novels with similar plot structures to Nollybooks in 2010. These texts feature titles such as *Mr not Quite Good Enough*, *Dance of the Heart* and *Second Time Lucky*. They all display a beautiful semi-clad, black heterosexual couple, deliriously in love, on their covers. Unlike the Nollybooks, the Sapphire books do contain sexual content, but this is presented with an emphasis on safe sex. Both the Nollybooks and Sapphire romances have proved to be extremely popular and are being marketed in West and East Africa. Both series featured at the Franschhoek Literary Festival in 2011 (*New Generation events at 2011 FLF 2011*) and the Cape Book Fair in 2012 as examples of new popular, local romantic fiction (Reid 2012). The Nollybooks also featured at the Jozi Book Fair in 2012 (Sidley 2012). With this in mind, it is necessary to unpack why there is such a wide popular reception of the romantic genre in the South African context.

The content of the Nollybooks is largely formulaic. In its search for aspiring writers, the Nollybooks website includes a brief for the requirements and structure of the bookazines; such stories should be “love stories featuring contemporary heroines that reflect our own lives, but give us an escapist storyline” (Nollybooks 2014). This supports Radway’s (1991: 29) theory that

category or formulaic literature possesses a “standard reliance on a recipe that dictates the essential ingredients to be included in each new version of the form”. It is evident that all four of the Nollybooks examined in this dissertation possess these “essential ingredients”. They are all directed at a specific audience, namely young black South African women aged between 16 and 24 years old. Radway aptly refers to this deliberate publishing decision as a means of having “a consistent appeal to a regular audience” (1991: 29). Each bookazine consists of fewer than 100 pages in a large font, making for a quick read which, according to Radway (1991: 59), is necessary as readers are impatient to see plots resolved. Plots revolve around a hero and heroine who fall in love, despite the challenges they encounter which keep them apart during the narrative, but, ultimately, each narrative has a happy ending, which is crucial to the positive reception of each bookazine.

Radway’s thirteen-point structure

Each of the Nollybooks is constructed around a similar idea. Each story follows the extraordinary challenges of a young, black, struggling heroine in attaining a romantic relationship with a young, desirable black hero. The attainment of her success and happiness is seen on the final page of each novel when she manages to capture and secure the hero’s heart. The plots, according to Radway, have three clear-cut divisions. They begin with an initial situation, a transformation of that situation and an intermediary intervention that explains the change. Besides these three parts, which will be analysed in my four samples, Radway identifies thirteen narrative points, which she terms “the narrative logic of the romance”

(1991: 150). She acknowledges that there are differences in the genre and that plots may not include all thirteen points. All plots do, however, function as “a utopian wish fulfillment fantasy through which women try to imagine themselves as they often are not in day-to-day existence, that is, as happy and content” (Radway, 1991:151).

Although the Nollybooks do not each contain all of Radway’s thirteen points, all of them contain some of them. It is helpful to list all of Radway’s narrative points before extracting those which are apposite to my study. The thirteen narrative points are:

1. The heroine’s social identity is thrown into question.
2. The heroine reacts antagonistically to an aristocratic male.
3. The aristocratic male responds ambiguously to the heroine.
4. The heroine interprets the hero’s behavior as evidence of a purely sexual interest in her.
5. The heroine responds to the hero’s behavior with anger or coldness.
6. The hero retaliates by punishing the heroine.
7. The heroine and hero are physically and/or emotionally separated.
8. The hero treats the heroine tenderly.
9. The heroine responds warmly to the hero’s act of tenderness.
10. The heroine reinterprets the hero’s ambiguous behavior as the product of previous hurt.
11. The hero proposes/openly declares his love for/demonstrates his unwavering commitment to the heroine with a supreme act of tenderness.
12. The heroine responds sexually and emotionally to the hero.
13. The heroine’s identity is restored (Radway 1991: 150).

All four of the Nollybooks under scrutiny exhibit all these points except for numbers 4 and 12. The books conform to point 12 in terms of an emotional response which is not explicitly sexual. It is important to comment on the hero’s transformation from the early parts of the narrative to later on in the narrative. We know that the heroines are all fairly constant in their pursuit of love, but the

heroes are often rude, dismissive, indifferent and intransigent. The obvious question then is what happens from point three, where the hero is ambiguous, to point six, where he punishes the heroine, and again to point eleven when he openly declares his love? Radway points out that the hero does not undergo a metamorphosis or a complete personality change, but it appears this way because the heroine makes sense of his earlier behaviour. She discovers that the hero does in fact possess a hidden tenderness. So the reader is similarly “encouraged to latch on to whatever expressions of thoughtfulness he might display, no matter how few, and to consider them, rather than his more obvious and frequent disinterest, as evidence of his true character” (Radway 1991:148).

My analysis has found that the plots of the Nollybooks contain several, but not all, of the above-mentioned narrative elements. The bulk of my chapter will focus on an exploration of the 13 elements in order to find out whether they are present in the chosen texts. If the Nollybooks exhibit many or most of the 13 elements, I will consider that there are grounds for classifying them as formulaic fiction. Of significance to the formula, is the hero and heroine’s overcoming of obstacles as readers do not want a sudden about turn in the last few pages of the narrative. Instead, along with the heroine, the reader will undergo a journey where she will eventually understand that the trials and tribulations were a necessary part of the process of attaining unequivocal love.

In *Finding Arizona*, Shezi, a hard-working university student, suffers emotional turmoil before deciding to follow her beloved Jason, a sought-after investment expert, to America. In *Looking for Mr Right*, Cassandra, a seamstress, endures humiliation and mortification before finding her long-sought-after perfect match, Kagiso, who happens to be a successful and sensitive veterinarian. The book polarizes male characters between the superficial “bad boys” (Cassandra’s online dates) and the “good boy” whose worth resides in his integrity and capacity for care. Similarly, in *Unfashionably in Love*, the heroine, Fikile, a financially insecure fashion student, also endures humiliation and mortification before Joe Silongo, the successful owner of a fashion house, accepts her as ‘his woman’. Luke Modise, the egotistical “bad boy” is contrasted with Joe Silongo in that he competes with Joe the “good boy”. *Lights, Camera, Love* is no different as Thuli is an insignificant receptionist who is grateful to have a job. She, too, is able to capture the heart of a powerful individual, the Hollywood film director, Jake Mkhize. Before this happens, however, she has to experience embarrassment and humiliation. The heroine’s suffering will make her journey worthwhile and pales in comparison compared to her ultimate reward of attaining the hero’s unwavering love. Radway makes it clear that the romance is not merely a narrative about a courtship, but, rather, the reader needs to identify with the heroine, as the object of the love story. In her interviews with readers of romance, Radway reports that:

all of the women I spoke to regardless of their taste in narratives, admitted that they want to identify with the heroine as she attempts to comprehend, anticipate, and deal with the ambiguous attentions of a man who inevitably cannot understand her feelings at all. The point of the experience is the sense of exquisite tension, anticipation, and excitement created within the reader as she imagines the possible resolutions and consequences for a woman

of an encounter with a member of the opposite sex and then observes that once again the heroine in question has avoided the ever-present potential for disaster because the hero has fallen helplessly in love with her (Radway, 1991:64-65).

The Cinderella myth

My introductory chapter analysed the power of the Cinderella myth, and I will now further explore its validity for the selected texts. All four writers of the bookazines place the “Cinderella” fairy tale plot at the core of their stories. They understand that the readers of these novels will identify not only with the heroines, but also with the romantic dream of being rescued from life’s hardships by a desirable ‘handsome prince’. Janice Radway explains it perfectly: “These women [the readers of romantic novels] are telling themselves a story whose central vision is one of total surrender where all danger has been expunged, thus permitting the heroine to relinquish self-control. Passivity is at the heart of the romance experience in the sense that the final goal of each narrative is the creation of that perfect union where the ideal male, who is masculine and strong yet nurturant too, finally recognizes the intrinsic worth of the heroine” (Radway 1991: 97). In contrast, I note that the Nollybooks’ heroines are not totally weak and passive, but are portrayed as exercising a degree of agency.

Arizona (referred to as “Shezi” in the text) is a feisty, independent university student who prides herself on her investigative journalism. She is certainly an

achiever, obtaining 88% for her Masters' degree. Nevertheless, Jason Khoza is the necessary vehicle through which she evolves and realises her ultimate dream of travelling to America. When Jason gives her a letter which is a plea for forgiveness and a declaration of his love, she makes the decision to defer her studies and to go travelling overseas. As she leaves, her friend Lu makes a cryptic comment: "And just make sure you make the most of any second chances" (Atagana 2010: 153). Shezi is surprised to meet Jason on the plane and to discover that they are going to be on the same flight to America later that night. He kisses her as they embark on a future together. The conclusion is that she eventually makes her way to Arizona with her beloved. This is a most satisfying ending for the reader of this romance who soon forgets Shezi's tribulations. Without overtly stating the obvious, the message is that Shezi was unable to attain her dream without Jason's contribution.

Similarly, Cassandra Sithole in *Looking for Mr Right* is a talented, thoughtful woman. Despite her thriving fashion business, it is necessary for her to undergo many challenges before she can find completion in her relationship with Kagiso. After attending her cousin Sindiswa's wedding, Cassandra decides to write Kagiso a letter of apology for her deceptions related to her secret marriage obsession. As in the bookazine discussed above (and in the time-honored tradition of epistolary romances dating back to Jane Austen), a letter is used to clarify any misunderstanding. She tells him that she is apologising, not for him to take her back, but "I'm writing it because I want you to understand, now that I finally understand myself. I don't need a wedding'" (Ntuny 2010: 145). She also burns

her beloved marriage manual, the core of her marriage obsession. The story ends with Kagiso coming to tell her that he has missed her and that he would like to start over. This is another example of a perfect ending, which the typical Nollybook reader will not only enjoy but also vicariously desire, especially if it is applied to her own absent or challenging romantic relationship.

Fikile Mathebula in *Unfashionably in Love* is definitely an independent woman. She questions why she received a prestigious fashion internship and the hero, Joe Silongo, the CEO of Cocoa Rouge, assures her “The Cocoa Rouge internship was awarded to the top student. It just happened to be you” (Mutangadura 2010:70). In addition, she is morally strong and instrumental in putting a stop to Professor Kaleni’s lecherous behaviour. She convinces her terrified friend, Khumo, that this behaviour is intolerable: ““we’ve got to confront him, Khumo. If we don’t, he’ll do this to some other poor girl in the future”” (Mutangadura 2010:113). This comment indicates that Fikile could be a nascent feminist. As a woman, she will not tolerate sexual blackmail and has no qualms about confronting the intimidating, powerful Kaleni. However, this conclusion is proved wrong later in the text as she forgives Joe in an instant for unjustifiably firing her. Despite her otherwise proactive, courageous personality, she is totally delighted and flattered by Joe’s attention, jealous of Phindile whom she assumes is his girlfriend, and, ultimately, wishes to become his beloved. The story ends with them kissing as Joe tells her, “I want you to be my woman” (Mutangadura 2010:147). These words also reflect idealised words that the Nollybook reader may earnestly desire to hear whispered in her own ear.

Thuli Ngcobo in *Lights, Camera, Love* might not be as educated or talented as the heroines of the previous three bookazines and, initially, she is portrayed as a bumbling fool, but she is instrumental in assisting the production team to film *Zulu Valentine*. The small tribal village where filming occurs is disturbed by the angry chief Dlamini, who halts the filming. Thuli pacifies the chief, who owns the land. She explains to Jake Mkhize, the film director who has travelled from America, that, in the Zulu culture, it is a great insult to the chief's authority not to ask permission to film there. Furthermore, Jake must make a formal request to the chief the following day. Jake is insensitive to the cultural norms and angry at the disruption. The next day Thuli, Jake and chief Dlamini meet. Thuli speaks in both English and Zulu, and puts forward Jake's request to film on the chief's land in a particularly convincing way by showing him an amusing clip from the film. She is so successful that the chief requests that both Thuli and Jake attend his niece's wedding to film parts of the ceremony. As much as Jake needs Thuli, both in this episode and, later, as a substitute for his leading lady when he is "captivated and spellbound by her" (Desjardins 2010: 91), Thuli is equally in need of Jake's undivided attention and, ultimately, her fulfillment is based on becoming his Zulu Valentine, particularly as she was born on Valentine's day. The story ends with Jake opening a rusty box to reveal his mother's gold and diamond ring. He presents it to Thuli as he asks, "Thuli Ngcobo, will you be my Zulu Valentine?" (Desjardins 2010: 154). This is another dreamlike ending as the Nollybook reader might envisage her own man eventually proposing to her in an unexpected, romantic way.

Indeed, none of the Nollybooks heroines is passively waiting to be rescued by the proverbial knight in shining armour. However, all four heroines are incomplete without the adoration of the heroes. This is a plot element that links all the bookazines under study and is necessary to promote the belief that every woman has a hero who can, and who will, eventually come to her rescue.

Gender/power dynamics

The publishers of Nollybooks, MME media, are confident in providing reading material to an audience whose tastes have already been identified and who are very similar to Radway's Smithton women. The Nollybooks website (Nollybooks 2014), when recruiting aspirant writers of future Nollybooks, includes a brief on the requirements and structure of the bookazines; such stories should be "love stories featuring contemporary heroines that reflect our own lives, but give us an escapist storyline" (Nollybooks 2014). Julie M Dugger, in her article "'I'm a feminist, But ...' Popular Romance in the Women's Literature Classroom" (2014), comments that these type of romance novels are in direct opposition to feminist literary criticism. If feminist literary criticism attempts to provide an awareness of gender power imbalances, novels like the Nollybooks, written by women for women, do little towards "ameliorating the condition of women" (Culler 2004:178). Dugger challenges Radway's view that the romance reader is deprived of a "single, self-contained existence" (Radway 1991:207) because her romance readers, as housewives, are victims of a patriarchal society. Dugger says that perhaps these readers prefer a "relational destiny" (Dugger 2014:6) to a "self-contained existence". She further substantiates this opinion by referring to Sarah

Webster Goodwin's students of romance, who "do not assume with Radway that traditional female roles are inherently oppressive" (Dugger 2014:6). One also must acknowledge that today's romance readers live in a very different world from Radway's housewife readers. Indeed, Rabine, in an essay entitled "Romance in the age of electronics: Harlequin Enterprises" (1985), presents a more contemporary scenario of both the romance's heroines and readers by looking at the plots of the mass-produced Harlequin romances. She is cognisant of these women as workers in the labour market, which often means that the heroine may struggle with a male boss who, in many cases, is the hero she so desperately loves. As Rabine writes: "Although, the hero of these romances is not always the heroine's boss he most often either is the boss or holds a position of economic or professional power over the heroine"(Rabine 1985:251). Rabine says that this heralds a different form of domination in that the hero might not only represent "sexual domination" (Rabine 1985:253) but also "economic domination" (Rabine, 1985, 253).

I have already acknowledged that there is no sexual activity in the Nollybook plots; however, the suggestive language repeatedly points to a degree of "sexual domination". Furthermore, the heroes are presented as men who earn recognition because of their status in the workplace. Kagiso is a financially independent, qualified and experienced veterinarian in *Looking for Mr Right*. Jason is an esteemed visiting lecturer and entrepreneur in *Finding Arizona*. In *Lights, Camera, Love* Jake is a distinguished Hollywood film director who initially provides Thuli with a job. Fikile works as a fashion intern for Joe Silongo, the

successful owner of a high-end fashion label, *Cocoa Rouge*, in *Unfashionably in Love*.

Rabine insists that there should no longer be a division between those women who work and those who don't. Her theory of literary criticism includes her belief that such divisions are male-centred. She maintains that "to draw a strong division between working women and housewives comes perhaps from applying to women a male model" (Rabine 1985: 253). She mentions that for many men at work, power rests with their employers whilst, paradoxically, they are the dominant force at home. Interestingly, this is not so with women, she contends, since "the average woman, on the other hand, finds herself contending with a masculine power both at home and at work" (Rabine 1985: 253). With this deeper analysis then, it is imperative that we acknowledge that the escapism that Radway speaks about (as described in my introduction) is not merely escapism from domestic confines. For Rabine, escapism is particularly relevant to the majority of readers who are factory workers or low-paid bureaucrats, who might symbolise the powerlessness of women at work. The reader's fantasy often involves an escape from her mundane work life so that she might, one day, find meaningful work and freedom. In this vein, the reader relates to Cassandra who opens her own bridal boutique, to Thuli who discovers an untapped acting ability, to Fikile who becomes a dress designer for a television celebrity, and to Shezi who chooses to broaden her horizons by travelling overseas. Rabine acknowledges that the real world of working women is perfect for the implementation of the

fantasy world of work, especially with changes in the workplace caused by the emergence of huge global companies. She astutely explains this as follows:

The women who work for these huge conglomerates and bureaucracies, in clerical positions, in service positions and as assemblers of the new electronic machinery, as well as the women whose shopping, banking, education, medical care and welfare payments have been changed by these new developments, constitute a large part of the readership of Harlequin Romances. And the musicians, painters, poets, coaches, car racers, Olympic athletes, photographers and female executives of the romances, with their glamorous jobs, are these readers' idealised alter egos. (Rabine 1985: 252).

Similarly, the Nollybook reader, who is most likely aliterate and possibly purchased her South African bookazine at the till of her local supermarket, vicariously aspires to occupy the desirable working roles described by the plots of the Nollybooks. This could especially hold true if she is part of the 36.1% of youth who are unemployed in South Africa (Dawjee 2014). But, paradoxically, romance plots create both inspiration and frustration for women. Ultimately both Rabine and Dugger reflect on the heroines' impossible situations. Rabine recognises that the heroines are caught between a "mingling of protest and acquiescence" (Rabine 1985: 256) and Dugger agrees that Radway's thirteen steps of the narrative structure deny women their own identity. In Radway's final point, point 13, the heroine's identity is restored only after the hero has declared his unwavering love and commitment.

Dugger further comments on the unacceptability of romance plots that involve abusive behaviour, which conveys the message that “even the mildest of punishments still send the message that the best relationships evolve out of antagonism between the partners and humiliation of the heroine” (Dugger 2014:8). This is borne out when, for example, Kagiso castigates Cassandra in *Looking for Mr Right*. Jake is blatantly rude to Thuli in *Lights, Camera, Love*. Joe unfairly fires Fikile in *Unfashionably in Love*, and Shezi is mortified to discover that Jason has a fiancée in *Finding Arizona*. Coupled with this idea of women deserving to be punished, Dugger is vocal in asserting that romances perpetuate harmful media stereotypes, which could create unrealistic expectations in real-life relationships.

Carolyn Heilbrun’s ground-breaking book *Writing a Woman’s Life* (1988) is important in acknowledging that many works that describe women’s lives are not a true reflection of women’s lives but, rather, reflect conventional portrayals. For example, she writes about women’s autobiographies that are unable to reflect anger. She writes, “Above all other prohibitions, what has been forbidden to women is anger, together with the open admission of the desire for power and control over one’s life” (1988: 13). She provides other examples of “unwomanly” (1988: 17), assertive female behaviour. Heilbrun writes that “well into the twentieth century, it continued to be impossible for women to admit into their autobiographical narratives the claim of achievement, the admission of ambition, the recognition that accomplishment was neither luck nor the result of the efforts or generosity of others” (Heilbrun 1988: 24). She comments on the difference

between black and white women writers in the early twentieth century, making the point that black writers such as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison were bolder in presenting the diverse roles of women. However, a century later, on a different continent, the plots of Nollybooks, written by both black and white writers, all focus on stereotypical narratives of romantic love, which lead to a 'a happily ever after' ending. The 2010 Nollybook heroines might be more assertive than those described by Heilbrun; they do not shy away from anger and proudly acknowledge their achievements; however, in the language of sexual politics, they are always secondary respondents to the dominant male heroes who drive the plots forward.

Plot conformity to formula: the initial stage

The initial function of Radway's plot structuring, namely the initial situation, begins with the heroine's removal from her comfort zone, which is often her home and family. This usually leads to an inauspicious meeting between the hero and heroine and the plot then proceeds to the various challenges they confront. I will now analyse the initial stage of each bookazine and point out how each heroine is portrayed as displaced or incomplete as a result of her specific situation.

In *Finding Arizona*, Arizona Shezi, a Masters University student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, is far removed from the warmth of her home in Howick, KwaZulu-Natal, particularly as she was raised by a single mother. She is an

active member of the university newspaper, *Inquire*, where she works alongside her close friend, Lucinda. Four pages into the story, at a career expo Shezi meets Jason Khoza, a substitute lecturer who is described as “an undeniably handsome man” (Atagana 2010: 13). Despite having several friends, Shezi is an emotional wreck, challenged by both her gruelling studies and her lack of romance. The implication is that she cannot be complete without a man.

Similarly, Cassandra Sithole, in *Looking for Mr Right*, is emotionally isolated. She is a Johannesburg wedding dress designer who secretly longs to be a bride herself. The plot begins with a call from her cousin at 2H00 in the morning. Sindiswa wakes her up with her news that she is engaged. The news triggers both jealousy and sadness: “At this rate, she’d be the last one standing. Sindiswa would be cooking perfect meals for her perfect family while Cassandra spent the rest of her life eating alone” (Ntuny 2010: 12). These words aptly confirm Radway’s assertion that “the mood of the romance’s opening pages, then, is nearly always set by the heroine’s emotional isolation and her profound sense of loss” (Radway 1991: 29). In her seminal work, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (1978), Judith Fetterley expounds on the female condition as one of isolation as she is cast out by the consequences of patriarchy. Her book labels American literature as male, whilst females are marginalised and powerless. Women readers relate to a masculine world which is far removed from the real female experience. Fetterley writes: “As readers and teachers and scholars, women are taught to think as men, to identify with a male point of view, and to accept as normal and legitimate a male system of values, one of whose

central principles is misogyny” (Fetterley, 1978: xx). These values, so clearly transmitted in *Looking for Mr Right's* opening pages, immediately present the male point of view that married, domesticated “Sindiswas”, described repeatedly by the adjective “perfect”, are far happier than the “Cassandras”, who are miserable because they are unloved and alone.

The initial scene of *Unfashionably in Love* is particularly mortifying for the heroine, Fikile Mathebula. Having tried on a pair of designer pants in the change room of a boutique, “Cocoa Rouge”, she bends down and tears her own black pants over the backside. This exposes her red underwear and leaves her panic-stricken in the change room as she considers how she can leave the cubicle to pay for her purchase and then take public transport home.

Finally, *Lights, Camera, Love* begins when Thuli Ngcobo, a receptionist at the five-star Nqema Lodge in the Natal Midlands, is awoken by a knock on the door at 2H00. It is a “tall, dark stranger” (Desjardins 2010: 11) who is soaking wet from standing outside in a storm. Jake Mkhize is a film director who has travelled from America to film a production called *Zulu Valentine*. She is immediately attracted to him, but Thuli is instantly portrayed as a disorganised individual who, unsurprisingly, was sleeping on the job. Even her hairstyle is a mess, her braids clipped with paperclips, and she does not reflect the type of professionalism that Jake Mkhize expects when he says “I’d have appreciated faster service at the door!” (Desjardins 2010: 13). Having established that the heroines experience an

emotional lack, the narratives go on to propose marriage as a remedy for the heroines' challenges.

The marriage myth

In all four bookazines, the heroines' initial incompleteness is a requisite for the progression of the plot. Besides their individual personal limitations, such as Fikile and Thuli's clumsiness and lack of confidence, Shezi's impulsive behaviour and Cassandra's intimidation by Thembi, all the heroines are quite simply perceived as deficient since they have not managed to attain true love.

The fact that all four heroines are unwed feeds into traditional patriarchal ideas of womanhood. Carolyn Heilbrun asserts that "Marriage is the most persistent of myths imprisoning women, and misleading those who write of women's lives" (Heilbrun 1988: 77). But it is a myth eagerly consumed by the heroines and their readers. As unmarried women, they are defective. Our patriarchal society might disrespect unmarried women as failures. Heilbrun elaborates that "one of the most persistent misconceptions about single women is that they do not marry because they cannot find a man, or because they have not been able to entice one they have found into matrimony" (Heilbrun 1988: 77). The Nollybooks do question these ideas to an extent, but, in the final analysis, both the heroines and the Nollybook readers do seem to fall back on antiquated misogynistic beliefs about unmarried women.

K.K. Ruthven's book *Feminist Literary Studies: an Introduction* (1984:79) promotes the concept of breaking with myth in examining sexist language or, in her words, "no more patriarchal mythologies" (Ruthven 1984: 79). She reflects on various repressive mythologies, such as those labelled by Charlotte Perkins Gilman as the Kaiser's four Ks — Kuchen, Kinder, Kirche, Kleider or Cooking, Children, Church and Clothes (Ruthven 1984: 79). These myths perpetuate the notion that a woman is a passive person modelled on faulty fairy-tale myths and pose the question as to whether children's literature should be more cautious in combatting sexist portrayals of women. Ruthven explores the passive role of fairy-tale heroines, who serve as models for the romance reader: "she learns also that she is symbolically dead (either asleep like Sleeping Beauty or incarcerated like Rapunzel) until brought to life by the man who will be the man in her life" (1984: 80). Furthermore, unmarried women, such as Cinderella's ugly stepsisters, are portrayed as evil and desperate to marry the prince in attempting to squeeze their toes into the real princess's slipper. Similarly to Heilbrun, Ruthven identifies the attainment of romantic love and, ultimately, marriage as a major myth. Ruthven says: "'romantic love' is one such myth which traps heterosexual young women into underachieving at school and sacrificing careers of their own in expectation that the most important thing in their lives is to marry the right man and live with him happily ever after" (Ruthven 1984: 79). Radway notes that for many romance readers, marriage is an ideal and not a form of bondage or part of a "utopian moment" (Radway 1991: 215) in the ultimate fantasy of women readers where "men are neither cruel nor indifferent, neither preoccupied with the external world nor wary of an intense emotional attachment to a woman"

(Radway 1991: 215). This then is the driving motive behind the heroine's and reader's thought processes: every fibre of her being will be dedicated to earning the grand prize, namely the hero's unwavering love.

Cassandra's marriage manual is a perfect example of perpetuating the marriage myth. Described as "her bible" (Ntuny 2010: 22), it is an enormous scrapbooking file with her collection of marriage-related material: "every clipping and photocopy in it was about getting to the altar — finding a man, keeping him and getting him to pop the question" (Ntuny 2010: 22). Indeed the word "bible" elevates the drive for marriage into a form of religion. In terms of the fairy-tale marriage myth, Cassandra would be undesirable and unattractive if she remained single. Kagiso, on discovering her marriage manual sees it as further proof of her disingenuousness and is outraged. He embarrassingly reads out the marriage manual topics: "How to make any man fall in love with you. Ten fool-proof ways to get him hooked. The ten-week guide to getting that proposal" (Ntuny 2010: 116), culminating in his disgusted realisation: "You've put together a book about how to make men marry you? Are you insane?" (Ntuny 2010: 116). Cassandra will have to learn to break away from the fairy-tale myth and, in Carolyn Heilbrun's terms, realise that she herself can become her own prince by taking responsibility for her own self-actualisation. The marriage manual is typical of all the heroines' obsession with marriage, and its presence points to their sense of being incomplete without a man. Radway points out that the reader can and will identify with the heroine's initial emptiness or incompleteness. She states that "the romance's opening exaggerates the very feeling of emptiness and

desire that sent the reader to the book in the first place” (1991: 138). Radway cites Chodorow’s thesis as an explanation of why women constantly have an ongoing need for attachment and nurturing. This involves a girl’s distancing from her initial close bond with her mother by replacing it with an attraction to her father. This represents her attraction to the hero, although it is an ambiguous attraction. This will be elaborated on in chapter two in my discussion on characterization and chapter three as part of my discussion of the gendered nature of language. I do need to comment here, however, that I have not found proof in the plots of the Nollybooks that the heroines are secretly trying to establish their lost bonds with their mothers by forming relationships with the heroes.

The second stage: transformations

The second phase identified by Radway relates to the transformation of the situation. This involves the heroines establishing trust in the heroes and overcoming their complex challenges.

An example of this in *Finding Arizona* is when Shezi learns the truth about Jason’s investment history. The editor of the paper and Shezi’s close friend, Marc Jessop, tells Shezi that Jason was an important, wealthy businessman who exploited workers for his own ends at a company called Ubuntu. In fact Marc tells her that 60% of Ubuntu’s staff lost their jobs because of Jason Khoza and that he was in fact in hiding. Marc confidently encourages her to destroy him when he says “Oh, Shezi, this is the big scoop we have been waiting for! Bring

him down, girl, bring him down!” (Atagana 2010: 27). However, Shezi will not bring him down and will conform to Radway’s description of this stage in that she will “believe that he loves her deeply even in the face of massive evidence to the contrary” (Radway 1991: 149). This transformational stage of the plot involves overcoming numerous obstacles. When Shezi tells Jason that she knows about Ubuntu, he painfully tells her of his sorrow about Ubuntu and that it was beyond his control. He is revealed as a different person in reality from Marc’s newspaper report in which he is described as “raping innocent people of their livelihoods” (Atagana 2010: 98) and she has glimpses of the truth: “for a moment she saw a different person, a more vulnerable creature who stared out from behind those chocolate-brown eyes” (Atagana 2010: 57).

As part of the transformational stage in *Looking for Mr Right*, Cassandra will have to endure Thembi Khumalo’s insults. She will painfully survive many internet dates with totally unacceptable men. However, these unsuitable candidates all serve a comic function in plot development. The first online date is with “Rosebank Romeo”, who proves to be a typical male chauvinist. He approves of Cassandra’s work as a dressmaker as he feels that women should not be in professional careers. His remarks are both patronising and insulting. A good example of this is when he says, ““a pretty little thing like you should only be concerned with hosting dinner parties and shopping for shoes”” (Ntuny, 2010: 37). Her second online date, 1_smooth_1, is equally distasteful to Cassandra. He expresses displeasure at the fact that she is not a blonde and is completely self-absorbed. Cassandra invites her third online date, GQ10/10, to partner her to a

friend's wedding. At first, he appears desirable; he is smartly dressed and drives a Jaguar, but as the evening progresses, she finds him rude and judgmental of both her and the women around them. She eventually asks him "Can't you say anything nice?" (Ntuny 2010: 67). The fourth online date with Blu_Wtr_Boi is a disaster. From the beginning, she realises that she would rather be at home than at a movie with him. She unintentionally sprays him with her pepper spray in the darkened movie when it falls out of her bag. These unsuccessful internet dates are extremely disappointing to Cassandra, but these events highlight Kagiso's desirability in that he is unlike any of her online dates. It is Amanda who notices that Cassandra has secret thoughts about Kagiso: "It's the vet isn't it?" (Ntuny 2010: 90). Her cousin, Sindiswa, encourages her to ask Kagiso out and tells her that it would be more appropriate than dating online strangers. Cassandra is tempted but is embarrassed that she is the "Wannabe Mrs" that Kagiso has heard about and realises that he would be appalled to know the truth about her desperation. When Kagiso spontaneously visits Cassandra and asks her out to dinner, she greatly enjoys the evening. At the end of the evening, he kisses her goodnight and promises to see her the next day. Halfway through the book she declares that "there was no doubt about it. She was in love" (Ntuny 2010:102).

Fikile Mathebula's transformation in *Unfashionably in Love* involves her overcoming a difficult background as an orphan, facing a hostile competitive working environment at Cocoa Rouge and dealing with Joe Silongo's inconsistent behaviour. Inevitably all these challenges are overcome by the last page when Joe takes Fikile in his arms and kisses her.

Thuli Ngcobo's transformation in *Lights, Camera, Love* involves not only taking on an intimidating job as personal assistant to Jake Mkhize, the "conceited Hollywood director" (Desjardins 2010: 25), but falling in love with a complex man. From crew members, Jim and Kerry, Thuli hears about Jake's past and that he grew up with an exiled uncle in England. Neroshni, the make-up artist, tells her that the lead actress has a crush on Jake but that Jake has not had a romantic involvement for two years. Kerry also tells Thuli that Jake wrote "Zulu Valentine" the year his parents drowned and that their bodies were never found. It had taken him fifteen years to plan the production. Thuli recognises that the film is his tribute to his parents and the "Zulu childhood he'd not known. Pain was driving it. It was tragic, but so beautiful" (Desjardins 2010: 67). Her transformation peaks towards the end when their lives are threatened. The final day of filming is in the rocky gorge of the Umkomaas Valley. Thuli's 'gift' enables her to sense that a big storm is on the way. Jake instructs the crew to leave the area, but he decides to go on to the rocky outcrop of Eagles Rock. As a flash flood arrives, Thuli follows Jake to save him. She manages to drag him into the car but, when the car is flooded, they climb onto the roof of the Hummer. From there, they climb up into the Hella-Hella cave, the very same cave where Jake's parents had last been alive many years earlier. Thuli translates the writing on the wall: "Jake, landela inhliziyu yakho njalo. Siyakdelu thanda, u Ma no Baba" as "Jake, always follow your heart. We love you, mom and dad" (Desjardins 2010: 146). It is a fitting moment for their first kiss. This completes the heroine's transformation, unlike the hero who did not require such a radical transformation.

The final stage: intervention and resolution

The third stage that Radway identifies in the plot structure is the intervention that explains the change. This is the final stage where the heroine reinterprets the hero's confusing behaviour as a result of previous hurt. Here we pity Jason Khoza as a victim of slander, Kagiso as damaged by his fiancée's death, Joe Silongo as betrayed by his ex-wife and best friend, and Jake Mkhize as an exile, removed from his beloved, lost, dead parents. The denouements see the heroes openly declaring their love for the heroines, who now respond emotionally to the heroes as their identities are restored. It is significant that ultimately the heroine reinterprets the hero's initial behaviour as this would encourage the reader to rethink the dynamics of her own relationship. It reiterates the fantasy that men can change and become more emotionally expressive and nurturing. As Radway says: "the romance perpetuates the illusion that like water into wine, brusque indifference can be transformed into unwavering devotion" (Radway 1991: 151).

Diversions from Radway's structure

Point one of Radway's narrative logic of the romance concerns the heroine's confused social identity and is present in all four sample books. In *Finding Arizona*, Shezi has a developed social identity as a Masters Student and journalist. She has a supportive group of friends, but she is deficient in that she has not discovered romantic love. Cassandra in *Looking for Mr Right* is not as self-assured as Shezi in the previous bookazine. Despite having close social

relationships with her cousin, Sindiswa, and her best friend, Amanda, she feels inadequate as she has not been able to find a man. This is fueled by Noma Sithole, her mother's persistent concern as well as the creation of her marriage manual, a collage of possible wedding scenarios. Fikile Mathebula at the beginning of *Unfashionably in Love* is an insecure, self-conscious young woman. At her first meeting with Joe Silongo, she tells him personal details: that she is a student, her mother left her when she was six to chase after a man and that she lives with her grandmother. She even reveals that both her parents died of AIDS. These may be deemed inappropriate responses to reveal to a stranger at a first meeting. Similarly, Thuli in *Lights, Camera, Love* might lack confidence in her ability as Jake Mkhize's personal assistant, although she reveals maturity and cultural sensitivity in dealing with the Zulu chief.

Points two of Radway's narrative logic (where the heroine reacts antagonistically to the aristocratic hero) and three (where the aristocratic male responds ambiguously to the heroine) are crucial to all the bookazines. In *Finding Arizona* the aristocratic male is Jason, a wealthy businessman; in *Looking for Mr Right*, it is Kagiso, the refined and educated vet; in *Unfashionably in Love*, it is the flashy Joe Silongo in his convertible sports car; and in *Lights, Camera, Love*, it is the renowned celebrity film director, Jake Mkhize. In each instance these alpha male figures respond ambiguously to the heroines, with a degree of friendliness, mixed at times with reserve and indifference, which conveys confusing mixed messages.

The bookazines notably lack point four and, partially, point twelve of Radway's list of the narrative elements of the romance. In point four, the heroine interprets the hero's interest in her as purely a sexual interest and point twelve is the heroine's sexual and emotional response to the hero. The authors of these bookazines have downplayed the sexual content and in no instance is there an explicit sexual description. Usually sexual intimacy reflects the hero's tenderness and their complete union, but the closest physical intimacy in the Nollybooks is usually at the end where the hero and heroine kiss or embrace. Point twelve in the Nollybooks is thus the heroine's emotional response to the hero. Moky Makura, the owner of MME Media and the publisher of the Nollybooks, is on record as saying that she made a deliberate decision to downplay sexual content in the bookazines because of the AIDS epidemic in South Africa. In doing this, she hoped to discourage promiscuity in her readers.

Finding Arizona is worth exploring here because it contains several parts of Radway's narrative logic. Point five (the heroine's angry or cold response), point six (the hero's retaliation), point seven (the physical or emotional separations), point eight (the hero's tenderness), point nine (the heroine's warmth), point ten (the heroine's understanding), point eleven (the hero's love declaration), point twelve (the heroine's response) and point thirteen (the heroine's intact identity) are all clearly evident.

In *Finding Arizona*, Shezi is angry about discovering Lundi, Jason's fiancé and her reaction - ““don't touch me”” and ““you lied to me and violated my trust”” (Atagana 2010: 123) - reflects point five. His retaliation, which reflects point six, comes when he asserts ““Trust? You want to talk about trust? What about your story, huh?”” (Atagana 2010: 123). They then part, conforming to point seven as they are physically separated. Shezi and Jason's reunion on the plane is especially tender since, with Lu's help, he surprises her. Her emotional response to him — ““I am game to start over — if you are”” (Atagana 2010:123), prefaces his gentle kiss as her identity is restored.

Point five is absent in *Looking for Mr Right* as Cassandra does not respond to Kagiso with either anger or coldness. Kagiso's initial behaviour might have been restrained since he was recovering from heartbreak over his fiancée's death. This point is unconventional as, in this case, it is the hero who responds to the heroine's behaviour with anger and coldness. Kagiso is furious at discovering that Cassandra is in fact Wannabe Mrs as well as discovering her embarrassing marriage manual. He feels completely duped as he sums up Cassandra's desperate behaviour: ““you've lied to me, you've been involved with other guys and you've been plotting strategies to trick me into marrying you. Are you that desperate to have a ring on your finger?”” (Ntuny 2010: 116-7). Point six is also absent as Kagiso does not punish her. Point seven is applicable as they separate. Points eight and nine are also unconventional because it is the heroine who writes a tender letter of apology, and it is in fact the hero who responds to the heroine's moving act of tenderness. Points ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen are applicable as

Cassandra reinterprets Kagiso's ambiguous behaviour as true love as he asks to "start over" (Ntuny 2010: 116-7) and her pride is restored.

Joe Silongo initially gives Fikile mixed messages when she interns at Cocoa Rouge in *Unfashionably in Love*. When he waits for her in the car he rudely tells her, "Listen I'm a very busy man and I really don't appreciate people wasting my time" (Mutangadura 2010: 65). Yet, only a short while later, he tells Fikile that he has fallen in love with her. This fits in perfectly with Radway's third point about the aristocratic male's ambiguous behaviour. However, points four and five are absent. There is no indication that Joe's interest is purely sexual, and Fikile is never cold nor angry towards him. Later in the narrative Joe fires Fikile which would appear to be a version of Radway's point six in that the hero retaliates by punishing the heroine as a result of seeing her interact with Luke Modise, the owner of another fashion house who had previously betrayed him with his ex-wife. After the hero and heroine are separated physically (point seven), the hero apologises for his behaviour and treats the heroine tenderly (point eight). Points nine, ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen are now in place as their love is restored and her identity is re-established in reaching the formulaic happy ending.

Jake Mkhize's ambiguous behaviour that is immediately shown on the first day of filming in *Lights, Camera, Love* conforms to Radway's third point. Jake is furious that the filming is interrupted when Thuli engages with the Zulu chief and accusingly asks her "Do you have any idea how much your little tête-à-tête with

Mr Big Shot has cost me?’” (Desjardins 2010:37). She, in turn, feels that he is an “arrogant Yankee Zulu” (Desjardins 2010:37), so this would be point five. However, unlike the previous bookazines, points six and seven are absent. Jake never punishes Thuli and the hero and heroine are never totally separated. Instead Jake himself needs to confront the pain of his own past and it is through Thuli that he is enabled to do this. Points eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen involve Jake treating Thuli with tenderness and her emotional response as she becomes Jake’s true Zulu Valentine. Thuli develops a deeper understanding of Jake’s former ambiguous responses to her, especially when she realises that she is not responsible for his feelings of alienation. Rather, it is his confusing past, with its unanswered questions, that lies behind his bravado. Radway’s tenth point is clear: “the heroine reinterprets the hero’s ambiguous behaviour as the product of previous hurt” (Radway 1991:150).

From the above discussion, it is clear that Radway’s points are not prescriptive. True, there are common threads in all the plots, such as the hero’s initial mixed messages, the obstacles that need to be overcome and the final romantic declaration and commitment of both parties, yet there is still a degree of flexibility in structuring these plots. In the section that follows, I suggest that conformity to the romantic formula provides a degree of reader satisfaction.

Readers’ response to the formula

The basic structure of the plots derive from a Western model with additional elements from African consumer culture. This admixture of cultural elements is indicative of a trend in South Africa post-Apartheid writing and has proved popular amongst young readers. Sonja Narunsky-Laden's article, entitled "Popular Writing in Post-Transitional, South Africa as an agency of socio-cultural change: or, "Meet Mzansi's Mr and Mrs New Black", discusses how popular fiction in South Africa reflects cultural issues and is reflective of social change. She refers to these novels as "cultural tools through which their writers and readers are able to articulate, rehearse, and enact processes of social mobility and socio-cultural change" (2010: 70). Narunsky-Laden also cites journalist Faith Baloyi's article 'Meet Mr and Mrs New Black' in the magazine publication *True Love Babe* which identifies a new category of readers. Baloyi refers to these readers as "Middle Africans, neither here nor there, neither Bantu nor coconut, one foot in kasi and the other in Rosebank" (Narunsky-Laden 2010:70). Even within this group, she identifies sub-categories of "Middle Africans" such as "the Hoity Toitys" and the "Arty Fartys". These hybrid New South Africans, who are not only represented by the Nollybook characters, as I will discuss in chapters two and three, but often mirror the readers of the Nollybooks, are particularly fascinating when it comes to their language and this will be elaborated on in chapter four. The Nollybook plots are not inventive, nor are they memorable because of their illuminating writing. As Narunsky-Laden writes about popular novels: they "will clearly never obtain the recognition, let alone the prestige, consecration, or artistic merit typically awarded to works by 'accredited' literary gatekeepers" (Narunsky-Laden 2010:64). Instead, she says that these novels are more powerful as agents of "cultural interference" (Narunsky-Laden 2010:63),

modelled on the typical romantic formula, yet adapted and translated to a South African context. It is from this vantage point that the plots may be viewed as innovative.

Dugger presents a case against romance from a feminist perspective. However, she is also at pains to present the “feminist case for romance” (Dugger 2014:9). One of her potent arguments is that women may “acknowledge their oppression and imagine a better future” (Dugger 2014:9). The Nollybook reader might say to herself, “If I were Fikile/Thuli/Shezi/Cassandra, I would react in a different way”. Radway also mentions that the narratives, through reader identification, allow readers to reflect on the shortcomings in their own lives which might prompt reform. Dugger also says that, contrary to popular belief, many readers desire “an alternative” to a “high-culture literary canon” (Dugger 2014:11) and, for her, contemporary romances present a real, recognisable world. She provides an example of romance writer Jennifer Crusie who, as a PhD student, read classic works of literature such as *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*. She found this a “mandatory curriculum of stories of disastrous female sexuality” (Dugger 2014:12). It seems that these renowned classics are also not faultless in relaying distorted female experience. As Dugger boldly writes: “The world of high culture has its own forms of oppression, as does the world of academic research, and critics and professors are no more immune to the influence of patriarchy than are mass-market publishers” (Dugger 2014:12). Fetterley too, is outspoken about American literature’s stereotypical portrayal of women by speaking about the “immasculation of women by men” (Fetterley, 1978: xx) since fictional female

portrayals are often unrelated to real women's lives as they are created by the male psyche.

Eric Ma and Hau Ling Helen Cheng's study of workers in South China in 2001 has parallels to the South African Nollybook reader's experience. They researched the lives of young rural female factory workers from the north who migrated to the urbanised south in pursuit of better lifestyles. Ma and Cheng referred to their "nakedness" in that "they are neither 'modern/urban' nor traditional/rural yet exposed to pressures from both sides" (During 2007: 202). As they moved away from home, traditional values were uprooted as new practices emerged; for example, it became acceptable for young lovers to cohabit, instead of marrying. However, despite new discourses, there was a constant awareness of the demands of traditions: "The migrant bodies exist in a prolonged state of transient 'nakedness', caught between yearning for the modern and returning to the traditional" (During 2007: 209). The widespread appeal of romantic novels and magazines were important as popular genres which gave female workers "a vicarious taste of romance" (During 2007: 206).

Although South African Nollybooks are less explicit in terms of erotic content, the readers share similarities with the Chinese factory workers discussed by Ma and Cheng. Like the Chinese factory workers, South African readers are preoccupied with the pursuit of true love. This indicates the universality of this genre's appeal across a wide diversity of cultures. Furthermore, they are also hybrid readers a blend of diverse cultures. Moky Makura, the mastermind of Nollybooks, is well aware of her winning formula and acknowledges the success

of formulaic writing when she says, “It captures readers. It gives them a guarantee. They know what to expect” (Nollybooks, 2014).

My study sees great value in the reading of the Nollybooks as young, Black women readers are simultaneously provided with escapist and realistic plots which are indisputably part of the reader’s frame of reference. Itamar Even-Zohar’s (1990) polysystem theory helps to explain how the confluence of cultures produces narratives that capture the popular imagination. Polysystem theory embraces both historical (diachronic) factors and contemporary (synchronic) factors in deconstructing culture. This dynamic approach is flexible and involves juxtaposing cultures within a globalised world. According to Even-Zohar, literature is not static or unicultural, but a dynamic system influenced by language, politics, economics and other factors. He further comments on the inequality between canonized and non-canonized texts, according to which texts are judged as either good or bad. There are frequent changes in the literary system so that the canonized system of today might occupy a different future position. If this is true, the Nollybooks, which might be denigrated today, might, in future, receive a more positive reception.

It is worth noting that the Nollybooks transition into a television series *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* in July 2012, broadcast by e-TV, was extremely successful. Six films were aired: “Office Games”, adapted from the book *Business of Love*, “Something’s Cooking”, adapted from the book *Recipe of Love*, “Uncovered” adapted from *The spy who loved him*, “Your Move”, adapted from *A man worth knowing*, “PhD” adapted from *Finding Arizona* and “Game on” adapted from

Looking for Mr Right. According to the website www.yomzansi.com, which rates viewers' responses to television shows, *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* was fifth in popularity in the comedy ratings of August 2012 which precipitated the production of a second series in July 2013 continuing into 2014. The success of the television series is probably an indication that the narratives successfully meet the needs of readers and I will explore this in a stand-alone chapter in chapter three. Undoubtedly, formulaic writing is part of the Nollywoods' success and it is for this reason that I will discuss this in chapter two in terms of characterization, and in chapter four in terms of language and presentation.

Chapter 2: Characters

“Lady, I’m your knight in shining armour and I love you, you have made me what I am and I am yours” (lyrics from *Lady* by Kenny Rogers)

In chapter one, I explained how the Nollybook plots conform to the romantic formula. This concept is carried through in discussing the characters in the Nollybooks; they too conform to the genre of formulaic literature which can be defined as constrained writing, as the authors have complied with certain rules in their writing. Various handbooks have emerged to direct and inform aspiring romance writers about what is expected of them in producing a romantic read. Titles such as *You can write a romance* (Estrada and Gallagher 1999) and *Writing a romance novel for Dummies* (Wainger 2004) encourage the readers of romances to become the writers of romance by following a prescriptive recipe.

Usually romance novels are published either as a category or a single title. Category romances, such as the *Mills & Boon* series, are inexpensive paperbacks published prolifically on the basis of their themes (such as medical romances), whilst single-title romances are longer, more complex and might include elements from other genres. The Nollybooks under study are category romances, which are not only similar in physical appearance, but also follow similarities in narrative conventions. Just as basic plot phases are identified, certain requirements are outlined in terms of characterisation. Kate Walker in *Kate Walker’s Twelve Point Guide to Writing Romance* advises prospective romance writers on creating well-

defined characters. She says: “Strong, believable, appealing characters are the most important part of your book. They are the way to grab your readers’ interest, win their sympathy and get them involved in your story. All twists and turns and complicated plots in the world won’t redeem a book that is peopled by stiff, wooden, one-dimensional people” (Walker 2004: 83). So, characters are considered the “most important” element in assuring the success of the text, and although the plots might be unrealistic, the characters must be portrayed as realistic creations. If the main objective is to create the unique emotion of falling in love for the protagonists and the reader, the emphasis, then, is not on how the plot creates this love but rather on the fantasised achievement of this perfect union. When asked to reflect on specific romances that they have read, very often, readers will not recall specific plot details, but what remains as a lasting impression is the exquisite memory of the hero and heroine’s union.

In recruiting potential Nollybook writers, the Nollybook website (www.nollybooks.co.za) actually indicates the requirements of characterisation in developing the hero and heroine. For example, step 3 of ‘tips’ describes the ambiguous role the heroine will play: “She’s sassy, independent, smart. She’s a young woman going places, someone readers will look up to. That doesn’t mean she’s perfect. She is also vulnerable and flawed” ([www. Nollybooks.co.za](http://www.Nollybooks.co.za)). This rings true: a reader will admire a “sassy, independent, smart” heroine, but will be overawed if she appears too perfect. In order for the reader to identify with the character, character flaws are a necessity.

All of the heroines in the texts chosen for this study are young, beautiful Black women, but the handbooks for creating these heroines insist that they must be unaware of their beauty. In Leslie Wainger's handbook, *Writing a Romance Novel for Dummies*, she advises: "instead of working your heroine's description into the story through her point of view, let the reader see her through the hero's eyes. After all, no one can object if *he* finds her beautiful" (Wainger 2004: 61). This reiterates a major point made in chapter one: that the success of the Nollybooks is based on the readers identifying with the heroine.

Interestingly, the handbooks show that, over time, changes relating to the modern hero and heroine, and contemporary readers have emerged. Estrada and Gallagher express this shift from the depiction of a passive heroine eagerly waiting to be rescued by a demigod hero by saying, "Gone are the days when the heroine waited around for Mr Right to rescue her. She's too involved in a real life to keep searching for some guy to make her complete ... she's fair, but unwilling to take less than her share. She's assertive but not aggressive. And she's not afraid of being single and living alone" (Estrada and Gallagher 1999: 78). This argument is debatable since most romantic fiction continues to be based on the premise that a woman needs a man to complete her. Several romantic texts feature women who do not, apparently, need to be married, but they do not generally emphasise the heroine's responsibility for her own happiness. In analysing the heroes and heroines of the Nollybooks, I will draw mainly on the following theorists: Janice Radway, Rita C Hubbard, Laura Vivanco and Suzanne

Juhasz. All these theorists write pertinently about the characters in romance fiction, but with different emphases, as I will explain below.

Hubbard's four visions

Hubbard's article (1985), "Relationship Styles in Popular Romance Novels, 1950 to 1983" reiterates Radway's argument that women readers identify with the heroines in romance fiction. Hubbard comments on the fact that romance novels are so popular that they are a "publishing phenomenon" (Hubbard 1985: 113). She says "marketing researchers report that romances of all types are the first choice of non-college educated women and the second choice among the college-educated" (1985: 113). This indicates that this popularity is a result of the reader's belief that she too can achieve romantic success. Hubbard elaborates: "there is something seductive about such identification as the reader contemplates the idea of becoming a heroine because in so doing she may not only seek the heroine's romantic success and derive happiness from a permanent love commitment, but she may also accept the interaction rules which govern the heroine's and the hero's behaviours" (1985: 114). Hubbard elaborates on these rules in her "four rhetorical vision" theory, which I will apply to each of the Nollybooks. Although Hubbard's four rhetorical visions identify different characteristics of the heroes and heroines, the common quality of all the visions is the transformative power of love. In all four bookazines, both the heroes and heroines experience personal psychological growth as a result of finding true love. Hubbard does, however, remark on the irony of the popularity of romantic novels in that the four visions are not reflective of reality and "they deny the

complexity of human relationships and promote impossible dreams” (Hubbard 1985: 124).

Feminist critical responses

In her article, “Feminism and Early Twenty-First Century Harlequin Mills and Boon Romances,” (2012: 1060), Laura Vivanco calls feminist responses to romance novels “scathing”. She examines different lines in the Harlequin Mills & Boon romances between 2000 and 2007, noting the differences between the “Modern” or “Presents” line and the “Romance” or “Tender” line, and concedes that “there is also significant variation within each Harlequin Mills and Boon line” (Vivanco 2012: 1062). She observes varying degrees of patriarchy in the heroes and varying levels of feminist awareness in the heroines. In some of the novels, the heroes remain in positions of power and the heroines enjoy and welcome this until the end. Vivanco comments that in many novels, “there was little evidence of either a positive or a negative engagement with feminism” (Vivanco 2012: 1062). However, she also says that one must guard against labelling romance novels as sexist as many romance novels do, in fact, articulate feminist values. She acknowledges changes in the Harlequin guidelines for heroes and heroines since the 1970s and 1980s when the focus was on the hero. In later romances, the stories are told from either the male or female point of view or from both viewpoints. The Nollybooks of 2010 are all told from the heroines’ viewpoints. Vivanco explains this shift as follows: “this change in the point of

view from which the novels are told gives readers greater knowledge of the heroes' thoughts and emotions, and the heroes of modern romances are often shown to have a softer side" (Vivanco 2012: 1065). However, it seems the Nollybooks have chosen not to take advantage of the greater freedom enjoyed by some lines of romantic fiction. I will demonstrate the "softer side" of the Nollybook heroes by referring to Hubbard's theory of rhetorical visions. I will also ask why the heroines need to be rescued, since it seems crucial to investigate what is lacking within the heroines' psyches that they are so totally directed towards finding perfect romantic relationships.

Suzanne Juhasz explores women's romance fiction in the United States in the 1980s. She proposes that needy heroines are reflective of damaged or undeveloped mother-daughter relationships¹. She speaks of "the heroine's lack of real self at the outset" as "her unmothered condition" (Juhasz 1988: 240). According to Juhasz, it is through the text itself that the heroine experiences psychological development and this reflects the reader's own unfulfilled mother-daughter relationship, so that "the daughter-reader and the mother-author meet in the book" (Juhasz 1988: 241). The heroines in the Nollybooks do, indeed, conform to the pattern of deficient mother-daughter relationships and this is surely another part of their appeal, since readers may identify with the situations portrayed in the books. In *Unfashionably in Love*, in the very first chapter, the reader learns that Fikile's mother has died of AIDS. In *Looking for Mr Right*, Cassandra's mother, Nomsa Sithole, is too steeped in her own traditional gender

¹ A deficiency in mother-child relationships is seen in many psychoanalytical paradigms of psychological development as the root of difficulties in interpersonal relationships.

beliefs to be useful in assisting her daughter develop a healthy identity. Shezi's mother in *Finding Arizona* is described as "worn out and time weathered" (Atagana 2010: 9) on the very first page of the story. Finally, in *Lights, Camera, Love*, Thuli's mother is a traditional Zulu mother, who, despite being a loving presence in her daughter's life, lives far away from her.

Hubbard categorises relationship styles in romance novels in the United States of America in a longitudinal study spanning three decades. Hubbard makes pertinent comments about the changing male and female roles in romance novels over time by analysing Harlequin romances. She claims that in the 1950s relationships were complementary, but by the 1960s and 1970s, relationships were characterised by "female rebellion to male dominance" (1985: 113). From the 1980s there was a shift, and now both sexes share characteristics that were previously considered gender-specific.

Hubbard also speaks of different "rhetorical visions", which refer to how males and females are defined by the characterisation of the hero and heroine. These visions relate to the archetypal roles of Cinderella and the prince. Vision one, found in the 1950s, sees the heroine as "Cinderella as earth mother" and the hero, the "prince as benign dictator" (1985:116). Here the powerful, handsome hero will dominate the young, devoted heroine and both will accept their roles without question. Vision two, found in the 1960s, shows a newer heroine in that she is now "Cinderella as feisty female" and the hero is "the prince as subduer"

(1985:117). The heroine attempts to show some independence, but this is subsumed by her primary goal of becoming the hero's wife, earning a lifetime of love and protection. Vivanco, in analysing the different Harlequin lines, distinguishes between romances which portray marriage as a place of sexist, traditional roles and those in which there are more equal roles. The Nollybooks embrace the latter as "the heroine's triumph is not simply an individual one in which the hero comes to love and trust her: it can also be read as a victory for women because she has forced the hero, the embodiment of patriarchy, to reassess his ideas about women ... and offer an apology for the beliefs which led him to oppress her" (Vivanco 2012: 1072). The apologies from Jason in *Finding Arizona* and Joe in *Unfashionably in Love* will serve this purpose in these heroes' character development.

Vision three is illustrated by the heroine of the 1970s, who is more self-assured but learns that her attempts to become independent and sexually free will ultimately fail. Here she is "Cinderella as virgin temptress" and he is "the prince as warrior" (Hubbard 1985:118). Hubbard asserts that "the heroine of the 1970s has increased confidence in her own abilities and exhibits knowingly a powerful sexuality to tempt the hero. But she is led gradually and forcefully by him to the realization that her attempts to assume power and to enjoy sexual freedom will bring about her own ruin" (Hubbard 1985:120). So, despite showing progression towards independence and autonomy, her strong spirit is only acceptable as long as it suits the hero's choices.

Finally vision four, found in 1980s' fiction, is a completely new vision with a more equal balance of power between hero and heroine. This is where the heroine is "the liberated heroine" (Hubbard 1985: 120) and the hero is "her man as equal partner" (Hubbard 1985: 120). The hero and heroine negotiate the rules of the relationship in instances such as marriage, sex and her own career. The Nollybooks' characterisation of the heroine as a product of the twenty-first century are very often similar to this vision, although my analysis will show that elements of the older visions are, surprisingly, still present.

Susan Faludi's bestseller, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (1991), speaks about the backlash against feminism and a return to the traditional roles of women. She also bravely asserts that the happiness of many women is still dependent on male approval. Perhaps the reason for the popularity of the romance novel is that it fits into this backlash, demonstrating that Hubbard's earlier visions are still applicable today. In this chapter I will argue that there is a mingling of and switching between all four visions in the Nollybooks. Michele Glasburgh, in her Masters dissertation, *Chick Lit: The New Face of Postfeminist Fiction* (2006), analyses ten samples of 'chick lit' and makes pertinent comments about the characterisation of the heroines. Despite the fact that her analysis is based on white heroines in their twenties or thirties and the Nollybooks' heroines are all black and younger, both sets of heroines develop along a trajectory that confirms how men and romance will bring the ultimate fulfillment to a woman. Glasburgh comments about the protagonists' reasons for pursuing a man: "They all want to be in a romantic relationship, their reasons

ranging from wanting to settle down to falling madly in love to having a date for national holidays” (Glasburgh 2006: 79). Thus, she notes that eight out of her ten samples end with the protagonist beginning a new relationship with the man she has pursued throughout the narrative. In a similar vein, all four of the Nollybooks’ heroines begin a renewed relationship with the heroes at the end of the narratives.

Application of Hubbard’s four visions

Arizona Shezi and Jason Khoza in *Finding Arizona* might be viewed as characters that exhibit elements of Hubbard’s early visions in that she is beautiful and sexually inexperienced, while he is handsome, successful and affluent, but mostly they evolve and represent vision four. Arizona struggles with hardships, is highly skilled at what she does, is educated and, ultimately, relishes the opportunity to travel overseas and broaden her horizons. True, she abandons her future PhD study and job at a prestigious newspaper, *The Mail & Guardian*, but this is to realise her long-held dream of going to her namesake, Arizona. This is also symbolised by the title of the book, *Finding Arizona*, indicating that she will find her true inner identity. She is a combination of a strong twenty-first century, independent woman and a stereotypical passive woman who needs to be pursued by the hero. As a Masters student and journalist at the aptly named *Inquire*, the university’s newspaper, she is portrayed as intelligent, hardworking and a person of integrity who reports incisively on contentious issues. She has discerning reading tastes and enjoys the works of Khaled Hosseini, so Jason surprises her with a gift of *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The Nollybook

reader also regards herself as a discerning reader and this plays into the readers' fantasies of being well-read and erudite. This idea of the heroine needing to be well-read harks back to much earlier expectations, as articulated by Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice*:

‘Oh! Certainly,’ cried his faithful assistant, ‘no one can be really esteemed accomplished, who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved’. ‘All this she must possess,’ added Darcy, ‘and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading’ (Austen 1998: 34).

It would seem that, on the surface, Arizona is a modern, enlightened heroine who is driven to accomplish her goals. So, it is surprising to see that at her very first meeting with Jason Khoza, she flirts with him, thus eliciting her friend Lucinda Meshengu's comment “your brain shut off for a bit” (Atagana 2010: 16). As the plot develops, she is portrayed as a victim of Jason Khoza's charms. The book is awash with her comments about his desirability and her inability to resist him. I cite a few examples of these: “He has such a nice smile, she thought wistfully” (Atagana 2010: 23); “His lips barely grazed her ear as he bent to whisper, but it sent shivers all over her body. *Get a hold of yourself, Shezi*, she commanded” (Atagana 2010: 64); and “He is so amazing, I just couldn't talk” (Atagana 2010: 89). All these examples reflect the concept that true love will derail the heroine's normal, balanced functioning and make her incapable of resisting the hero,

despite his imperfections and her otherwise intelligent, sassy and astute mental functioning. Arizona's responses are in line with Hubbard's third vision and aptly fit Hubbard's description that "in the end she not only accepts his domination but rejoices in it" (Hubbard 1985: 119).

The hero, Jason Khoza, also evolves from his initial characterisation as an arrogant, overconfident investment advisor with an MBA from Brown University to a more sincere, humble person. However, before he changes from Hubbard's earlier visions, we see him taking on the role of male protector and guardian angel. When Arizona goes on a date with him on a yacht in Durban and she is fearful since she can't swim, he comforts her by assuring her that it is he who will control the situation. Phrases such as "'Don't worry, I will protect you,' he smiled, her favourite dazzling smile" and "he took her hand and led her to the small motorboat" (Atagana 2010:65) convey this strong, commanding and protective role.

Ironically, he loses this self-assurance in the end when he becomes part of vision four. His pleading letter to Arizona ultimately reveals him as a vulnerable and damaged man, whose only wish is to find love with Arizona. I quote this letter as it is essential in understanding his metamorphosis: "Arizona, how do I make you reconsider? How do I make you come back to me? I came here to run away from the hurts of my old life, to look for a different way to do things. I didn't expect to find you, but I did. Now I see you at every corner, I see you in every person, I

hear you in every voice. You opened up a part of me that I thought was long dead; I came here a searching, hurting man and you have helped me towards wholeness. I am a better man for knowing you, I am a happier man knowing that I love you. I will not give up on you. Forgive me, Jason” (Atagana 2010: 142). Jason redeems himself from his initial position of paternalistic power as he resolves to change and become the perfect, thoughtful, kind and generous man who views Arizona as his equal.

At this point I wish to draw a comparison between the study of white American Smithton women in the 1970s and the black South African readers of Nollybooks in 2014. Both sets of readers display identification with the paradoxes in the heroines’ characterisation. Radway mentions that the Smithton women were angered by men and feminists who saw them as typical housewives who were “ignorant, inactive, and unimportant”, whilst they, like the heroines, saw themselves as “intelligent and independent” (Radway 1991: 78-79). She summarises the readers’ perception of themselves and identification with the heroines’ contradictory traits by stating that “in the utopia of romance fiction, ‘independence’ and a secure individual ‘identity’ are never compromised by the paternalistic care and protection of the male” (Radway 1991: 79). This, by implication, means that Hubbard’s final vision will never be totally achieved. Despite the presence of “the liberated heroine with her man as equal partner,” (Hubbard 1985: 120), it remains a momentary illusion.

The momentary and illusory nature of vision four is evident in *Unfashionably in Love*. Fikile Mathebula is an ambitious fashion student, who, despite her difficult background, such as losing her parents to AIDS and being raised by her grandmother in the township of Phumula, rises in a competitive industry to become a designer to one of South Africa's leading fashion houses. She is certainly talented, driven and courageous, and possesses exceptional creativity and ingenuity. This would classify her as part of Hubbard's vision four, except that her greatest achievement will not be achieving her qualification and sought-after internship, nor her cutting-edge designs. It will be acquiring a relationship with the desirable Joe Silongo, Cocoa Rouge's CEO. This heroine regresses to vision one when Joe eventually kisses her. She is elated and grateful: "How long had she imagined this moment? What joy to finally be in his arms!" (Mutangadura 2010: 104).

Joe, we learn, is a self-made entrepreneur with humble origins. Raised by a single mother, a domestic worker who died whilst Joe was in matric, he faced many challenges. This information inspires additional admiration for his character and makes him even more desirable to Fikile since he is a self-made millionaire. His ability to apologise for his jealousy and unfair firing of her make him a vision four hero. He becomes more articulate towards the end of the narrative and realises that he was guilty of sending mixed messages. However, in the third last paragraph of the story, he switches back to his previous dominant role when he says, "and this means that I want you to be my woman" (Mutangadura 2010: 147). The bookazine's final message is that, ultimately, both the hero and

heroine's completion is synonymous with Fikile belonging to Joe. So vision four has been sacrificed as Fikile switches back to vision one, taking on the role of Cinderella as "virgin earth mother" and Joe, "the benign dictator". The pronoun "my" which precedes "woman" in Joe's statement affirms Hubbard's comment about vision one: "he has a monopoly on formal, overt power, and he assumes his right to rule. She gladly gives obedience in exchange for upward mobility, protection, and enduring love" (Hubbard 1985: 116).

Cassandra Sithole, the heroine in *Looking for Mr Right*, is no different in the author's portrayal of a strong personality who unexpectedly displays archaic values. Despite her entrepreneurial spirit and creative talents, she still feels incomplete without a husband. Ortner and Whitehead, in their book *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality* (1981), present various essays investigating sex and gender based on cross-cultural and social practices. First, they mention that the exchange of women is very often an economic or political transaction. In some African cultures the acquisition of a wife is equated to ownership of property. The authors highlight that, in many societies, marriage is a critical factor in creating male prestige and, very often, "women may be cast as the prize for male prowess or success; having a wife may be prerequisite to full adult male status" (Ortner and Whitehead 1981: 21). They further comment on the benefits of a wife, that "a wife is thus often a productive asset, and particularly a producer of goods utilized in male prestige-generating exchange activities, or in hospitality events that allow a husband to be seen as a big and generous man" (Ortner and Whitehead 1981: 22). Furthermore, marriage,

which produces children and continues the man's lineage, adds value and prestige to the male. Cassandra would eagerly offer herself up as a prestige offering to a potential husband.

We do not see Cassandra concerned with traditional practices of marriage, such as those displayed by brideservice and bridewealth cultures where the groom becomes obligated to serve and honour his wife's family. There is no mention of African marriage customs or rituals in her marriage manual. Rather, her perception of marriage is based on Western perceptions or, more specifically, on the Western fantasy of marriage. Her fantasy is more about the process of sourcing a husband and the spectacular wedding day than about the married life that would follow. Her marriage manual includes articles entitled such as "The ten week guide to getting that proposal" (Ntuny 2010: 116). She dreamily imagines her wedding gown: "she'd wear a full skirted gown in ivory with silver embroidery on the hem and he'd wear a matching white suit ..." (Ntuny 2010: 23). Of the four heroines in the bookazines, she seems to be the heroine who is most dependent on a man and the least evolved as an individual since her independence and self-determination, important parts of individuation, are deficient. Her self-worth is equated to finding a husband, a primary characteristic of Hubbard's second vision. Her marriage manual and internet dating ventures convey this continual obsession, which provides insight into the title of the bookazine, *Looking for Mr Right*. It appears obvious to her that her happiness is dependent on finding this elusive person and she dreams of an unlikely scenario when she thinks: "Why couldn't Mr Right just walk into the bridal shop and

sweep her off her feet?” (Ntuny 2010: 59). Hubbard’s second vision is encapsulated in Cassandra’s character, as Hubbard says: “she has declared that next to being his wife nothing else in the world is of any importance” (Hubbard 1985:118). This anti-feminist notion that to be complete, Cassandra must marry is perpetuated by the constant nagging of her mother, Nomsa Sithole, who is preoccupied with scouting the community for a potential husband for her daughter. When she actually hears that her daughter does have a date, her mother responds in an old-fashioned way by asking questions about her appearance and not about the man himself: ““Are your clothes ironed? Is your hair clean? I hope you’re wearing perfume”” (Ntuny 2010: 33).

It is true that Cassandra’s date with Vusi incites her anger as he openly declares his wish for a submissive, passive wife when he says: “Most women these days claim they don’t need a man. But you are a true African woman who understands the value of marriage” (Ntuny 2010: 36). Vusi’s naked male chauvinism is intolerable and affirms Cassandra’s strength in her convictions: she might want a husband, but certainly not a chauvinistic dictator. Suddenly a potential “Mr Right” seems to be totally “Mr Wrong” and Cassandra declares, “His attitude towards women said it all — not to mention the way he had looked at her, as if she were a thick slice of black forest cake” (Ntuny 2010: 38). Now Cassandra yearns for an ideal man in terms of Hubbard’s vision four who: “is articulate and sensitive in matters of human relations, respecting the ambitions and desires of the heroine and accepting her as an equal partner” (Hubbard 1985: 120/1). It becomes unimportant that Kagiso is not the typical masculine, alpha male. He

drives an “old Toyota Hilux” (Ntuny 2010: 100) and confesses to having undeveloped social skills since he spends most of his time with animals. Instead, it is because he is respectful, “relaxed, genuine and at ease with himself” (Ntuny 2010: 101) that Cassandra is attracted to him.

Michelle Brophy-Baerman (2004:16) researched romantic television programmes in the United States of America and reached interesting conclusions regarding male heroes. She mentions the “sensitive man phenomenon” where “women want to see nice guys” and not necessarily the testosterone macho prototype. She reminds us that “loutish and violent, sexy and buff are not the only representations of masculinity we find in popular culture ... sensitive, nurturing, vulnerable men have appeared in shows like *Friends*, *Home Improvement*, *ER*, and *NYPD Blues* and movies like *Cheaper by the Dozen* and *Lost in Translation*” (2004:15). This sensitive man portrayal may be another fantasy figure of masculinity. Indeed, Kagiso fits this model. His visual appearance is not startlingly attractive. He is no alpha male who works out in the gym nor is he dressed in a power suit. As in the bookazine, he simply could be any common male, nevertheless the “Mr Nice Guy” is still a female fantasy of the hero.

At her core, Cassandra has deep values such as honesty, integrity and loyalty, but her marriage obsession has sidetracked these and it is only through the intolerable characters of the internet dates that she is reminded of her inability to sacrifice her core beliefs. Cassandra cannot be the “African woman” that Vusi describes and will have to abandon her persona of “Wannabe Mrs” to be true to herself. This

would mean casting aside Hubbard's second and third visions and becoming "the liberated heroine with her man as equal partner" (Hubbard 1985: 120).

Dispelling the marriage myth

Suzanne Juhasz (1988: 240), in her article "Texts to grow on: Reading Women's Romance Fiction", makes the observation that marriage in romance novels does not necessarily mean that a woman has lost her identity to an overprotective, powerful male. Instead, she says that there is a place for marriage and healthy hero/heroine relationships as "marriage then celebrates a love both egalitarian and total and becomes the cornerstone for a potentially healthy society, not the perpetuation of a patriarchal and sexist system". So Cassandra's hypothetical marriage to Vusi would be disastrous, but a hypothetical marriage to Kagiso could still bring fulfillment because Kagiso embodies Hubbard's vision four regarding the hero's mode of relating to the heroine.

Predictably, Cassandra evolves into a more independent woman and the book ends with her abandoning her desperation to find a man. Radway acknowledges that the plot of the romance is driven by the emotion and choices of the heroine, and that the "romance originates in the female push toward individuation and actualization of the self" (Radway 1991: 147). Cassandra is satisfied to befriend Kagiso but states, "At this point, I kind of like being on my own" (Ntuny 2010: 166). This developing maturity in Cassandra's character allows her to embrace vision four, and her letter of apology to Kagiso is a turning point in her

character's evolution when she writes: "I'm not writing this so you will take me back. I'm writing it because I want you to understand, now that I finally understand myself. I don't need a wedding. I don't even need a man. All the love I've been seeking was already there — in my work, my family and my friends" (Ntuny 2010: 145). Cassandra makes conscious, selective decisions, typical of an enlightened heroine, once she feels she is in control of her own life. This ability is known as 'agency'. Feminist discourse, especially in second-wave feminist works such as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), often focuses on how women are deprived of agency, and the Nollybook heroines possess it in varying degrees.

The bookazine *Lights, Camera, Love* initially conveys its heroine, Thuli Ngcobo, as a dishevelled, clumsy, disorganised receptionist. Her immediate attraction to the dashing American film director Jake Mkhize makes her want to establish/parade her worth from the outset. She sees it as an opportunity to make money when she is asked to stand in as his personal assistant, and "now more than ever she wanted to show him how capable she was" (Desjardins 2010: 27). However, she shows her inexperience by her inappropriate wardrobe choice on set as she stumbles in her high heels. I shall elaborate on the very significant role appearance plays in the characterisation of the heroine later in this chapter.

Initially Jake and Thuli conform to vision one in Hubbard's description of the hero and heroine. On the third page of the bookazine, she meets him and he is described by a clichéd expression as "the tall, dark stranger" (Desjardins 2010: 11). Immediately she is affected by his expensive Chanel cologne and

acknowledges his demigod status by describing him as both physically magnetic and as a most important person: “this was the VIP guest the staff had been gossiping about all week! The good-looking, unmarried, Oscar-winning director with Zulu roots. She stole another glance at him. With his strong jawline and striking eyes, Jake looked like a man who belonged on a Hollywood action movie set — the kind female audiences delighted in seeing up close and personal on the big screen. It was obvious he took care of himself — flawless skin and perfect teeth. A gold Rolex watch, navy Gucci shirt, loose collar — a tailored suede jacket completed the celebrity look” (Desjardins 2010: 13). Of course Thuli is not in his league as she is described as irritating and clumsy. She, according to vision one, deserves Jake’s rude comment as she checks him into the hotel: “Look, I’m really bushed, could we just do the necessary” (Desjardins 2010: 12), since he is the benign dictator.

As the bookazine progresses, the heroine is portrayed in a more favourable light. She is intelligent and culturally sensitive, and manages to broker a deal with Chief Dlamini. Yet the author is still intent on portraying the heroine as worthy of Jake Mkhize’s attentions by referring to her physical attributes. Hubbard’s third vision of the hero and heroine is dominant as there is a focus on Thuli’s awakening sexuality which will tempt Jake, “the prince as warrior”. A major change from visions one and two to vision three is that “the heroines in this vision are permitted to exhibit a strong militancy, to acknowledge their sexuality, and to test the male almost beyond his powers of endurance” (Hubbard 1985: 119). When Jake takes Thuli to the Hilton College dinner as his partner, he purchases a

dress for her and the focus is certainly not on her personality or interpersonal skills, but rather on her body areas: “The dress hugged every curve, flattering and sensual, as if it had been designed just for her, emphasizing her narrow waist and curvaceous hips. Her breasts perched, moulded to perfection in gathered cups of duchess satin. She wondered how he’d known which size to buy. The satin red heels lengthened her legs which peeped, gazelle-like, from the midthigh split up the front” (Desjardins 2010:68). This breathtaking description of Thuli’s beauty is typical of the romantic heroine. It feeds into the reader’s secret hope that she too might win an unattainable man, if she could only perfect her physical appearance.

Commodity culture

Naomi Johnson’s article, “All Consuming Love: A feminist critique of the unconventional pairing of advertising and teen romance novels”, points out the fact that typical romantic heroines must be beautiful. She notes that these romances even promote certain products and brands as “integral to heroines’ search for love” (Johnson 2008: 1). I quoted, earlier in this chapter, a passage from *Lights, Camera, Love* in which Thuli notices Jake’s gold Rolex watch and navy Gucci shirt when she first sets eyes on him. Both these labels communicate that Jake is a man of wealth and importance. When she takes him to meet her family, he is once again decked out in the trappings of wealth and status. He drives a 4x4 (symbolic of his rugged image) and wears fashionable Calvin Klein jeans and an expensive navy Lacoste golf shirt. Similarly, in *Finding Arizona*, Arizona goes to Durban in Jason’s Audi TT, also a symbol of his wealth and status. We are told that Cassandra in *Looking for Mr Right* drives a second-hand

VW Golf, very different from the above-mentioned vehicles driven by the heroes of the bookazines. This is consistent with Hubbard's description of the first vision, namely that the heroine's wealth and status is always below that of the desirable hero. Johnson's article stresses that teen romances are not merely entertaining but are a form of perpetuating the prevailing commercial culture. These romances perpetuate the ornamental role played by women and, consequently, the trouble and expense that is eagerly embraced as a means to acquiring the perfect man. The expensive, desirable brands that are casually displayed by the heroes are a fantasy ploy to increase the heroes' desirability. This plays into women readers' fantasies of the perfect man as wealthy and stylish.

Angela McRobbie (1991), in analysing romantic serials in *Jackie*, a popular British magazine, discovered similar findings. Besides the pursuit of romance, young women were encouraged to improve their appearance through the "maintenance and reupholstery of the self" (McRobbie 1991: 124). When Jason takes Shezi out to dinner on their first date in *Finding Arizona*, he is rendered breathless when he first sets eyes on her: "'Wow, you look lovely,' he murmured, his eyes sweeping over her" (Atagana 2010: 61). It is extremely important that Arizona in *Finding Arizona* borrow the perfect dress from her friend Lu for her dream date in Durban with Jason, and she acknowledges her irresistibility when she comments to herself, "with the dress and her hair up she looked like a completely different person" (Atagana 2010: 59). The fairy-tale fantasy symbolism is overt. Arizona is the proverbial transformed Cinderella, dressing up

for the ball where she expects the desirable prince to be overwhelmed by her beauty.

This focus on the heroine's physical beauty and dressing for success described by Naomi Johnson is not only about outer garments. It also includes underwear, accessories, cosmetics and hairstyles, which all form part of the heroine's allure. Johnson (2008: 14) notes that lipgloss is important in the *Clique* series of romances. This is expected as the heroine should look her most seductive in preparation for the first kiss. It is interesting that, moments before Kagiso first kisses Cassandra in *Looking for Mr Right*, she is worrying about her physical desirability. Instead of confidently embracing this momentous occasion, she shows her insecurities by thinking, "*Was her hair okay? Had her perfume faded? Did she need more lipgloss?*" (Ntuny 2010: 101).

Undoubtedly, the stress on the heroine's attractiveness is crucial to her character, and the romance reader would equate this external beauty with her inner beauty. Also, women readers, having been raised to worry continually about their appearance, will identify with these insecurities. Valerie Parv (1997), in her handbook on writing romances *The Art of Romance Writing: How to create, write and sell your contemporary romance novel*, directs aspiring writers to make use of mirrors or reflections to convey and prove the heroine's beauty. Before Thuli in *Lights, Camera, Love* takes on the daunting role of assistant to Jake, the "conceited Hollywood director" (Desjardins 2010: 25), she is strengthened by the

confidence she gains from knowing that she looks impressive in the mirror. Chapter two begins with the following description of Thuli harnessing her power to impress: “Thuli took one last look in the mirror. Bongani had wanted her dressed for success, and she was going to deliver. She was wearing high heels with the charcoal pin-striped suit her aunt had made for her as a graduation gift — skirt above the knee, buttoned up figure-hugging jacket, a white blouse. She’d checked her hair, applied her make-up. She was confident that, this time, he would see a well-dressed, professional woman at his door” (Desjardins 2010: 26).

Repressed sexuality

After looking at so many references to the heroines’ physical beauty and seductiveness, it seems strange that there is no sexual content in the Nollybooks. Tami Bereska (1994), in her article “Adolescent Sexuality and the Changing Romance Novel Market”, confirms my observation when she comments that the decline of young adult romance novels in the late 1980s was a result of excluding sexual content. She says that, as adolescents became more sexually aware, the lack of sexual content in teen romances made them lose their appeal as the adolescent readers sought to identify with their heroines. More sexually active heroines in adult romances were closer to their own experiences.

This poses the question whether Nollybooks readers are, in fact, satisfied with the diluted sexual behaviour of the heroes and heroines. After all the flirting and titillation, the question is, does the first kiss satisfy the readers’ expectations?

Vivanco stresses the importance of explicit sex scenes in twenty-first century romances as being synonymous with the portrayal of strong, independent women and a woman's right to experience sexual fulfilment. She says: "In twenty-first century Modern romances there are plenty of explicit sex scenes, complete with multiple orgasms, positions and techniques, resulting in the best sex the heroine has ever experienced" (Vivanco 2012: 1066).

I would argue that the Nollybooks, in failing to explore sexual relationships, merely scratch the surface of physical love. Moky Makura of MME media, explained the absence of sex in an interview in *The Sunday Times* in 2011 when she referred to the Nollybook heroines as "morally upright" and claimed that "You don't need sex to have good storytelling" (Sidley 2011: 32). However, this argument is insubstantial in that real women's lives are certainly not portrayed and, furthermore, pregnancy and motherhood are excluded from the Nollybooks. Nowhere do the characters struggle to balance work and family life. Vivanco cites the UK'S Equal Opportunities Commission as stating in 2007 that: "the reality is that unless women can combine work and caring roles successfully, they are unlikely to reach the top in great numbers" (Vivanco 2012: 1079). None of these issues are ever raised in the plots of the Nollybooks, and it is not difficult to see why romance novels of this ilk have been labelled as antifeminist.

The Nollybooks, which are part of South African fiction, never mention South Africa's history or apartheid. The heroines, despite having high levels of

education, pursuing passionate causes and possessing social consciences, such as Arizona's interest in exposing the corruption in Jason's Ubuntu deal and Fikile's denunciation of the immoral professor, are overwhelmingly far more interested in frivolities such as their clothes and hair. After all, it is not their intelligence nor moral posturing that will assist them in their primary goal of catching their sought-after men.

Evolution of the hero

Returning to individual character development, it is true that the heroines do provide the vehicle through which the heroes can evolve. Thuli in *Lights, Camera, Love* assists Jake Mkhize to deal with his traumatic past and get closure in understanding his parents' death. Nevertheless, she is still portrayed as a stereotypical heroine who, paradoxically, contains elements of both neediness and strength. The hero understands that it is this that, ultimately, will make her desirable. Her eyes "spoke simultaneously of an independent spirit and one that wanted to be rescued" (Desjardins 2010: 80) and, once again, this duality of character is exactly what the bookazine reader understands and desires in a man. The Nollybooks confirm a trend in other twenty-first century romance fiction of depicting women as paradoxically needing both independence and a saviour. In this way, these books place men in the impossible situation of having to fulfil two contradictory demands. Jake Mkhize, as Thuli's saviour, loses his arrogance and narcissism as the narrative progresses and the reader may soon forget his initial bullying, self-indulgent behaviour. This is a reminder of Radway's point about the heroine making sense of the hero's ambiguous behaviour, as mentioned in

chapter one, when I discussed the progression of the narrative. The hero does not undergo a personality change, nor does he experience an epiphany. Rather, the heroine makes sense of his earlier behaviour. He is perceived as a man who has suffered both physical and emotional exile. It is the extraordinary Thuli who can bring him back to his roots, both literally and metaphorically, because she assists him in getting closure about his anguished past, thus confirming her superior emotional sophistication.

As the plot progresses, there is a transition from these stereotypical roles to Hubbard's fourth vision as Thuli shows independence and intelligence, and Jake becomes more sensitised to her needs. This is highlighted by the fact that it is only through Thuli's intervention that Chief Dlamini allows them to film on his land. She also shows ambition in wanting to own her own B&B one day. She reveals an untapped acting ability when she substitutes for Zodwa, the lead actress in the Butterfly house in Jake's production of *Zulu Valentine*, and this is when Jake becomes "captivated and spellbound by her" (Desjardins 2010: 91). Jake needs Thuli on many levels but, most critically, he needs her to assist him to attain psychological peace over his turmoil about his parents. It is fitting that it is Thuli who points out the secret message from his parents that was etched in the cave so many years earlier. Yet, still the reader is reminded of the prevalence of Hubbard's earlier visions as Thuli constantly seeks Jake's paternalistic care and male protection. The following quotation is significant because it shows how she is governed more by her heart than by her head when she says, "There was no room for romance in her five-year plan to becoming manager of her own B&B.

Oh, but the scent of his cologne numbed her common sense!” (Desjardins 2010: 81). Vision four disintegrates as she is thrust back into vision one by Jake’s irresistible charm. Vision two is the final message of the narrative when Jake presents her with his mother’s delicate ring. As he proposes to her, Hubbard’s words regarding vision two are applicable: “next to being his wife nothing else in the world is of any importance” (1985:118). Although the plot makes a few gestures towards a more gender-egalitarian dispensation, it ultimately falls back onto a formulaic vision of the heroine’s relationship with the hero.

Character foils

Although the heroines of the bookazines are portrayed as modern, independent women to varying degrees, each of them shows some self-actualisation based on the approval of the male heroes. In addition, there are binary oppositions to the heroes and heroines in portrayals of foils, in the form of minor characters in the books, whose function is to highlight the main characters’ good points. A good example of this is in *Looking for Mr Right*. Cassandra’s vision of an ideal romance contrasts with Thembi’s numerous romances, which are all calculated decisions based on her narcissistic personality. Similarly in *Finding Arizona*, Lundi, the predatory ex-fiancée, is the perfect foil for Arizona’s naive, unworldly self. Where the foil is another woman, she is usually a competitor who is often shown to be experienced, vain, beautiful, demanding and dependent, unlike the heroines, who are invariably naïve and unaware of their exceptional beauty.

Not only is there a contrast between the heroines and their foils, but the heroes and heroines are also portrayed in many instances as paradoxical individuals. Radway comments on the contrast between the heroes and heroines' sexual histories. Whilst the heroines are usually inexperienced, the hero's previous promiscuity is acceptable to "both the heroine and the reader because it is always attributed to his lack of love for his sexual partners" (Radway 1991: 130). At the same time, it confirms his masculinity and reaffirms the notion that only with the presence of the heroine's attentions can he find true love. Joe Silongo in *Unfashionably in Love* is a pursued man, found desirable by models and fashion industry personalities. Only Fikile can tame his wandering eye. As Radway elaborates, "Sexual fidelity in the ideal romance is understood to be the natural partner of true love" (1991: 130).

Radway also comments on the prolific presence of villain figures, which are typically found in romances: "These figures are inevitably ugly, morally corrupt, and interested only in the heroine's sexual favours" (1991: 133). These villains set up another contrast with the heroes, who are ultimately the opposite of Radway's description — attractive, honest and with noble intentions. It is apt that Vusi's online name in *Looking for Mr Right* is Rosebank Romeo. Cassandra's other online dates' names such as 1_smooth_1 and GQ10/10 also reflect their narcissistic personalities. Their unacceptability is necessary to contrast with Kagiso's sensitivity and respectful demeanour as a prerequisite to earning Cassandra's love. Where Kagiso desires love, the internet men desire sexual pleasure. Where Kagiso is tender and honest, they are vain and corrupt. Vusi's

statements such as ““You’re hot”” and ““I can’t wait to show you off. How soon do you think I can start the lobola negotiations?”” (Ntummy 2010: 38) reinforce his sexist attitude to women. Similarly, in *Unfashionably in Love*, the rakish, egotistical Luke Modise assumes that Fikile functions according to his own immoral values and that he can lure her away from Cocoa Rouge by offering her an extraordinary salary. The narcissism evident in his introduction to her contrasts with Joe’s humility when he first met Fikile as Joe does not even mention that he is the owner of Cocoa Rouge. The blatant difference in their characters is evident in Luke’s introduction: ““We haven’t met before but we should have. I’m the owner of I-Gear. In fact some people think of me as I-Gear itself!’ he laughed cockily” (Mutangadura 2010: 138).

The Nollybook heroes do not have best friends in the same way that the heroines do. This conforms to the stereotype of the man as lone achiever and the woman as emotionally nurturing and almost co-dependent. Of the Nollybook samples in this study, only Joe in *Unfashionably in Love* has a good friend, Chief, who is mainly a business partner. The heroines’ close friends, who form a support structure, are a significant feature in three of the bookazines. *Lights*, *Camera*, *Love* is the exception in that the heroine, Thuli, does not have a close girlfriend. In the other three bookazines, the friends are important elements in the heroines’ growth. They comment on the developing romances and frequently provide a moral compass to the confused and injured heroines.

Lucinda Meshengu, or Lu, is Shezi's best friend in *Finding Arizona* and is her advisor and confidante throughout. Shezi cries in her arms when the situation seems hopeless, but Lu is always there to encourage her to pursue Jason. From dressing her up for her dream date in Durban to engineering their final meeting on the aeroplane at the end of the story, Lu is a constant source of hope. She represents the perfect best friend: supportive, non-judgmental, generous and completely invested in the friendship. She is Shezi's friend, who accompanies her to the mall, not merely to buy girly paraphernalia with which to adorn herself, but also to buy books, and we first learn of Shezi's discerning reading tastes when she plans to go and source the award-winning novel, *The Kite Runner*, with Lu. Her final words to Shezi at the airport before Shezi boards the plane to America hint at her hand in the ultimate goal of the romance novel, namely attaining the desired man but, in this instance, it is for her best friend: "I love you ... and just make sure you make the most of any second chances" (Atagana 2010: 153). This is a declaration of her unique friendship and a prophecy of a perfect future for her friend.

Amanda Li, Cassandra's assistant, becomes her best friend in *Looking for Mr Right*. However, their relationship is turbulent as Amanda has a strong identity and becomes critical of Cassandra's obsessive desire to marry. At first, Amanda plays along with her friend's marriage obsession and assists her in dressing up for her first internet date. She comments on her appearance by complimenting her: "You look great. Sophisticated, stylish, perfect wife material" (Ntuny 2010: 31-2). Yet again, her physical attraction is equated to her desirability. It is interesting

that Amanda is happily single and will eventually disapprove of Cassandra's marriage manual. Their relationship is sorely tested by various forces. These include Thembi's threats, Cassandra firing Amanda, and Amanda breaking off the friendship and refusing to answer Cassandra's calls. This experience is an important lesson in Cassandra's path to maturity as she realises that her friendship is far more valuable than acquiring Thembi's business. She musters the incredible strength to face Thembi and refuses to "drop everything for a cheque" (Ntuny 2010: 122). Her awareness of her unacceptable past behaviour is not expressed by a mere apology to Amanda. Rather she has a raw confrontation with the intimidating Thembi, which is incongruous with Cassandra's typical grovelling persona. It is a turning point for her character as she asserts:

"do you have any idea how much work Amanda and I put into your wedding clothes? It was just the two of us, doing half the work by hand, and we had other customers. You wanted me to fire Amanda after you treated her like dirt, but you wouldn't have a wedding dress without her help. Honestly, the trouble you put me through is worth ten times what you paid me ... if you don't change your attitude, it's going to come back to bite you. Take it from someone who knows" (Ntuny 2010: 123).

Amanda is more than Cassandra's sounding board; she is an important factor in Cassandra's psychological growth and it is fitting that she is present at the end of the story when Cassandra burns her marriage manual.

Khumo, a textile designer and Fikile's younger best friend in *Unfashionably in Love*, met the heroine at school and they went to college together. They both have a passion for fashion and it is truly a mutual friendship in which they are both

invested in helping each other. Khumo is proud of Fikile's accomplishments and it is expected that she turns to her best friend when the crisis with Professor Kaleni occurs. She reveals that the professor failed her in the Basic Men's Tailoring course because she refused to commit to a relationship with the married Kaleni. In addition, her boyfriend, Mbongeni, has left her because of this. This is especially devastating to Khumo, since she loves Mbongeni and she no longer has the money to pay her rent as Mbongeni assisted her financially. I note another dependence on a male provider here: Hubbard's first vision of romantic relationships is also to be found in the subplot. It is only as a result of Fikile's meeting with the professor, when she threatens him with exposure to the college council if Khumo does not get accurate exam results, that the issue is resolved.

Fikile's emerging psychological strength is conveyed at this meeting and the dialogue is important in reiterating Fikile's newfound confidence. Professor Kaleni refers to Fikile condescendingly as "Khumo's 'little friend'" (Mutangadura 2010: 122). Fikile's response is assertive and appealing to the Nollybook reader, who revels in Professor Kaleni's comeuppance: "'let's get a few things straight. First, I'm not Khumo's 'little friend' — I'm an interested party who has much to share with the college council. Secondly, you're late'" (Mutangadura 2010: 122). Khumo's role in Fikile's transition to Hubbard's fourth vision is evident as Fikile becomes a "liberated heroine". This is a new fantasy theme as the reader may identify with the heroine's ability to make her own decisions. It is understandable that this is the vision so prominent in self-help books today, in that "the definition of woman has moved from woman incapable

to woman in total control” (Hubbard 1985:124). Both Khumo and Fikile give unstintingly to each other and the relationship is symbiotic. Khumo’s confidence in Fikile never wavers and she plays an important role in Fikile’s growth both professionally and privately. The best friends’ relationship is solidified at the end of the bookazine when they become business partners in designing and sewing outfits for the celebrity, Phindile, for her television programme.

Reader identification

Whilst romance writing as a whole can be labelled as formulaic, I have noted that there are discrepancies within the genre. The characterisations of the heroines Arizona Shezi, Cassandra Sithole, Fikile Mathebula and Thuli Ngcobo all share the purpose of making the reader identify with them and passionately desire their corresponding heroes, namely Jason Khoza, Kagiso, Joe Silongo and Jake Mkhize, as intensely as possible. The readers who buy into the fantasy of the perfect love story as a panacea for all of life’s challenges eagerly embrace these heroines and heroes. Indeed, is it not the reader’s secret fear that she too, might be like Cassandra at the beginning of *Looking for Mr Right*: “What was enjoyable about watching *Pretty Woman* alone on Valentine’s Day, when everyone else in Johannesburg was getting chocolates, flowers and the requisite red and white teddy bears?”(Ntuny 2010: 22). However, I have also identified the transitions in the heroes and heroines’ characters as reflecting a more enlightened reader who, in 2014, will possibly understand that watching *Pretty Woman* alone on Valentine’s Day is not ultimately a tragedy.

My investigation has revealed how, although the Nollybooks' plots and characters display elements of Hubbard's fourth vision, in which the partners enjoy equality, in the main they espouse a more conservative vision of relationships. The following chapter will elaborate further on the formulaic nature of the Nollybooks by exploring their transition to the television series *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*.

Chapter 3: From text to television: Nollybook to *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*

**“We are marching to Mzansi we are flying, running, moving, riding” (lyrics
from *Mzansi* by Jamali)**

This chapter will examine the transmission of three of the Nollybook narratives as a television series. I will use Stuart Hall’s approach to “representation” to analyse the television programmes because Hall is a leading exponent of the link between textual and visual images, and cultural meanings. My objective is to show that, just as the books portray conservative and stereotypical notions of romance and gender, so too does the television series. It is thus necessary to comment further on the popularity of the Nollybooks, not only in written form but also as presented in the medium of television, which naturally reaches a wider audience. Television draws on the visual and the auditory, and is potentially more powerful than the written word in persuading viewers to accept conservative views of love and gender. In chapters one and two, I explained how the Nollybooks are aimed at a young, female audience. The adaptation to television marks a change in the potential audience as the series could be watched by all viewers of television. The audience for any TV programme is largely determined by when it is shown. In this way, the target market for the narratives is broadened considerably. My main argument is that the TV programmes reflect the main ideas of the texts, particularly regarding the romantic formula and gender portrayals. They thus further persuade viewers to accept these traditional and conservative views of romance and male/female stereotypes.

In July 2012 the Nollybooks were transformed into a TV series comprising six episodes, each 45 minutes long, entitled *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. The series was broadcast by e-TV and created by MME Media and Fireworx. These low-budget television programmes were made because e-TV acknowledged that there was a strong consumer desire for local productions. The head of e-TV channels in 2012, Monde Twala, commented: “Our new six-part romantic comedy series, *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, is based on the highly successful Nollybooks novels, published by Moky Makura. This new series is built around the eKasi brand which has proved itself over and over again. It generates good ratings and delivers refreshing and inspiring stories to the market. *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* comprises gritty, real and uplifting stories about young women falling in love” (Sterkowicz 2012). This provides additional support to my argument that there is a widespread demand for the South African romance genre, not only among the female readers of the Nollybook texts (as discussed in the previous chapters) but also by the viewers of South African television programmes.

Six programmes were initially aired in 2012, all based on Nollybooks. These were: *Office games*, adapted from the book *Business of Love*, *Something’s cooking*, adapted from the book *Recipe of Love*, *Uncovered*, adapted from *The spy who loved him* (whose title is, in turn, borrowed from the 1977 James Bond film *The spy who loved me*), *Your Move*, adapted from *A man worth knowing*, *PhD*, adapted from *Finding Arizona*, and *Game On*, adapted from *Looking for Mr Right*. Season 2, consisting of several episodes, was aired in 2013 and 2014. Most of the scripts for season 2 were newly written and not based on the

Nollybooks, but four episodes were based on the Nollybook stories. The following table will provide clarity on which Nollybooks were adapted to television programmes. The highlighted sections represent the Nollybooks and television adaptations which are under study.

Schedule of programmes

Nollybook	Mzansi Love: Kasi Style	Broadcast date
<i>Business of Love</i> by Pamela Moeng	<i>Office Games</i>	31 July 2012
<i>Recipe of Love</i> by Charleen Naidoo	<i>Something's Cooking</i>	7 August 2012
<i>The spy who loved him</i> by Robyn Goss	<i>Uncovered</i>	14 August 2012
<i>A man worth knowing</i> by Anthony Ehler	<i>Your Move</i>	21 August 2012
Finding Arizona by Michelle Atagana	PhD	28 August 2012
Looking for Mr Right by Cheryl S Ntuny	Game On	4 September 2012

	Mzansi Love: Kasi Style (2)	Broadcast date
<i>New Scripts</i>	<i>Secret Marriage</i>	9 July 2013
<i>New Script</i>	<i>Out of Breadth</i>	16 July 2013
<i>New Script</i>	<i>Sexy.com</i>	23 July 2013
<i>New Script</i>	<i>Kiss and Tell</i>	30 July 2014
<i>New Script</i>	<i>Colour blind</i>	6 August 2013
<i>New Script</i>	<i>Lawless</i>	13 August 2013
Nollybook <i>More than Friends</i> by Lisa Anne Julien	<i>Just Friends</i>	6 May 2014
Nollybook Unfashionably in Love by Sabina Mutangadura	Label it Love	13 May 2014
<i>New Script</i>	<i>The Wannabe</i>	20 May 2014
<i>New Script</i>	<i>Head Rush</i>	27 May 2014
Nollybook <i>Following my passion</i> by Vuyo Seipe	<i>In the Mix</i>	3 June 2014
<i>New Script</i>	<i>Perfect Score</i>	10 June 2014
Nollybook <i>Perfect Holiday Romance</i> by Paula Marais	<i>Last Resort</i>	17 June 2014

This chapter will look at samples of the e-TV series and compare them with their corresponding Nollybooks. I am interested to find out whether the portrayals of the characters and plotlines are mere reproductions of the bookazines. Furthermore, I will investigate the possible reasons for these adaptations. Since three out of the four Nollybooks in this study were adapted for television, I will refer to these three examples, namely *Game On*, *PhD* and *Label it Love*. The fourth Nollybook in the study (*Lights, Camera, Love*) was not produced as part of the series since the producers felt that the plot was too elaborate for a low-budget film.

In my analysis, I will draw on the theories of Stuart Hall and Laura Mulvey. Hall's ideas of representation and culture are central to analysing the images in the television programmes. Mulvey's ideas, based on John Berger's theory of the ways of seeing, are most relevant to my exploration of how the heroines are objectified by the heroes. I will focus on similarities and differences between the texts and the television programmes, and on the portrayal of gender in the plots and characterisation. In addition, I will be making comparisons with South Africa's most popular television show, namely *Generations*, since both series reflect on a post-apartheid, transformed new South Africa. On the 21 August 2014, BBC news reported on the world-shattering news of the firing of the *Generations*' cast in August 2014 since "*Generations* is one of the longest running and reportedly, the top rated show in the country" (Fihlani 2014). Since there is little established research on the viewers of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*,

Generations offers a useful comparison in that it also reflects on South African popular culture.

Theories of representation

It is helpful at this point to step back and explore the theory of representation. In a lecture entitled “Representations & The media: featuring Stuart Hall” (Hall 2006), Hall defines representation as “the way in which meaning is given to the things depicted”. He elaborates by saying that the word “representation” has numerous meanings. Firstly it refers to the action of presenting, depicting or imaging, but it may also be to re-present, meaning this expands on something that was already there. Furthermore, it may be understood as a stand-in or taking the place of something else. He draws our attention to the fact that there is very often a “gap of representation” between the true meaning and the media’s representation of an image. The standard view of representation is that it is either an accurate or a distorted depiction but Hall’s view is that representation is more complex. He argues that representation is an active, creative process where images may have many different meanings and he invites the viewer not merely to accept any image but to undertake an “interrogation of the image” and to consider the “politics of the image”. Here he poses an important question: “What kind of images of Black people are we presented with?” (Hall 2011). In a satirical spoof on a Hollywood Black acting school he shows stereotypical roles played by Black men, for example, the roles of “pimps” and “epic slaves” or as people who swear and engage in “jive talk”. Hall, in speaking about the stereotyping of Black men in television and film, says “the limited images of Black men affect how the

society perceives ‘black men’ in the real world” (Hall 2011). He argues that the media need to portray a greater diversity of images for Black people.

These negative Black male stereotypes are not conveyed in *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. The Black heroes are all upstanding, modern, refined, urbanised young men and this is a major part of the romantic fantasy. Certainly no star-struck heroine and, by implication, no female viewer who craves the idealised romantic fantasy, wishes to be rescued by a crass, gun-toting rapper! However, the paradox is that the heroes, presented as perfect males, are also not reflective of the real world. A different type of Black male might be evident: the wealthy successful, modernised and educated Black male shown in *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* might be far removed from the Black males the viewer encounters in her everyday life.

Hall’s unique contribution lies in combining shrewd linguistic analysis with an analysis of the way culture is presented in visual and verbal texts. Hall refers to culture as a “primary element” in that “culture is the way we make sense of, give meaning, to the world” (Hall 2011). Here, he mentions shared perceptions or, in his words, “the maps of meaning” and “the frames of intelligibility” reflected in communication between people. Thus, he says culture is not merely the values we are born into but rather, without it, we would find the world “unintelligible”. Culture itself “is a system of representation” (Hall 2011) and involves the sharing of meanings. Hall’s concept of a “system of representation” is when people organise and classify concepts by using “principles of similarity and difference to

establish relationships between concepts or to distinguish them from one another” (Hall 1997:17). A good example of Hall’s account of representation as a system for identifying similarities and differences appears in *Game On* in which the viewer can distinguish between the heroine, Cassandra’s, genuine nature and Thembi’s superficiality. The viewer also distinguishes all her internet dates as being different from the true hero, Kagiso. Thus visual discourses are dialogical as audience reactions are extremely important because they are not passive recipients of visual portrayals but can accept or contest images. As Helen Davis elaborates: “It is common for people to assume that consumption is a passive act. We just sit in front of the television and consume without engagement or activity. However Hall is arguing that consumption is not a passive act because consumption requires the generation of meaning” (Davis 2004: 62). I will now explore the dialogical nature of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* and the way viewers are encode their own meanings.

Mzansi Love: Kasi Style is a South African production aimed at a South African audience. Hall’s encoding and decoding model is reliant on an established shared meaning between producer and audience. Davis comments on the necessity of this by providing an example of a French-speaking audience losing the nuances of meaning when watching a British comedy (Davis 2004:63). Similarly, a hypothetical foreign audience might miss out on the linguistic and cultural elements particular to a South African audience. However, even a diverse South African audience might have a multiplicity of responses. Whilst the producer as encoder might frame a message in a certain way, the viewer as decoder might

interpret it differently, according to his or her particular experiences and background. In this case, the encoders are the producers, MME Media and Fireworx Media, who created *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, and the decoders are the South African viewers of the series. The processes of encoding and decoding themselves have different phases or *moments* in the code; for example, the moment of decoding by the viewer is the moment of reception or consumption. The viewer creates meaning through all the moments that are presented by processing the signs, sounds and images.

I have mentioned that, as decoders, viewers can adopt multiple interpretations and these may be dominant-hegemonic, negotiated or oppositional. Viewers may adopt a dominant or hegemonic reading by not questioning an image. This is the ideal position from a producer's viewpoint as the audience will share what is presented to them. Hall notes that, when this occurs, it may result in viewer pleasure and the popularity of the discourse. He says the dominant readings are "hegemonic precisely because they represent definitions of situations and events which are 'in dominance'" (Hall 1990: 486). Since *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* was a weekly series, audiences who continued to watch each week would have an idea about what to expect and would be primed to decode the meanings. Many of these viewers embraced what they experienced favourably and, as such, decoded the message from the dominant or hegemonic position. Second, viewers may conduct a negotiated reading or an interpretation of the image where parts of the message will be accepted and other parts rejected or, third, the viewers may adopt an oppositional reading by disagreeing with or rejecting the image.

Application of theory to selected programmes

I will provide examples of each of these three types of reading from the reception of the series. In addition, I will also propose that the success of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* is largely based on a dominant-hegemonic reception where the viewer relates to the action and characters. She also identifies with familiar locations, recognises objects and is acquainted with the dialogue. However, I also note the argument that viewers who respond in a negotiated or oppositional way, contest the authenticity of the portrayals and are astute enough to observe that the idealisation of portrayals is part of the farfetched fantasy world of romance.

In analysing signs, Hall (1990) refers to the existing concepts of denotation and connotation, where signs are seen either in a literal or first-order signifying system or according to interpretive meanings or a second-order signifying system. He notes that there are few instances where signs are purely denotative. Usually there is a combination of denotative and connotative meanings, and the connotative level of the sign is important in that meanings are not fixed. It is worth pointing out samples of denotative and connotative images from the series.

Local signifiers

There are some features of the programmes that encourage readers to accept the presented world as real. Others, however, indicate that the shows do not depict

real life. I will now examine these features in order to demonstrate that the television programmes ultimately play into viewers' romantic fantasies.

In order to persuade the viewer to adopt a hegemonic reading, the image presents credible information. In *PhD*, the settings are Wits University and the Gordon Institute of Business at the University of Pretoria. In *Game On* there are local signifiers, visual signs or "iconic signs" which, according to Hall "bear, in their form, a certain resemblance to the object, person or event to which they refer" (Hall 1997:20). These tell the viewer that the action is set in Johannesburg, South Africa. Shots of the Nelson Mandela Bridge in Braamfontein are used in both *Game On* and *PhD*. A Newtown road sign and a Juta Street road sign indicate the physical contexts in *Game On*. There is a shot of "Doubleshot coffee shop" and the heroine, Cassandra plans to meet one of her internet dates at "Bistro Hyde Park". There are also other, more subtle, signs signifying the local South African context. For example, Amanda reads a Nollybook in the bridal boutique, a shopper walks with a "Mr Price" bag and there is a brief shot of *The Sowetan* newspaper. All these signs might appear denotative but, in actual fact, have connotative associations and encourage a hegemonic reading of the scenes. The viewer accepts the recognisable signs. The Nelson Mandela Bridge is a landmark bridge in Johannesburg and Mr Price is a well-known, widespread store. However, the viewer might associate Mr Price with her own affordable fashion wardrobe, and the bridge might elicit comments about the rejuvenation of Johannesburg's inner city.

With these iconic signs, it would seem that the viewer constructs meaning through what Hall terms “a reflective approach” (Hall 1997:24), where these images reflect concrete real objects. However Hall believes that a constructionist approach far better explains representation. Here meaning is constructed by language which uses signs to refer to real or imaginary events. Concepts formed in the mind are communicated by language that uses codes or our “shared ‘maps of meaning’” (Hall 1997:29). So Hall states that “producing meaning depends on the practice of interpretation, and interpretation is sustained by us actively using the code — encoding, putting things into the code — and by the person at the other end interpreting or decoding the meaning” (Hall 1997:62).

The image on the *Looking for Mr Right* Nollybook cover (a silhouette of a black bride draped in a white wedding dress) might not be a familiar sign but it is accepted as part of a credible local and appropriate context. Furthermore, the main protagonist’s choice of reading material reinforces her frame of reference. She is not reading *Das Kapital* or *Long Walk to Freedom* as these would be incongruous with the plot and characterisation. As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the creator of Nollybooks and the producer of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* deliberately targeted the huge aliterate market, people who do not choose to read but who, as a result of the bookazines and films, would be prompted to make different choices. Cassandra is deliberately not presented as an intellectual as this would alienate the viewers. Through her choice of reading material, the viewer identifies with her penchant for modern South African romantic fiction. In terms of Hall’s theory of representation, the image of the visible Nollybook

represents a comfort zone to those who are familiar with the Nollybook series and also an unthreatening, attractive read for those who might be prompted to source the real Nollybook.

Label it Love, the eighth programme in the second season of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, has a different beginning from the previous samples. Whereas the first series began with a montage of animated images such as Johannesburg's skyline, images of shoes and clothes, a split screen containing four people chatting on the phone and a shot of people sitting in a coffee shop, the new series begins with a Black couple sitting on a bench holding hands underneath a tree whose leaves are all red hearts which rain down on them, immediately setting up a romantic theme. Denotatively these are heart-shaped leaves, but the obvious connotation is that this film will be all about love. Here we see typical gendered connotations of "love stories". Love stories depend on certain gender performances such as the tall, dark, handsome, silent hero and the starry-eyed, love-struck and mostly passive heroine. In the few seconds that it takes for the title *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* to emerge on screen, the viewer already notes the heroine on the bench coyly turning away from the dashing dressed hero who reaches out and takes her hand before leaning towards her and giving her a kiss on the cheek.

This sample from the second series also provides familiar signs and symbols that will encourage a hegemonic reading by the audience. There are many more shots of Johannesburg than in the first series. We see Johannesburg by night and by day. Familiar landmarks are shown, such as the Nelson Mandela Bridge and the Hillbrow Tower. The opening scene, set in the Maboneng Precinct, shows a

direction sign to Ponte and the Kwai Mai-Mai market. At this point I would like to make the point that these familiar landmarks reiterate the real world of the films. Janice Radway makes a valid point about the readers of romance identifying with the “temporal specificity of the tale” (Radway 1991:204) despite the elements of fantasy and myth. The same concept is evident in *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, where the action plays out chronologically and does not happen in a timeless, mythical world. A mythical setting, such as Tim Burton creates in the film *Alice in Wonderland*, would distance the viewer from the action by creating a context apart from the viewer’s everyday experience. The opening scene of the film, *Label it Love* is set in a fashion college, where Fikile has just completed her studies and is now applying for a fashion internship advertised on a billboard. Radway asserts that when a romantic text refers to the past, the reader awaits the relating of her future. Like the heroine in the romantic novel, Fikile in the film is a “historical being who exists in time and in the real world” (Radway 1991:204). This “realness” is developed by showing real, identifiable places and brands. The viewer is therefore persuaded to accept the unfolding of the plot as ‘real’.

Trendy new developments in the inner city are chosen as fitting locations for a film that deals with fashion and design. We see the “The Bioscope” on Main Street in the Maboneng Precinct, a newly developed urban neighbourhood in Johannesburg’s east central business district, and arty places such as the Kalashnikov gallery in Juta Street, Braamfontein and “Pata Pata”, a restaurant serving African cuisine (also in the Maboneng Precinct). Fikile’s house with a “Rawson” estate agent sign on its pavement is also shown. On a denotative level

these places and symbols will be read as locales or purely as literal objects. The connotative messages are far more indicative of social and cultural transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. Places like the Maboneng Precinct are associated with the new, urbanised *avant-garde* black Johannesburg city dweller, a meeting place of creativity and business. When Fikile first arrives at Cocoa Rouge's offices, Manuel's model mockingly misidentifies her as Toya Delazy, a renowned South African R&B (rhythm & blues) star.

According to these signifiers, the inner city of Johannesburg, no longer a crime-ridden slum, has been rejuvenated, much like chic international urban areas such as Soho in New York. It is, therefore, a place of creativity and entrepreneurship, a fitting locale for the fashion designers of Cocoa Rouge. The final fashion showcase at the end of the film, where Fikile and Joe eventually embrace, actually takes place on the open rooftop of a Johannesburg building. These locations are perfect for the "Meet Mr and Mrs New Black" scenario, which, as mentioned in chapter one, is described by Faith Baloyi as "Middle Africans", a new middle-class of Black South Africans with "one foot in kasi and the other in Rosebank" (Baloyi 2008:62). However, it is easy to perceive that these representations are not the real face of Johannesburg, and that the series' portrayals of the city are idealised and selective, omitting any depiction of poverty. Ironically the series is called *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* referring to two geographical locations. The word "Mzansi", a word meaning "south" derives from the Xhosa word *uMzantsi*, which refers to South Africa. The word "kasi" comes from "ekasi", a slang word derived from the isiZulu word "kasi", which means "house" but has evolved to refer to the location, ghetto area or township. But there is no portrayal of township life, no depictions of overcrowded streets

and low cost housing. Instead the producers prefer upmarket locations which would be favoured by Baloyi's "Mr and Mrs New Black".

Comparison with *Generations*

Sarah Ives supports this argument about portrayals of idealised representations in her research into *Generations*. She argues that many viewers of South Africa's leading soap opera contest whether the depictions are, in fact, realistic portrayals which resemble the lives of the viewers because of the characters' use of language. She cites a viewer's response to the show's depiction of Black South Africans by saying "No Black people in Africa talk like that! ... As urban, sophisticated South Africans we don't know ANYONE who speaks like that. And where do they come from? Mars? London? Who gave birth to them? Do they never go home to visit their parents? Why is their [sic] no mention of townships?" (Ives 2008:253).

Michele Tager adds her voice in support of negotiated and oppositional readings of *Generations* by audiences, and acknowledges that the long-standing series has been criticised as being far removed from the real lives of South Africans. In her article "The Black and the Beautiful: Perceptions of (a) New Generation(s)" (2010), based on a sample of University of Johannesburg students, she argues that many respondents felt that the soap opera did not reflect their lives, particularly since the show is no longer multiracial. Several of her respondents also felt that, whilst the soap opera displayed wealth and status, there was no practical

indication of how to acquire these. Tager quotes one of her respondent's responses as aptly conveying the fantasy world of *Generations*: "It gives a misleading impression of life in Jo'burg. Like there aren't any poor people and we all know that there are poor people. They also don't show any foreigners and we all know there are a lot of foreigners in Jo'burg. It just shows the glitz and glamour of Jo'burg" (Tager 2010:121). However, despite Tager's students pointing out the shortcomings of *Generations*, they still watched it, avidly discussing plotlines and characters with their friends, and still regarded it as part of contemporary South African popular culture.

In support of Tager's respondents' view of *Generations* as not being representative of reality, I now turn to a linguistic analysis of the dialogue of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. Such an analysis will demonstrate anomalies between "street language" and the screenplay that was used for the series. In the screenplay, a more formal, anglicised register is used than would be the case in everyday colloquial speech. Can the same be said of *Game On*, in which Cassandra and Amanda's English bears little resemblance to the English used by many Black South Africans? Certainly there are anglicised expressions, which are possibly unfamiliar to second language speakers. For example, Marc's insistence that Shezi investigate Zimele Khoza in *PhD* illustrates this point when he says: "Arizona Noncheba Shezi do not go lily-livered on me now!" (2012). *Label it Love* might also contain dialogue interspersed with isiZulu words, but much of the screenplay would be hard to duplicate on the streets of Johannesburg. I cite several of these examples: Fikile says "I'm going incognito to Cocoa Rouge"

(2014), Joe refers to Manuel's "sub-par effort" (2014) and Khumo asks Fikile "how did the recce go?" (2014). These examples are more likely to be found in British English rather than in the language used by the viewers. Rajend Mesthrie's book *Eish But is it English?* (2011) concedes that there are many varieties of English in South Africa today and that no particular version is the correct version and that "where language is concerned, diversity is all" (Mesthrie 2011:149). Mesthrie also explains that South Africa's history of apartheid, childhood experiences and the type of schooling an individual has experienced definitely impacts on the type of English spoken by Black speakers. He notes the neologism, "coconut", a word that metaphorically refers to Black people who are Black on the outside but are white inside, reflecting Black people's westernised behaviour. These speakers, "the new elites" (Mesthrie 2011:98), are an upwardly mobile class, who tend to live in the suburbs away from the traditional townships and their children mostly attend expensive private schools. In all likelihood, they know little about their families' traditions and may not be able to converse in their parents' mother tongues. This language feature will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Another feature of *Generations* lack of verisimilitude is its failure to probe burning social issues such as racial diversity. I believe that similar criticisms are applicable to *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* where, besides the portrayal of Black characters, there are only minor roles given to other races and no true reflections of South Africa's diverse population. It is in these moments that the viewer might wish that the series would probe deeper into South Africa's multicultural rainbow

nation and its contemporary issues. In *PhD*, the dialogue touches on the new post-apartheid economic policy, BEE, when Zimele states that he'll bring sushi for their date and Arizona responds by saying, "Wow, you have no idea how BEE that sounds" (2012). Similarly, in *Game On*, Kagiso's discussion of his friend who has cancer but smokes and Cassandra's mention of women who deliberately starve themselves could potentially reveal topical social issues. Manuel's theft of Fikile's designs out of desperation to become a celebrity designer in *Label it Love* could also serve as a trigger for debate and discussion on contentious issues such as intellectual property and plagiarism, but this fizzles out as the producers refocus the action on the developing romance. Christopher Warnes' words, applied to both the 27 Sapphire books and the Nollybooks published between 2010 and 2011 in South Africa, are equally applicable to each episode of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. He says: "Because the romantic narrative is structured so obsessively around the redemptive qualities of romantic love and because each text must end on a note of happy heterosexual union, these mass produced fantasies always evacuate any of the doubts or ethical concerns raised in the course of the narrative" (Warnes 2014:169). It is apparent that the producers of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* are little concerned with these issues and, like the creators of *Generations*, they know that despite *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style's* unrealistic portrayals, its high viewer ratings and the creation of not only a second series but also a third series are testament to the series' popularity.

On the other hand, Sarah Ives's article (2008) "Visual methodologies through a feminist lens: South African soap operas and the post-apartheid nation"

acknowledges the importance of the role played by television generally, and soap operas or series in particular, in the lives of South Africans when she says that television “permeates the everyday lives of a majority of South Africans” (2008:246). Her article is particularly interesting as she is an American who, in 2001, stayed in a Black township and first encountered the South African soap opera, *Generations*, as a very different portrayal of South Africa from the culture that she was experiencing. She speaks about visual media contributing to the “seeable”, not only because visual images reflect reality but also because visual images powerfully reflect imagined scenarios. She says “in South Africa soap operas, rural Black audiences see images of an urban, wealthy South Africa in which interracial relationships go largely unquestioned and everyone can readily achieve financial success” (Ives 2008:247). Applying this notion to *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, this then means that viewers will adopt a hegemonic reading. However, I argue that such a view is not sustainable because of the series’ deviations from lived realities and, therefore, the appeal of the series is ultimately based on fantasy. Viewers in South Africa would regard the portrayals as realistic romantic possibilities despite the fact that the characters might speak in an unfamiliar diction and that plotlines and characterisations might be farfetched. The series then, like the Nollywoods, are a reflection of fantasies that make the tedium of real life more bearable.

Similarities to the texts

I am now going to explore the ways in which the television programmes confirm the overall message of the books. There are several deviations in terms of the

details, but the basic themes remain the same. The episode entitled *Game On*, based on *Looking for Mr Right*, essentially follows the main plot of the bookazine. The main idea of the story is conveyed in both media, namely Cassandra's desperation to marry. Cassandra's important marriage manual features in both media but, in the film, it contains a list of dating rules that are accumulated as the plot develops. In both media, Kagiso shows his disapproval both for internet dating and for women who are marriage-obsessed but in the film he is more vocally expressive. The following examples justify this point as Kagiso tells Cassandra about the "idiocy of internet dating" (2012), "and the women like the ring, they'll chase it like they're crazy, it's like an obsession, they have to get married, they have to get married" (2012). Finally his disgust at realising the depth of her marriage obsession is shown in his response to her marriage manual: "I mean you're just looking for a guy to fill this idea that you have of romance you know like any guy you're just gonna cut and paste him in" (2012). Here Kagiso delves deeper into Cassandra's internalised vision of her social role as the maker of relationships and potential home-maker.

According to patriarchal stereotypes, female roles are usually related to family, friends and romance, whilst male roles are more work-related. Film and television follow this pattern: when women are portrayed in the workplace, most of the action centres on interpersonal activities such as advising and counselling. The authors of "Constructing Gender Stereotypes through Social Roles in Prime-Time Television" (2008) emphasise stereotypical gender roles by saying: "although women were present in the workplace, they continued to play domestic and

interpersonal roles” (Lauzen et al. 2008:202). This is applicable to *Game On*, where nothing is shown about the crafting process of producing magnificent handmade wedding gowns at Cassandra’s bridal boutique. Instead, conversations focus on Cassandra’s doomed single status and Thembi’s inconstant wedding arrangements. Similarly the focus in Shezi’s office in *PhD* is not on her investigative journalism but rather on her paradoxical reactions and, ultimately, her attraction to Zimele Khoza. It is worthwhile exploring the division of labour among the characters in the programmes. The males in these episodes, are portrayed as industrious go-getters — Kagiso is a dedicated vet who works long hours and Zimele is a wealthy, ambitious entrepreneur. In *Label it Love*, Fikile’s creative talent is dismissed until Manuel’s confession that Fikile is the real source of his brilliant designs, 27 minutes — more than half-way — into the 45-minute film. Until then, the key creators and geniuses are all men: Joe, Chief and Manuel, and their role models are all male — such as German fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld and former *Vogue* editor Andre Leon Tally.

Gender roles in visual culture

Michelle Brophy-Baerman’s paper “True Love on TV: A gendered analysis of reality romance television” (2004) is an investigation of television dating shows, where the contestants try to find the elusive love of their lives. In the process, the article provides an insight into viewers’ television preferences. Such popular programmes perpetuate the “Cassandra marriage obsession” which is the concept that a woman cannot be complete unless she is married, that women’s happiness is essentially based on finding the right partner. She comments that, in love

reality shows such as “The Bachelor”, it is common to have 25 women vying to be the chosen one. She also refers to Diane Barthel’s discussion of gender codes in advertising, where men in advertisements are portrayed as powerful and women’s power is sexual — “her ability to be desired, to be chosen, tantamount” (Brophy-Baerman 2004:13). The article “Constructing Gender Stereotypes through Social Roles in Prime-Time Television” (2008) by Lauzen, Dozier and Horan has value here; by observing 124 programmes on six broadcast networks in the United States of America, the authors’ findings confirmed the different gendered social roles of characters. Despite popular media reports that progressive gender stereotypes are being portrayed on prime time television, these authors find that progressive representations are sporadic and that commercial demands dictate these familiar gendered portrayals. It is also fascinating to learn that women are clearly outnumbered by men in the important “behind the scenes” roles, so that prime time television is still a male-dominated organisational culture where women often use a “*blending in*” gender management strategy (Lauzen et al. 2008:204).

Mzansi Love: Kasi Style was rated as the fifth most popular comedy on South African television channels in August 2012 with approximately 901 000 viewers (*Most watched TV shows in South Africa this August 2012*), possibly confirming that viewers empathise with Cassandra and Kagiso’s positions, and identify simultaneously with Cassandra’s fear of being alone as well as, paradoxically, the stupidity of this notion. After all, many South African families function outside

the context of marriage and recognise a diversity of relationships and family structures so it may be inaccurate to focus exclusively on the traditional family.

Plot variations from the texts

The following section of the chapter will identify plot variations between the bookazines that I have selected for study and the television programmes. My intention here is to demonstrate that, despite plot deviations, there is still an adherence to the romantic formula.

First, Amanda is not Cassandra's best friend, but is her cousin. She is the one who calls Cassandra at the beginning of the film to announce her good news that she is getting married. We later learn that she has dated her fiancé since she was sixteen years old. In the bookazine, it is Cassandra's cousin Sindiswa who calls and gives her this news. Sindiswa is possibly edited from the film version as a means of condensing information in a short period of time as each episode runs for 45 minutes.

Another significant plot change is the way in which Kagiso meets Cassandra. In the book, Amanda and Cassandra bump into Kagiso, a neighbour, when he exits from a lift. However, in the film, it is only Cassandra who meets him outside the lift, when she drops an earring. He exits from the lift and unintentionally collides with her, resulting in her earring falling. He then offers to fix her earring with his pliers, which he conveniently takes out of his pocket. This visual image is

replayed later in the film when Cassandra has a flashback to Kagiso lovingly tending her earring. Not only is the earring a denotative sign — a pearl drop earring — but it is connotative, symbolic of Kagiso’s caring, attentive and ultimately “precious” nature. She will symbolically become his pearl, his chosen jewel. In the bookazine, he compliments them on their appearance before introducing himself. In the book he says: “‘Hi ladies ... you look fantastic’” (Ntuny 2010:34), but in the film his first words are “Sorry, I’m so sorry” (2012) and then he proceeds to fix the earring. When Cassandra recoils at his smell, he tells her that he is a vet, but in the book, Kagiso only gives her this information after Cassandra has bumped into him several times.

Another plot variation is when Cassandra invites Kagiso into her home to repair his shirt. The shirt can be read denotatively as a torn shirt caused by a cat during his work day in the veterinary surgery. However, the shirt is also connotative. This image of them assisting each other is symbolic as they both “repair” each other’s damaged psyches. Kagiso is hurt by the death of his fiancée, and Cassandra is damaged by her loneliness and marriage obsession. The shot of her lovingly stitching up the tear alludes to the romantic “happily ever after ending” when, metaphorically, all the loose threads will come together.

There are many plot variations concerning Thembi’s wedding. In the book, Cassandra is without a date, the empty seat beside her, “a garish red reminder of her new single status” (Ntuny 2010:120) but, in the film, she takes a rude, outspoken date who insults the bride and her mother. In the film, she sees Kagiso at this wedding, and he rescues her from Thembi’s wrath; in the book, he is not

present at the wedding. This is an important plot change because it is at this wedding that Cassandra shows that she might not be worthy of the hero who has always been direct and honest with her. After falsely accusing Kagiso of being engaged “5 minutes before we got together” (2012) and that “your fiancée breaks up with you and you come knocking on my door” (2012), he tells her that his fiancée passed away sixteen months earlier. So, the film highlights the fact that if Cassandra wants to regain the hero, she urgently needs to apologise profusely. Although her apology letter is shorter than the book’s apology, both letters convey her fear of being alone and her deep desire for forgiveness. Her self-flagellation is necessary for absolution by both the reader and viewer, and it ultimately proves that she is worthy of the attention of the most desirable hero.

In the book, Thembi demands that Cassandra fire Amanda at her bridal shop, but in the film it occurs at her wedding. These variations, overall, do not alter the essential themes of marriage and singledom. In both media Thembi is still referred to as “Bridezilla”, indicative of her narcissistic, vain and selfish personality. In the film, there is a plot addition when she provides Cassandra with a date, Dennis, who stands her up but this addition is merely a part of the narrative’s repetitive message that Cassandra is both determined and desperate to find a man. All of these plot deviations can be ascribed to the contingencies of film production rather than to any intent to alter the basic message of the narratives.

Viewer identification

I believe that Gilbert Motsaathebe's comments about the audiences of *Generations* are applicable to *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* because there will be multiple responses to the series. Motsaathebe, when commenting on the wide range of audiences who view *Generations*, states that viewership has been estimated at approximately seven million viewers, so it is obvious that there will be both admirers and detesters (2009:430). He further comments on the fact that many viewers are so familiarised with the characters, that they use the characters' names as nicknames to refer to their own contacts. Motsaathebe's comments also hold true for *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. If *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* has an estimated viewership of close to a million, viewers are not solely female.

At this point it is useful to explore Laura Mulvey's theory about gendered spectatorship in relation to the series. Laura Mulvey (1989) reiterates the stereotype that women in film are passive subjects whilst men are portrayed as active, powerful voyeurs. She refers to scopophilia, or the pleasure in looking, and says that Freud spoke of this as regarding people as objects, "subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze" (Mulvey 1975:381). She speaks of the gendered nature of scopophilia as the "woman as image and man as bearer of the look" (Mulvey 1975:383) where the female form is a source of voyeurism. Besides the heroines' physical appearance in *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* attracting the heroes' gaze, the female form is openly conveyed as an object for parade. In *PhD*, Lu seductively sways her hips in front of her boyfriend and actually refers to herself as "Exhibit A. Hey baby" (2012).

The masculine spectator's scopophilia could operate on two levels: the first concerns sexual stimulation through the image, where the woman's image is objectified, and the second concerns an identification with the image. In the first instance, the viewer has an active, powerful look and distances himself from the object on screen, so there is an element of voyeurism. The second position, where there is identification with the image, relates to the viewer's narcissism and ego. Of this identification, Jackie Stacey elaborates, "It offers the spectator the pleasurable identification with the main male protagonist and through him the power indirectly to possess the female character displayed as sexual object for his pleasure" (Stacey 1988:391).

But what of the female viewer whose pleasures in looking might not be motivated by voyeurism? Stacey notes that female responses are complex and could be responses of both acceptance and refusal. She provides an example of Roberta in *Desperately Seeking Susan* who, as a woman, becomes "the bearer of the look" (Stacey 1988:398) of another woman, Susan, who is played by a sexually explicit Madonna. She also refers to the Hollywood film, *All about Eve*, where the casting of the Hollywood celebrity Bette Davis in the lead role of Margot Channing as a star not only relates to its plot about Eve trying to usurp Margot's fame but also to the spectator's delusions of grandeur. It is instructive to apply Stacey's insights into the sources of viewers' pleasure to *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. I note that, despite the creators of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*'s tight budget and employment of young, new talent, the producers also recruited more famous and well-known actors. I will identify these in the three series under study with an understanding

that, since many of these actors and actresses are already familiar faces to the viewers, certain connotations and associations might very well be part of the viewing experience.

In *PhD*, Nozipho Nkelemba takes the role of Arizona. Recognisable as the girl on the bus in the Allan Gray advert and from many South African television shows, some of her notable roles have been as Charlotte in the e-TV soapie *Rhythm City*, Nana in Season 3 of SABC2's *90 Plein Street*, Ayanda in *Heartlines* and Mmatsietsie in *When we were Black*. Her co-star Yonda Thomas, who plays Zimele Khoza, might also be recognised as Damon from SABC2's soapie *Muvhango* and from his starring role as Mvelo Nobela in SABC1's drama series *Fallen* in 2011. Sela Thobakgale, who plays Cassandra in *Game On*, is a well-known SABC1 television YOTV host and is also a presenter on DSTV's *Teen Gospel Live*. Her co-star Wandile Molebatsi, who plays Kagiso, was the face of Samuel Sedipeng in *Rhythm City* and Blessing in MNet's popular series *The Wild*. In *Label it Love* Batsile Ramasodi, who plays Joe Silongo, might be recognised from his appearance in many television adverts, most notably the Toyota Yaris advert where, in an attempt to silence his talkative girlfriend, he bundles her into the cubbyhole. This memory of power, authority and determination might subconsciously reverberate in the viewer's psyche in his role as the powerful owner of Cocoa Rouge. Jacqui Carpede, who plays Phindile, also might be recognised as the well-known pop star from the local group Jamali, which formed as a result of the televised show *Popstars* in 2004. It is, therefore, quite probable that viewers who are already familiar with these stars, have

preconceived ideas about who they are and what they represent. These stars are recognisable to the viewers and will attract viewers to the programmes.

Returning to the matter of the male gaze, I note that in all of the dating instances, Cassandra is dressed to attract a man. She wears tight-fitting mini dresses with high heels, portraying a seductive, predatory female. Since Kagiso bumps into her dressed like this, he makes numerous statements about her appearance such as “Wow, you look amazing”, “he’ll only have eyes for you” and “that’s the winning outfit” (2012). Mulvey makes the point that the heroine is not only an erotic object for the characters on screen, exemplified here by Kagiso, but also an erotic object for the spectator who, in identifying with Kagiso, can indirectly possess Cassandra too. Kagiso, however, redeems himself from being seen as a stereotypical man who only focuses on her external appearance and alluring body when he later tells her that her “favourite look” (2012) for him is when she is attired in her casual, unrevealing everyday clothes. This comment conveys his satisfaction with the real, unadorned Cassandra. True, it may be argued that Cassandra is not sexualised or objectified, and that Kagiso does not act in terms of Mulvey’s argument about scopophilia or the stereotypical “male gaze”. However, the fact that he constantly makes comments on her “look” throughout the programme confirms that he is always assessing her physical appearance.

Kissing and sexuality

There are major differences between the first kiss in the bookazines and film versions. In *Looking for Mr Right*, the first kiss is a brief kiss outside Cassandra's door after the first date. It is described by Cassandra as "over much too soon" (Ntuny 2010:101). In the film, Kagiso surprises her by kissing her when he visits her, saying: "Well you know how people are so worried and stressed about the first kiss and the assessment of the first kiss on the first date. Now you don't have to worry about it at all" (2012). This leads to more passionate kisses on the couch with their legs intertwined and, for a moment, Cassandra lies on top of him. On their next date, she feeds him food and he comments "it's delicious, seriously but not as delicious as you" (2012), before passionately kissing her.

Conversely, the film version of *Unfashionably in Love* is less focused on the first kiss. In *Label it Love* Joe attempts to kiss Fikile after they have an intimate discussion where he reveals that he was once betrayed by his lover and she, in turn, speaks about the pain of losing her mother to cancer. He is so moved by the intimacy of the moment that he says, "You truly are extraordinary" (2014) and bends to kiss her, but she recoils since she believes that he is in a relationship with Phindile. Their first kiss will only occur at the end of the film when all misunderstandings have been clarified. In the bookazine, *Unfashionably in Love*, besides telling her that he is in love with her, Joe kisses her twice before the final kiss. The first time is in the studio where she responds with passion and the description is charged with sexual innuendo: "How long had she imagined this moment? What joy to finally be in his arms! He caressed her left arm with light feathery strokes and excitement coursed through her veins. She leaned closer

against him and heard him moan softly. He kissed her hungrily and she responded ardently” (Mutangadura 2010:104). The second kiss, “gently on the lips” (Mutangadura 2010:109), occurs after their dinner date. Fikile and Joe’s kiss in *Label it Love* might not be as passionate as those in the bookazine, but the producers of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* do not shy away from risqué content. In the opening scene, Fikile mockingly tells her spendthrift friend Khumo: “Well we can’t all sleep our way into a limit-free credit card” (2014).

Shezi and Zimele’s first kiss in *PhD* is also a lengthy passionate kiss, which will be repeated in the last moments of the film. There is a suggestive moment similar to *Game On* when Zimele feeds Shezi ice cream when they are on a date and he tells her that he is planning to kiss her again at the ball. It is interesting to note that, although the series was aired at 8.30 pm on Tuesday nights and has a PG10 rating, the film versions contain more sexually suggestive content than the bookazines, which are aimed at more mature women. My previous discussion of “first kisses” is part of my overall discussion of the sexual explicitness of the TV programmes as opposed to the bookazines. Radway’s study found that the Smithton women believed in sex as long as it belonged within a context of true love and marriage. By contrast, the heroines of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* openly embrace their sexuality as single women. Radway comments on the traditional heroines as “completely unaware that they are capable of passionate sexual urges” (Radway 1991: 126). However, Radway does make the point that many Smithton readers had a preference for historical romances over Harlequins because historical romances included more explicit sex scenes. Fikile, Cassandra

and Shezi are not portrayed as virginal, childlike or inexperienced. Fikile and Khumo sing and dance to the war cry “You have a boyfriend, he wants to kiss me, he likes your afro, he thinks I’m sexy, he’s gonna marry me” (2014). Cassandra unashamedly has numerous internet dates and Shezi, as a journalist, is quite comfortable investigating sexual impropriety.

Just as Sindiswa is edited from the film, Anele is introduced to the plot of the film of *Game On*. She was Kagiso’s fiancée and Kagiso is furious when he sees her wedding dress superimposed on Cassandra’s face in Cassandra’s wedding manual. There is no mention of Anele in the bookazine, although the reader is told of Kagiso’s fiancée who passed away. The film provides more details about this, possibly to confirm to the viewer that Kagiso is over his loss and ready to embrace a new relationship.

It is extremely significant that Kagiso is not perceived in the same way as Cassandra’s shallow internet dates are by both the reader and viewer, but in the film this is developed further by a plot addition containing important dialogue between Cassandra and Kagiso. Kagiso relays the story about his friend’s cancer patient who has begun smoking and makes the comment “so typical of human beings not understanding what’s important in life instead all they’re concerned about is looking good, instead of like feeling good, you know” (2012). To this Cassandra replies “I know right I mean I see women starving themselves all the time just to fit into their wedding gowns but meanwhile the guy she’s marrying

has a gut up to here” (2012). This is an important observation about male and female stereotypes and the hypocrisy of double standards where women are expected to be thin and are judged harshly if they do not conform to standards of attractiveness, whilst men are not dictated to by this norm.

The second programme to be analysed is *PhD*. Through identifying several of the plot and character changes in *PhD* compared to *Finding Arizona*, I will argue that the adaptations and deviations between the book and the series are insignificant overall, in that the major structures are maintained. The hero and heroine will fall in love and endure various challenges but ultimately overcome these. Furthermore, the gender stereotypes described in chapter two are no different in the film version.

Firstly Lu and Marc, Shezi’s close friends, are presented as a couple in love. Marc is not Marc Jessop but Marc Barton, but in both media, he is portrayed as expedient and ruthless. In the film, this is emphasised by his brutal breakup with Lu and his hasty replacement of her with Thabang. He is further demonised when we learn that he hacked into Shezi’s computer to source incriminating evidence against Zimele for the university publication. There are deviations regarding the Ubuntu story — in the film it was his fiancée’s father who was a partner at Uguhle (a new addition) who wanted Zimele to lie for him in court, however the deviations are not significant as the essential message is that Jason or Zimele has unshakeable integrity. In both media the reader and viewer learn that, in reality,

he did not exploit thousands of workers and cause them to lose their jobs. Instead, the reader and viewer learns the truth that Jason/Zimele turned his back on a corrupt company despite it being extremely lucrative, ironically because of his moral values.

Minimising socio-economic and political issues

Christopher Warnes in his essay “Desired State: Black Economic Empowerment and The South African Popular Romance” (2014) does make the point that Jason’s acknowledgement of his role in the Ubuntu workers’ destitution might make the plot more credible and less of a fantasy story. However, this is not developed and, rather, is used as a ploy to expose the hero’s vulnerability, similar to what I referred to earlier in relation to the “sensitive man phenomenon” (Brophy-Baerman 2004:16). In both the written and visual media, the main purpose is to convey the success of romantic love so that any subplots that could trigger debate are quashed. As Warnes writes, “*Finding Arizona* describes the capitalist profiteering that has proved all too common in the post-apartheid neoliberal economic dispensation. Yet the dominant codes of the romance - codes based around the power of passion, the overcoming of obstacles to romantic love, the force of desire, the inevitable rightness of heterosexual union - render it almost impossible that such realist elements can be sustained” (Warnes 2014:168).

In the interests of maintaining the ideal romantic hero, the characterisation of Jason Khoza and Zimele Khoza is portrayed similarly in both media, despite plot

variations. He is presented as an exceptionally good-looking, wealthy BEE entrepreneur. In the film, he is tall and smartly dressed, with a broad smile that displays perfect teeth. In the film, Shezi discovers an engagement ring in Zimele's jacket pocket and, so, infers that he has a fiancée but, in the book, she actually meets Lundi. In the book Jason whisks her off to an exotic date in Umhlanga, but in the film it is on the roof of the university's school of journalism's library. In the film, he gives her the gift of the earrings which she later returns to him while he is with his supposed fiancée. In the book *The Mail and Guardian* offers Shezi a job, but in the film it is *The Bulletin*. In the book, Jason meets Shezi on the plane and they will travel to America together, but in the film she will go alone, promising to return to him. These plot changes are not significant since they do not alter the core narratives, and they are very often used in the interests of condensing information since each bookazine is condensed into a short 45 minute episode.

Since *Generations*¹ is not only the most popular soap opera on South African television screens, but also the most popular television programme on our screens, it is also worth noting the research regarding gender portrayals in this series. I earlier quoted Tager's comments about the lack of realism in *Generations* and this echoes Christopher Warnes' view that real life issues are subjugated in favour of the romantic love theme. This can also be applied to archaic gender portrayals in South Africa's most watched television show. Gilbert

¹ *Generations* is no longer showing on South African television. It has been replaced by *Generations – The Legacy*, which "broke its own record as the country's only show to attract more than [sic] 10 million viewers" (Dube, A. (4 December 2014), *Generations* sets record audience. *The New Age*. Page 1.)

Motsaathebe's article, "Gendered roles, images and behavioural patterns in the soap opera *Generations*" (2009) provides much insight into gender portrayals on South African screens.

Motsaathebe acknowledges the importance of the television medium by saying: "much incidental learning takes place when such programmes are viewed. Many viewers say they have also learned a great deal about important contemporary issues such as child abuse, homosexuality and race relations which have been highlighted in the soap opera. This is a further indication that soap operas stimulate and inspire viewers through the real life situations that are portrayed. Thus it is necessary that stereotyping of images and roles be avoided" (2009:446). He comments that after apartheid ended, the Independent Broadcasting Authority in South Africa was set up to prioritise local content and to portray Black people in a new, positive light. However, in his quantitative study of 150 respondents, he argues that the stereotypical portrayal of negative and unrealistic gender images still prevails on our screens and these images are damaging to viewers where the flow of information is one way. Sixty-nine percent of his respondents felt that *Generations* perpetuates gender stereotypes (Motsaathebe 2009:443). Interestingly Motsaathebe points out that, although women might be displayed in responsible roles and even in similar occupational roles as men, their behaviour patterns reconfirm their weak status. In addition, where a woman is portrayed in a powerful position, he argues, she might arouse suspicion and criticism. He therefore recommends that *Generations* should adopt corrective measures such as having constant viewer feedback, in-house guidelines about the portrayal of

gender, and that more women become actively involved in the production process.

PhD perpetuates similar stereotypical gender portrayals. When Shezi is preparing to go on a date with the desirable Zimele, her friend Lu insists that Shezi dresses up in an alluring manner and lends her a seductive, off-the-shoulder see-through top, which Zimele will later comment on. This is another example of Mulvey's viewpoint that women are portrayed in film as objects to be looked at. Lu's belief that Shezi's life can change if she can attract the millionaire is clear when she says, "He can drag you away from the dreariness of journalism" (2012). Lu has definite ideas about masculinity and femininity, as shown by her waxing Shezi's underarms to make sure that she is in no way offensive to her chosen man. Lu herself frantically exercises to lose weight so that she too can attract a desirable man. In Motsaathebe's study of *Generations*, 80% of respondents portrayed the ideal female character as being above all, "beautiful, cute, irresistible" (2009:444).

Zimele's confidence and power over women is highlighted by his statement: "I am a successful man with plenty of women at my disposal" (2012). Yet, Zimele's assuredness is shaken when he is smitten by Shezi's beauty when he fetches her for the ball. This is certainly the Cinderella story or fairy tale myth as the viewer applies typical prince-princess connotations to the image. Zimele is speechless when his eyes absorb Shezi's magnificence — she is dressed in a floor-length

black ball gown with her hair coiffed in an up-style. Her make-up is immaculate, and Zimele completes her perfect look by presenting her with a gift of shimmering drop earrings. Later when he breaks up with her because he feels betrayed by her, believing that she shared his personal Ubuntu story with Marc who published it in *The Varsity Times*, Shezi replays those specific romantic moments. The viewer is manipulated into sympathising with her heartbreak, despising Marc's expedience and longing for the inevitable romantic reconciliation.

Both Shezi and Lu cry excessively when they are jilted by their men. Lu is distraught and is comforted by her best friend. There is a shot of Shezi's pile of used tissues, which points to her broken heart. This is a perfect example of Motsaathebe's point about female behaviour patterns in *Generations*. Similarly, in *Label it Love*, the fashion-conscious Fikile is unrecognisable as she mopes in her pyjamas, hibernating in bed with a dishevelled hairstyle, also surrounded by used tissues after believing that Joe is cheating on Phindile and that her chances for love are over.

In both the bookazine *Finding Arizona* and the film *PhD*, Shezi's character is portrayed similarly. Despite Shezi being an independent, strong-willed Masters student and investigative journalist, she is ultimately a weak and emotionally battered woman when it comes to love. Even in the final denouement at the airport in *PhD*, when they reconcile and have a passionate kiss, she nods in

agreement when Zimele says “Let’s quickly get you out of here so you can rush back to me okay?”(2012). In their final moments of reconciliation, he assumes control as she passively agrees to his decision. This ending echoes the endings of *Unfashionably in Love* and its corresponding film, *Label it Love*. In the bookazine Joe kisses Fikile and states “I want you to be my woman” (Mutangadura 2010:147). In the film version, Joe says “Fikile can you stop talking so I can kiss you” (2014) and then they kiss. In both media, Joe assumes control and initiates the anticipated kiss.

In identifying plot and character variations between *Unfashionably in Love* and *Label it Love*, I note that the producers of the film have edited the subplot of Khumo and Professor Kaleni’s relationship. There is also no Luke Modise and, therefore, no indication of Joe’s jealousy as there is in the bookazine. A significant addition is the subplot of the dishonest Manuel, the gay White fashion designer and his model sidekick who serve as a foil to Fikile’s honest and endearing character. He feels perfectly justified in stealing Fikile’s designs as he tells her “I’ve forgotten what it’s like to be on top” (2014). The concept of Joe valuing integrity is also conveyed through another plot change from the book. Fikile, unaware that he is Cocoa Rouge’s owner when she first meets him in the Cocoa Rouge shop, tells him that Cocoa Rouge could improve on their designs whilst later contradicting her true opinion by disingenuously pretending to like them in her letter of application in a desperate attempt to acquire the Cocoa Rouge job. These subplots emphasise the cutthroat, competitive world of fashion

and, of course, the hero's prioritising of truth and integrity make him an anomaly in the backstabbing world of fashion and as such, an even more coveted man.

There are slight insignificant variations, such as in the book Khumo's boyfriend is Mbongeni whilst in the film, it is Sipho. In the book, Fikile is embarrassed by her pants ripping, whilst in the book she trips in the Cocoa Rouge store. In the book Fikile and Khumo make clothes for Phindile's television show, but in the film it is for the fashion spread in the international *Imprime* magazine. The book also deals with her designs for the Cape Town store and the Colleges' New Talent Competition. In the book Joe woos Fikile by giving her lifts home and taking her out to dinner, but in the film all their interactions are set in a work-related context. These variations are not memorable. Instead, the focus in both media is on how, against all odds, Fikile and Joe ultimately come together, hence both titles include the word "Love".

As in *Game On* and *PhD*, sexist gender portrayals are also evident in *Label it Love*. Examples of these are found in the fact that Joe and Chief are the powerful, wealthy figures behind Cocoa Rouge's success. The Chief is never confronted about his rude, derisive behaviour. Khumo is quite happy to be Sipho's "trophy wife" (2014). When Fikile is ordered into Joe's office with the words "Fikile, in my office now" (2014) and reprimanded, she meekly replies "Yes, sir" (2014) and lacks the courage to expose Manuel's duplicity. Khumo's character is reminiscent of Lu in *PhD*, as she believes that her friend's appearance is essential

in acquiring a man, evident when she says, “Men don’t make passes at girls who wear glasses” (2012). Fikile does reveal her intolerance for this by her enlightened retort, “And girls who wear glasses don’t need men to make passes. We make our own way” (2012). In addition, she is an independent thinker and criticises Cocoa Rouge’s designs as being exclusively for small, slender women. She tells Joe “Look around you, how many size tens you see? We South African women, we’ve got hips you know? We’ve got booty. We’ve got lovely lady lumps” (2012). This type of response, often expressed in response to media portrayals of emaciated models might be appreciated by women viewers who share this sentiment; however, the irony of Fikile’s words might prompt negotiated or oppositional retorts. Fikile is an exceptionally small and slender character — there is no evidence of her “hips”, “booty” and “lovely lady lumps” - so Sarah Ives’ comments, quoted earlier, about the lack of realism that conveys the viewer’s experience of inauthenticity hold true.

Fikile’s enlightened viewpoints on contentious issues are undeveloped and we never see the producers following through by, for example, portraying an independent heroine. Instead, like the traditional romantic heroine, Fikile persists in deifying Joe. She initially responds to him with adjectives such as “wow”, “beautiful” and “tall” (2014) and later she describes him to Khumo as “an angel or a hallucination” (2014) and says that “he’s just too pretty to be real” (2014). Her verbalised clichéd responses to him are more powerful than her earlier social conscience, inviting the viewer to a hegemonic reading of the scenes. Comments such as “he’s like the love child of Denzel Washington and The Rock” and “he

smells like fresh baked bread, Joburg after the rain and puppies!”(2014) encourage the viewer to acknowledge that Joe is an ideal hero. Certainly, an oppositional response might also be elicited in which these clichéd descriptions might even be construed as ridiculously unrealistic. Indeed, the few lyrics by Nomsa Mazwai from the song, “The Emperor” that are played just two minutes into the film are symbolic of Fikile’s sacrifices and could be part of a hegemonic decoding: “I have to sacrifice my freedom for a feeling of security, sacrifice my free will so that I can feel a little bit of safety”. Fikile’s character might be endearing to the viewer but, in the real world, more circumspect viewers will acknowledge that the show is more romantic fantasy than a likely tale of a young girl who just happens to be blessed with incredible luck. Her unexpected meteoric rise, Phindile telling her “You’re phenomenal” (2014) and Joe saying “You’re the best designer that I’ve seen in my twenty years of this business” (2014), coupled with the “happily ever after” ending, result in negotiated and oppositional decodings. However, for many female viewers who either consciously or unconsciously crave the romance formula, Fikile’s declarations are not clichés. These viewers, like the Nollybook readers, can only hope that they too, will attract a man who can be described as “the love child of Denzel Washington and The Rock” and as smelling “like fresh baked bread, Joburg after the rain and puppies!” (2014).

Reasons for the programmes’ success

There are many possible reasons for the success of both the first and second series of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, but this study reinforces the argument that one of the

major reasons for the series' success is that, like the Nollybook series, they follow the formulaic, prescriptive recipe of the romantic genre, which has universal popularity. South African viewers are eager to embrace these representations, particularly when they resonate with personal frames of reference. St Ives' research into viewers imagining "seeable" scenarios is comparable to Janice Radway's theory about women wilfully accepting and embracing the romance genre "even though the characters are more perfect than they or their husbands can ever hope to be, yet they are entirely persuasive and believable as possible human individuals. The women can thus believe in them *and* in the verity of the happy ending that concludes the story" (Radway 1991:203). Furthermore, like Dot's Smithton women in the 1970s who lived a parochial North American life, the enlightened, modernised South African female viewers of 2014 still might have an identification with the heroines. Radway notes that, for the Smithton women, "their intense reliance on these books suggests strongly that they help to fulfil deeply felt psychological needs" (Radway 1991:59). It is these same psychological needs that provide an explanation of the popularity of the television series in 2012, 2013 and 2014. My analysis of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* has demonstrated that, despite differences in details, the TV programmes reinforce the same conservative messages about romance and gender as the Nollybooks.

Chapter 4: Language in the Nollybooks

Not “Gangham” Style but “Nollybook” Style

In the preceding chapters I have explored the formulaic aspects of plot and characterisation in the Nollybooks. I have determined that the linguistic and stylistic components of the text exhibit similar formulaic qualities. In this chapter I will examine these. I will begin by looking at the simple language, short chapter lengths, paragraphing and formatting of the Nollybooks that make them accessible to most readers. As the readers are part of a multilingual society, my discussion will identify code switching¹ in both the Nollybooks and television versions, and I comment on the blending of cultures in South Africa. I will draw on Narunsky-Laden’s theory in explaining “cultural interference” and agree with the notion that the worth of the Nollybooks should not be assessed based on their stylistic merits but rather as a product of socio-cultural transition. Moudelino’s concept of Africanising the romance genre is also relevant here. Although there is a supposed equality of all languages in South Africa, this is not carried through in practice, so the code switching in the texts might appear contrived to the informed reader. The uncritical reader, however, accepts the code switches and is not concerned with the nuances of language as she reads purely for the plot development of the narrative. The reader is an implied reader who fills in gaps in the narrative with her own interpretations. Here, I will refer to the theoretical

¹ The term “code-switching” appears with a hyphen in certain texts, but without one in others. For the sake of consistency I have eliminated the hyphen.

insights of Wolfgang Iser and Wayne Booth, who both discuss reader response theory. My discussion will then elaborate on the limited representation of sex in the Nollybooks, which ultimately denies elevated pleasure or *jouissance* to the reader. Finally, I will consider language as a misogynistic tool in the Nollybooks and identify the male-centred language of the Nollybooks by referring to the work of Robin Lakoff, Deborah Cameron and Elaine Showalter, who analyse language from a feminist perspective. This will develop the discussion of the Nollybooks' gender portrayals described in earlier chapters.

Simplicity of language

I have emphasised the Nollybooks' simple language as a feature that appeals to many readers. The Gunning FOG Index Readability Formula or FOG Index is a measure of the reading complexity of a text. It derives from Gunning's book, *The Technique of Clear Writing* (1952). Although the merits of this theory are debatable, it provides a formula whereby the readability of a text is quantified. For example, the Bible has a Fog Index of 6, whilst *Time* Magazine has a rating of 11. When a random passage taken from *Lights, Camera, Love* was assessed in terms of the formula, the FOG index was 4.5, described as easy to read (*Readability Formulas* n.d.). This experiment provides an indication of the Nollybooks' basic level of language. One of the reasons why I initially exposed students in Applied Communicative Skills at the University of Johannesburg to the Nollybook series was that I understood that, as second- and third- language speakers of English, they were reticent to read English books. Indeed, they regarded reading as an arduous task and the simplicity of the Nollybooks was

welcomed. The sentences in the texts are often simple short sentences such as, “In her flatlet, Thuli looked at her alarm clock” (Desjardins 2010:41). There is plenty of dialogue which reduces the density of the texts. A sample taken from *Finding Arizona* demonstrates this point: “‘So what are we doing today?’ She asked as they sat in the car. ‘I thought we could watch a movie, then have dinner?’” (Atagana 2010: 84). However, the simple language is only one strategy to attract the aliterate reader. The Nollybooks’ short paragraphing, short chapters, large font and unthreatening format all contribute to their appeal.

Handbooks

De Geest and Goris, in their discussion of the various handbooks for aspirant romance writers, state that the handbooks “provide extensive information about the ways the final manuscript has to be prepared for publication” (2010:101). Details about the norms of word count, spacing, fonts, chaptering and other formatting tools are also provided. Sis’ Nolly, the fictional editor of the Nollybooks, says that the Nollybooks are “just the right length” (*Nollybooks* 2014). The deliberate decision to make the Nollybooks short (they are described as “bookazines” — namely a cross between a book and a magazine) aims at making their reading accessible to speakers of English as a second language rather than laborious. The average length is 150 pages, strikingly different from the average length of a Victorian novel. Initially in 2010, the Nollybooks bookazines were sold on the magazine racks in Shoprite, where a busy shopper could pick up an entertaining read when purchasing her groceries, for the reasonable price of R49.99. Radway reports that there was a similar strategy for

marketing romance novels in the 1930s in America, where they were also displayed on magazine racks in grocery and drug stores. Today the marketing of the Nollybooks has shifted to purchasing the books online in either printed or electronic format through the Nollybook website, at a cost of R69.99 per book. In 2012 these books became available as a digital book app, designed by Snapplify, so they could be read on mobile devices. In our world of technology, Nollybooks have become accessible at any time and from any place. This is in keeping with the idea that the Nollybooks are handy diversions and always accessible, wherever the reader finds herself, be it waiting for an appointment, en route to work, in a coffee shop or even if she is sitting in darkness as a result of an electrical power failure.

De Geest and Goris, mention that many handbooks provide examples of certain suitable words and phrases. They say that “aspirant writers not only find inspiration in the many examples offered by the handbooks for romance writing, they may even imitate and copy certain suggestions (e.g. when a list of phrases is given to describe the emotions or the body language of the main characters)” (De Geest & Goris 2010:95). These examples from established romances reinforce the conventions of the genre, although they say that variations are “tolerated” as long as “they do not lead to generic transgressions” (De Geest & Goris 2010:95). All the handbooks of romance advise against longwinded descriptions in favour of getting to the point sooner. The rules are often not made explicit but instruct the writers in an indirect way. Although the handbooks do not directly say “do” or “do not”, they advise the writer in a more subtle way such as “It is a good idea to

...” or “You might want to ...”. Thus, language choices are directed by the experts.

The Nollybook writers are all guided by “Sis Nolly”, the fictional editor who provides a five-step process that must be followed in creating a Nollybook. On its first page the Nollybook website makes it known that readers also can become Nollybook writers, as it says, “Click here to find out how you can become a Nollybooks writer” (*Nollybooks* 2014). A writer’s brief can then be downloaded with instructions about plot, characters, setting, viewpoint and dialogue. The five steps included in the “tips on writing Nollybooks” (*Nollybooks* 2014), are communicated in a chatty colloquial register that is indicative of the Nollybooks’ tone.

Formatting and presentation

The formatting and presentation of the Nollybooks is also formulaic. They are published in paperback format to make them affordable as well as being small enough to carry in a handbag where they can possibly be read in a taxi or on a train. Each cover is presented in a similar style with a pastel-coloured background overlapped by the silhouette of a young Black woman. This image is related to the heroines’ pursuits. In *Finding Arizona*, the image is of a confident student attired in a mini-dress, red heels and graduation cap. In *Looking for Mr Right*, a bride poses seductively in her wedding dress. In *Unfashionably in Love*, a model walks the fashion runway. In *Lights, Camera, Love*, the profile of a young film

director emphasises her breasts, elongated legs and buttocks. The titles of all four bookazines are written in a curly, pastel font with the label “A Nollybooks Romance” set against a bright pink background. The standardised appearance of the Nollybooks makes them instantly recognisable as part of the series, and the reader who has sampled one bookazine would notice other available Nollybooks when browsing the retail outlets that initially sold them. I did, however, discover that there is much criticism about the appearance of the covers of romances (Greenfield 2008: n.p.), which supports the argument denigrating the literary value of romances. This negative publicity regards the covers as tacky, indicative of their puerile content. However, I argue that the intended readers will not find the Nollybook covers offensive as these are compatible with their expectations.

The popular interactive website “Smart Bitches Who Love Trashy Novels (SBTB)” (Greenfield 2008), an online romance community of romance readers who oppose the trashing or denigration of the romance genre, has many participants who feel that, in many instances, it is the covers of novels that give the romance novel its negative reputation. It is true that the physical appearance of the Nollybooks do appear light-hearted, with their sexist depictions of women’s bodies set against swirly, decorative flowery patterning in the background and this could be deemed insulting to the intelligent Nollybook reader. Questions could be asked such as whether it is really necessary to portray the graduate posing on the cover of *Finding Arizona* with her hand on her hip in a suggestive pose, simultaneously wearing a graduation cap and mini-dress? And why are the woman’s breasts and buttocks emphasised in the silhouetted image

on the cover of *Lights, Camera, Love?* The cover illustrations give an inkling of what the Nollybooks represent: stereotypical objectified portrayals of women whose professions are minimised by their sexualised representations. However, it is my opinion that the books might be considered refreshing when compared with the sordid content of the cult trilogy *Fifty Shades of Grey* (James 2011). These black, darkened covers, each with their sado-masochistic symbols of a tie, mask and handcuffs respectively are in stark contrast to the unthreatening covers of the Nollybooks.

The prescriptive presentation of each Nollybook begins with a letter from the editor or “Sis Nolly”, who provides an introduction to the story. As mentioned in my Introduction, the editorials to each Nollybook encourage readers to believe in the romantic formula and to believe that they too can feature as heroines in their own romantic stories. Simple diction is chosen by the Nollybook writer, since many readers probably speak English as a second language. I do, however, note that despite the Nollybooks’ primary objective as reading for enjoyment, they do encourage a love for reading and promote the development of the reader’s vocabulary. Each Nollybook ends with a book club discussion of key thinking points presented by the story, a “word power” or glossary of complex words, a word quiz and word puzzle and solutions to these.

A page with a mini-interview and picture of a contemporary celebrity follows, accompanied by a description of her reading tastes. These celebrities are

recognisable role models, and reinforce the notion that reading is a valuable pastime. As I mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, one of the publishers' initial objectives in creating the Nollybooks was to tackle the challenge of aliteracy amongst many young South Africans, and one strategy is to convey the message that celebrities are role models in that they make wise reading choices. In *Finding Arizona*, the celebrity is Sonia Booth, a model and wife of renowned South African soccer player, Matthew Booth. Together, this celebrity couple are frequently portrayed in the media as a perfect love match across the colour line. In *Looking for Mr Right*, the celebrity is the beautiful Mmbatho Montsho, a familiar face from *Generations* and *Rhythm City*. In *Rhythm City*, viewers might recall that Mmbatho's onscreen character, Thembi, and onscreen gorgeous lover, Sbu, played by Lungile Radu, were involved in a real-life love relationship. This knowledge fits in perfectly with the romantic fantasy of the Nollybooks, namely that the woman reader, or heroine, can be "swept away" by a good-looking and desirable man. In *Unfashionably in Love*, it is Nkensani Nkosi, the distinguished fashion designer whose brand "Stoned Cherrie" has enjoyed a meteoric rise. She is happily married to a former television presenter, Zam Nkosi, whom she dated for seventeen years before marrying. This is another subliminal message to the Nollybook reader in terms of the romantic fantasy — quite clearly success and true love go hand in hand. In *Lights, Camera, Love* the celebrity is the poet, actress, motivational speaker and television presenter Lebo Mashile. Her column "In her shoes," might be familiar to the Nollybook reader, as it appears in the iconic South African magazine for Black women, *True Love*.

Finally, the last pages of each Nollybook contain pictures and summaries of Nollybooks that are “coming soon” and an invitation for Nollybooks’ readers to contact the Nollybook website as well as to connect with “Sis Nolly” through Facebook and Twitter. There are also contact details for those who wish to become Nollybooks writers or agents. Clearly, the reader is invited to engage actively with others about her reading experience and encouraged to read other Nollybooks.

Code switching

In the previous chapter I observed the presence of code switching in the television series *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. No discussion on the language of the Nollybooks and *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* would be complete without a closer inspection of code switching in both the texts and the readers’ own language. Out of the four Nollybooks in this study, *Lights, Camera, Love* uses code switching extensively. In *Unfashionably in Love* it is absent and in *Finding Arizona* and *Looking for Mr Right*, it is sporadic. In *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, *Game On* makes constant use of code switching whilst in *PhD* and *Label It Love*, it is sporadic. A discussion of code switching, using the definition of code switching as “the alternate use of two (or more) languages within the same utterance or during the same conversation” (Hoffmann 1991:110), from a sociolinguistic perspective will be applied to *Lights, Camera, Love*.

Code switching occurs when a writer deliberately and voluntarily chooses to use words from another language besides English to express the writer's meaning more accurately. The incidence of code switching from English to indigenous languages is high in South Africa and familiar to the Nollybook reader who, most likely, was not schooled in his or her mother tongue. Second, English has often been regarded as an international language and proficiency has been encouraged as a means of "furthering one's chances of upward socio-economic mobility" (Van Dulm 2007: 32). Borrowing or interference is also used, which is an involuntary switch from one language to another. This is often used in conversations between a bilingual and monolingual speaker.

The significance of code switching has been has been recognised by many writers, both in an educational environment and in wider society. Mesthrie notes that its origins can be traced to Canada, where speakers mixed French and English in informal speech and, thereafter, it became apparent in American urban areas such as in the Texan mix of Spanish and English known as Tex-Mex. South Africans also frequently code switch and "switching between languages also enables speakers to express multiple identities, to establish intimacy or distance, to accommodate the language abilities of other speakers and to express themselves more fully" (Mesthrie 2011:80). Studying code switching amongst Zulu teachers and students in South Africa, Adendorff sees code switching as a "crucial communicative resource in classrooms" (Adendorff 1993:20) and encourages its use as "a sign of bilingual competence, affording speakers communicative power, and thus social power" (Adendorff 1993:19). Ncoko et al

echo this viewpoint in their study of Zulu-English code switching in primary schools, arguing that “primary school students appear to use code switching to fulfil a variety of social functions” (Van Dulm 2007: 33). They comment that code switching has become the norm among South African schoolchildren. It is most probable, then, that the readers of Nollybooks are familiar with code switching, especially if they originate from South Africa’s townships. Finlayson and Slabbert’s report (1995) on code switching in the South African township demonstrates that code switching between indigenous languages is a widespread norm and “the ability to switch languages is an integral part of a speaker’s identity” (Van Dulm 2007:36). If this is so, one might ask the questions: when do these speakers code switch and what are their attitudes towards code switching?

Barnes’ (1994) valuable research on code switching between and among various South African languages notes that code switching is used “for direct quotations and idiomatic expressions in the original language, for reiteration, for discourse marking, and generally for dramatic effect and creating intimacy amongst speakers” (Van Dulm 2007:35). All these identified functions can be applied to one of the Nollybooks, namely *Lights, Camera, Love*, which uses many examples of code switching. In *Lights, Camera, Love*, the author constantly switches from expressions in English to Zulu. I cite several examples here: “Sawubona. Welcome!” (Desjardins 2010:99), “‘Nabu utshwala for your thoughts?’” (Desjardins 2010:108) and “‘Ngubani igama lakho?’” (Desjardins 2010:34). In the first two examples, there is intersentential code switching, where one clause is in one language and the next clause in another. In many instances the Zulu words

are a borrowed or a replacement word such as ““she must bring you to my *nduma*”” (Desjardins 2010:122), “the tradition of *ukwaba*” (Desjardins 2010:111), “that *utswala* sure has kick!” (Desjardins 2010:115) and “Jake was confronted by a bevy of beautiful girls in beaded skirts, *isidwaba*” (Desjardins 2010:108). This would posit the theory that the author of the text is not a first-language speaker of Zulu and, in accordance with Pfaff’s view of code switching, she has chosen this syntax, which is unusual in English, because “surface structures common to both languages are favoured for switches” (Pfaff 1979:314). Muysken calls this type of code switching “congruent lexicalization”, where the “two languages share the grammatical structure of the sentence, either partially or fully” (Muysken 2000:132, 152). Even first-language English speakers could, from the contexts in the above examples, interpret the meanings of the Zulu words or easily access the single word meanings in a Zulu-English dictionary. There are no nuances of meaning as the Zulu words refer to literal objects.

Common colloquialisms and greetings are borrowed from the indigenous language such as “*Yebo sisi*” (Desjardins 2010:110), “Hey *wena!*” (Desjardins 2010:111), ““Lala kahle”” (Desjardins 2010:123), ““Thank you, *ngiyabonga kakhulu*”” (Desjardins 2010:147), “Hawu!” (Desjardins 2010:117) and ““Ah, Jake, *woza,*”” (Desjardins 2010:127). It is significant that the final unravelling of the plot and Jake’s final message from his dead parents comes to him from the engraved cave wall message that they left for him in isiZulu in 1991: ““*Jake, landela inhliziyu yakho njalo Siyakdelu thanda, uMa no Baba*”” which is

translated by Thuli as “*“Always follow your heart. We love you, mom and dad”*” (Desjardins 2010:146).

The producers of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* were well aware that their targeted audiences intermingle languages and would effortlessly understand and relate to the code switching in the dialogue. Mesthrie remarks that many South African programmes use code switching in their scripts and so many viewers have come to accept that “code switching is a natural phenomenon and that there are strategic reasons for it” (Mesthrie 2011:85). He mentions “*Isidingo, Generations, Rhythm City, Scandal* and others [who] are skilled at using a mixture of languages to establish social nuances and the identity of their characters and to sweep in viewers from across the board” (Mesthrie 2011:84). There are many examples of code switching in the television programme *Game On*, based on *Looking for Mr Right. Label it Love* and *PhD* have fewer mixed expressions; nevertheless, code switching is present where actors unconsciously converse in more than one language.

Game On begins with Cassandra answering the telephone when her cousin, Amanda, tells her in Sesotho that she is getting married. The conversation switches between Sesotho and English and there are English subtitles throughout the episode to translate the Sesotho expressions. Various Sesotho expressions are used such as Amanda’s response to being stood up by Dennis, “*O bathong!*”, translated this means “Oh people” but is used here as an expression of shock, for

example “oh my G-d!” (2012), or Cassandra’s expression of disbelief when Kagiso tells her about the cancer patient smoking and she says: “*A o a hlanya* that’s just crazy” (2012). At the beginning of *Label it Love*, Fikile addresses her best friend in isiZulu “*Ngiyokukhumbula*”. There is no subtitle to translate the meaning which must be understood by code switchers as “I will miss you”. Khumo responds to Fikile’s news of her applying for an internship in isiZulu as “*Sisand ukuqeda eCollege* why do you have to be such an overachiever all the time” (2013). The sentence is split partly into isiZulu and partly into English, with the first part meaning “we have just graduated from college”. In other instances Zulu expressions are used as replacements. For example, when Fikile tells Khumo “*unenhlanhla uBuhle*” (2013), the English subtitles translate this as “you’re lucky you’re pretty” (2013), or when Khumo thanks Fikile for getting her a job she says “*Ngiyabonga Chomie*” (2013). In *PhD*, an example of a mixed Sesotho-English sentence is when Arizona orders a muffin from the canteen and says “Hello *Ne ke kopa* apricot muffin” (2013), but in another instance she uses a replacement sentence in Sesotho, “*gore ke se ke ka mo penta ka le brush le le one le Jenkins*” (2013), which the subtitles translate as “Not paint him with the same brush as Jenkins” (2013). The code switching in the television programmes appears more natural than in the printed books because it is closer to the reality of spoken language in South Africa, as opposed to the written word.

Ramsay-Brijball’s research on Zulu-English code switching in students at the Westville campus of the University of Kwazulu Natal noted that code switching reveals Zulu speakers’ “hybrid nature” and is “an illustration of their adaptation

to global demands” (Van Dulm 2007:34). These students naturally switched codes and saw English as a desirable international language. She concludes that “Zulu speakers use Zulu-English code switching as a tool to define themselves and to express their aspirations” (Van Dulm 2007:34). However, her article, entitled “Understanding Zulu-English code switching: a psycho-social perspective” (1999) provides more complex insights into the minds of code switchers in South Africa and, by inference, the Nollybooks’ readers and the viewers of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. Van Dulm probed Zulu speakers’ motivations and attitudes towards code switching in English by analysing the results of quantitative research methodologies such as interviews, personal observations and questionnaires at the University of Durban-Westville. She noted that Myers Scotton’s research (1993:47) revealed that many speakers regard code switching negatively as “the performance of an imperfect bilingual” (Ramsay-Brijball 1999:163). Eight-four percent of Ramsay-Brijball’s respondents disapproved of code switching and she surprisingly discovered that this response was more prevalent in endolingual interactions, namely where speakers shared Zulu as their mother tongue (1999:165). The obvious question is why this is so. It seems that intra-group communication as a social function has been prioritised and code switching diminishes the purity of culture.

Homi Bhabha’s complex notion of cultural hybridity in *The Location of Culture* (1994) is relevant here. Instead of focusing on power-relations in postcolonial societies, as many theorists do, Bhabha examines the mingling of cultures of the coloniser and the colonised in such settings to create new cultural forms, which

are different from either of the original cultures. Globalisation in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has extended this hybridity as communication spans continents and cultures, facilitating further intermingling of cultures. It is especially fascinating to note the differences in gender responses to code switching as Ramsay-Brijball discovered that females were more willing to code switch than males. She posits that this may be because of the Zulu patriarchal culture in which the male is seen as the protector of culture and, thus, as the protector of the purity of language. It would be interesting to conduct further research on the female Nollybook reader to assess whether code switching in the text is in fact offensive to the reader as language purists would claim. I also note that the only Nollybook in this study that uses code switching extensively is written by Bronwyn Desjardins, who is female and not a Zulu first-language speaker. Mesthrie comments that for code switching to be most effective, it is done by the bilingual speaker naturally and without a conscious awareness of the rules of switching (Mesthrie 2011:82), so the switches in *Lights, Camera, Love* might appear contrived. However, Ramsay-Brijball's article provides a counter argument to the language purists by noting that "some interviewees made the point that the exclusive use of Zulu is seen as inappropriate by the younger generation as it does not reflect their social, economic and educational aspirations" (1999:170). If this is the case, then readers of *Lights, Camera, Love* might both approve of and enjoy the switches.

Blending of cultures

As I mentioned in my introduction, Faith Baloyi's (2008) article "Meet Mr and Mrs New Black" refers to two types of New Black "Middle Africans": the "Hoity Toity" and the "Arty Fartys". The former are prevalent in the Nollybooks as young, upwardly mobile young Black people who are obsessed with status and wealth. The "Arty Fartys" are Bohemian, creative people who espouse alternative, healthy lifestyles and are "intent on romanticizing what they imagine precolonial (South) Africans to have been like" (Baloyi 2008:71). Thembi Khumalo is the "Hoity Toity" prototype in *Looking for Mr Right*. Described as "the daughter of a wealthy businessman" and "part-time model who insisted on calling herself an actress" (Ntuny 2010:14-15), she is spoilt, narcissistic and entitled. Her millionaire groom is described as "perfectly matched" (Ntuny 2010:119), and their high profile wedding is described as "an extravagant, ostentatious display" (Ntuny 2010:119) and as "an occasion fit for the society pages" (Ntuny 2010:120). There is no mention of their roots or traditional customs. Thuli in *Lights, Camera and Love* is more "Arty Farty" in that she embraces traditional customs. She is not averse to wearing traditional dress, eating the traditional cow intestines, consulting the sangoma and relaying her gogo's symbolic tale about Eagles' Rock. Yet all the main characters in the four Nollybooks under analysis embrace Western patterns of behaviour.

Narunsky-Laden's theory, outlined in "Popular Writing in Post-Transitional South Africa as an Agency of Socio-Cultural Change: or, 'Meet Mzansi's Mr and Mrs New Black'" regards certain novels as products of social and cultural change or as "cultural tools through which their writers and readers are able to articulate,

rehearse, and enact processes of social mobility and socio-cultural change” (2010:63). Developing Even-Zohar’s theory of “literary interference”, she refers to “cultural interference” where cultures are “imported from a source culture, and successfully take hold in a target culture” (Narunsky-Laden 2010:63). There are many references to Western culture and modernity in the Nollybooks. In *Looking for Mr Right*, Cassandra’s posters are of “Will Smith, TK Zee and Madonna” (Ntuny 2010:140). Frantz Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, posed the question, “what does the black man want?” (Fanon 2008:1). He posits that “the black man wants to be white” (Fanon 2008:3). In the foreword to the 2008 edition, Ziauddin Sardar explains that Fanon is dealing with the Black person’s sense of inferiority for being Black and so “the entire purpose of his behavior is to emulate the white man, to become like him, and thus hope to be accepted as a man” (Fanon 2008: xiii). Certainly, the Black Nollybook characters seem to be embracing Western brands as a means of identifying with “Whiteness”: Cassandra eats the popular biscuit brand “Romany Creams” and watches the television channel “M-Net” (Ntuny 2010:129). When she’s irritated with her friend Amanda, she refers to her as the famous American talk show psychologist “Dr Phil” (Ntuny 2010:40). Various famous imported brands such as Gucci, Calvin Klein, Rolex and Lacoste, the trappings of the European elite, are mentioned in *Lights, Camera, Love*. Narunsky-Laden’s concept of “aesthetic cosmopolitanism” (2010: 66) applies here, where cultural expressions “are based on urban cultural forms created in response to and under the influence of globalization” (Narunsky-Laden 2010:66). New Black identities are formed as a result of a consumption-orientated society, which is constantly bombarded by mass media and, with the emergence of a new upwardly mobile Black consumer in post-apartheid South Africa, these coveted

international brands are synonymous with wealth and status. It is unsurprising then, that these desirable objects are so often owned by the eminent heroes of the Nollybooks.

Local labels and brands are also present. In *Unfashionably in Love*, Fikile expresses her taste for “shweshwe”, a Sesotho borrowed loanword that refers to the locally made and printed dyed cotton fabric as well as her admiration for Nkensani Nkosi, the local designer of Stoned Cherrie. I will now cite several of the many South African references in the Nollybooks.

In *Finding Arizona*, there is a reference to the *Mail and Guardian*, (Atagana 2010: 150), and Jason Khoza’s company was called Ubuntu, an Nguni word translated to mean human kindness (*Ubuntu (philosophy)* 2014) but which has come to have connotations of humanity and compassion in post-apartheid South Africa. Recognisable cities such as Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Cape Town and Umhlanga are mentioned. Indigenous African names are used in most instances. In *Finding Arizona*, Jason’s surname is Khoza. In *Looking for Mr Right*, there are Sindiswa, Thembi and Kagiso. In *Unfashionably in Love*, there is Fikile, Khumo, Phindile, Silongo and Kaleni. In *Lights, Camera, Love*, examples of the characters’ indigenous names are Mkhize, Thuli Ngcobo, Dlamini and Zodwa. Neroшни, a makeup artist, is identified as Indian purely by her Indian name. It is interesting to note that in the rural village described in *Lights, Camera, Love*, where traditional customs are prevalent and mainly Zulu is spoken, the villagers still have Western-type questions for their Hollywood film director visitor such as: “Have you met Denzel Washington? Do all the famous people carry small

dogs in their handbags? What's it like in America?" (Desjardins 2010:103). Indeed, these questions are incongruous in a rural South African setting. Once again, this reflects the Nollybook reader who identifies with the heroines as modern, informed women and who might, in all probability, have similar curiosities.

Africanisation of the romance genre

In Lydie Moudileno's article, "The troubling popularity of West African Romance novels" (2008), the author looks at a collection of French romance novels called the Adoras collection launched in the 1990s. She attempts to analyse why they have enjoyed enormous popularity and refers to them as the "African Harlequin" (Moudileno 2008:122). I believe that the Nollybook reader in South Africa is in a similar position to the Adoras reader in Abidjan or Dakar. Moudileno, commenting on the formulaic nature of Adoras, says that "the heroines of Adoras all embark on a trajectory that involves meeting a man, falling in love, dealing with a number of social and affective barriers, and finally, surrendering to the triumph of love" (Moudileno 2008:123).

Moudileno points out that the romance genre has undergone Africanisation and says there is a double universe in the African romance — a realistic African world and a fantasy world. The fantasy world is made up of idealised, uncomplicated scenarios; it is a "re-presentation of Africa as an idyllic, unproblematic, enviable romantic topography" (Moudileno 2008:124). She says

that the Adoras books are escapist as they allow the reader to be removed from the harsh realities of life. The plots and characters are far removed from the hardships of post-colonial life. She elaborates by saying that, “the ultimate appeal of Adoras could be its capacity to let readers break away from the real and the idea of Africa, allowing them to forget, if just for a couple of hours, the frustration in their daily lives in the postcolony and the ubiquitous images — including those provided by more canonical writers — of a tragic, doomed, and distressed continent” (Moudileno 2008:124). The Nollybooks are similar in veering away from reality in that they never mention South Africa’s obvious notorious history, namely the painful journey to democracy. There is no direct mention of apartheid, the struggle and the discrimination that the Nollybooks’ readers’ parents and grandparents probably endured. I also noted in chapter 3 that the depictions in *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* do not show the real face of South Africa — the homeless, unemployed and displaced. There are no portrayals of the strikes, corruption or political divisions that are so prevalent in our day-to-day existence. At the time of writing this dissertation in 2014, Statistics South Africa’s figure for youth unemployment was 36.1% (Dawjee 2014). Nowhere is this alluded to in either the Nollybooks or the television adaptations. Considering the fact that the Nollybook readers are in this age bracket, it is astounding to note that more than a third of South Africa’s youth is unemployed, yet this is glaringly omitted in the interests of maintaining the romantic fantasy.

Where there are references of the real face of South Africa, these are secondary considerations, such as Thembi’s attempt to promote BEE in *Looking for Mr*

Right, and Jason Khoza's history of causing thousands of workers to lose their jobs in *Finding Arizona*. Commenting on this aspect of the plot, Christopher Warnes says that the main point here is not an in-depth realistic discussion of the exploitation of the workers, but rather the fantasy, which is the progression of the romantic union. As he says, "the betrayal of the workers becomes a pretext for the triggering of vulnerability in the hero, which furthers the romance while glossing over the fact that he has benefitted handsomely in financial terms from that which supposedly causes him such pain" (Warnes 2014:168). Ironically, the reference to exploited workers is used as a ploy to elicit respect for the hero, who has realised his unintentional complicity. This device is cleverly constructed as it elevates his desirability in the heroine's and the reader's eyes. This argument might appear unconvincing but on closer inspection, I must agree with Warnes' point as the heroine and the reader are more concerned about Jason's pain rather than having sympathy for the impoverished workers. When Shezi tells him that thousands of workers lost their jobs because of him, he replies in a voice "thick with sorrow" (Atagana 2010: 56). His letter to Arizona near the end of the book is a letter of apology. He begs her to come back to him and this feeds the belief that the romantic hero is essentially good. He writes: "I came here a searching, hurting man and you have helped me towards wholeness. I am a better man for knowing you, I am a happier man knowing that I love you. I will not give up on you" (Atagana 2010:142).

The Andoras stories, like the Nollybooks, are all set in African cities. Many specific cultural references are mentioned in the texts. Moudileno identifies

specific West African references by saying that “heroines and heroes have African names, are seen eating West African dishes like *aloko*, *attieke*, *kedjenou*, and *yassa* and listening to songs by Youssou Ndour, Ray Lema and Mayway. References to African styles of clothing like *pagnes*, *petit pagnes*, or *boubous* can also be found throughout, giving the Adoras stories a distinctive national, regional or continental grounding” (Moudileno 2008:123). In chapter three, I identified this indigenous African flavour in the television adaptation of the Nollybooks, *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*, by citing many examples of local signifiers such as downtown Johannesburg locales, and recognisable eateries and brands.

Chinweizu et al (1983) in their book, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, insist that Africans should write in their own particular styles and not imitate western traditions. They promote African literature in their own indigenous languages but where this is not possible, they make comments regarding the type of English that is acceptable. They say that African literature is autonomous and should not be dismissed as inferior or inadequate. Commenting on the simplified language, they say, “We would like to point out that the King’s English, or the English of schoolmen, is not the only kind of English. Writing in an English different from standard English should not be construed as ‘letting Africa down’”. (Chinweizu et al 1983:264). Ngugi wa Thiong’o takes this further in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986) by suggesting that African writers should only write in indigenous African languages. Narunsky-Laden takes this argument against linguistic purity a step further when she makes the point that where popular fiction is a cultural tool,

literary concerns are secondary as these books are not appreciated for their “literariness”. She elaborates by saying that “these novels will clearly never obtain the recognition, let alone the prestige, consecration, or artistic merit typically awarded to literary works by ‘accredited’ literary gatekeepers, ie members of the literary academy and/or already sanctioned South African writers and critics” (Narunsky-Laden 2010:63).

The Nollybooks have not garnered any literary awards nor earned any international recognition. Instead they are marketed to a local audience as “aspirational tools” (Narunsky-Laden 2010:65), where readers can identify with role models who represent “the changing needs and interests of many Black South Africans” (Narunsky-Laden 2010:65). Furthermore, Rajend Mesthrie’s book *Eish, but is it English?* is vocal in commenting on the diversity of English in our blended new South African culture and warns against being judgmental. Reacting to older South African listeners’ complaints about the demise of standardised English forms on the SAFM radio programme, *Word of Mouth*, Mesthrie warns against judging English in terms of its correctness. In referring to Black South African English (BSAE), he comments on a wide range of linguistic strands. His paper, “Undeletions in Black South African English” (2006), suggests that this diversity is to be expected after the demise of apartheid for various reasons. These reasons include exiles who returned home from distant shores, the creation of a new Black elite whose children attend English private schools together with English first-language speakers, and the increase in the number of Black children attending schools outside of townships (Mesthrie

2006:76). In this context, it is to be expected that the Nollybooks incorporate linguistic diversity.

Clearly, many styles of English are spoken in South Africa today. Shezi's mother's wish for her to go to Arizona in America ("promise me you'll go to Arizona and tell me what it is like, this place that holds you'" (Atagana 2010:147) might not be expressed in the most eloquent language, yet the message is understood. Lu tells Shezi in an informal register to seek out Jason at the dance to "run off to your man candy" (Atagana 2010:93). *Lights, Camera, Love* contains both the sangoma's code switching greeting to Jake, "'Ah Jake, woza'" (Desjardins 2010:127) as well as the articulate English spoken by the Hilton college principal who refers to Jake as "an inspiration and a true creative genius" (Desjardins 2010:73).

The implied author and the implied reader

I shall now elaborate on how the romance handbooks directions to authors to choose particular language forms are written with an awareness of the implied author. Booth (1961) speaks of an "implied reader" (Schmid 2013) and an "implied author" (Schmid 2013). The implied reader is a role taken on by the real reader in response to the kind of reader the text requires. In this way the text creates the reader. The implied author is a role that is taken on by the real author based on who would be reading her books. This means that a particular person would read a Nollybook in the same way as a particular writer would pen a

Nollybook. The female reader who buys into the romantic fantasy is the ideal implied reader. The implied reader of the Nollybooks is a fairly naïve woman who buys into the Cinderella fantasy and has not been enlightened. Similarly, the author who believes in the success of the romantic formula is the ideal implied author. In *Readers, Texts, Teachers*, Clem Young writes “each real reader is invited to take on the role of the particular kind of reader ‘required’ by the text — the kind of person who would find these things interesting, amusing, or shocking” (Young, 1987:20). This begs the question asked in chapter two: Are the deliberate sexual omissions in the Nollybooks satisfying to the reader or, rather, is the level of sexuality adequately portrayed? “Sis Nolly”, the fictional editor of the Nollybooks, says in her directives to Nollybook writers that the bookazines are “morally responsible” (*Nollybooks* 2014). She represents Moky Makura, the publisher of MME Media, who said in an interview with CNN: “because of the market we are selling to and because of the issues in Africa with AIDS and sex as a whole we didn’t think it was important” (Mabuse & Wither 2011). “It” here is a reference to sex. I will argue, however that for the millennial reader who is probably internet savvy and completely immersed in various social media such as Facebook and Twitter, this watered-down version of sexual portrayals is actually myopic and unsatisfying. I will, therefore, look at the suggestions posited by the Romance handbooks in dealing with sexual content.

If the Nollybooks are read in the ways suggested by theorists Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser in terms of reader-response criticism, with the understanding that meaning is dependent both on the text and the reader, then the Nollybook reader is an active participant in producing meaning. The reader fills in the missing parts, through her interpretations. This is in line with Iser’s view that texts contain

blanks for the reader to interpret. The following description of Thuli in *Lights, Camera, Love* prompts the reader to fill in these blanks. The reader is not directly told that Thuli is a sexy woman; rather, the reader's imagination is evoked so that she can interpret the suggestive words as indicative of Thuli's powerful sexuality and potential to seduce. Here it is helpful to repeat the quotation from *Lights, Camera, Love* which appeared in chapter two: "The dress hugged every curve, flattering and sensual, as if it had been designed just for her, emphasizing her narrow waist and curvaceous hips. Her breasts perched, moulded to perfection in gathered cups of duchess satin. She wondered how he'd known which size to buy. The satin red heels lengthened her legs which peeped, gazelle-like, from the mid thigh split up the front" (Desjardins 2010:68). This description again highlights the reader's own fantasy that she herself can be magnetic and capture a man's attention which Mulvey described in chapter three as scopophilia. It is not spelt out, but the reader understands that her sheer beauty and physical form has enormous power.

The various handbooks of romance writing acknowledge the differences regarding sexual content between romances, and stress that romance writers should write according to the requirements of a specific line. Aspiring writers are advised to target a specific line or category before submitting to a particular publisher. Lines are groups of thematically related romances such as medical romances. Estrada and Gallagher elaborate on the range of sexuality in different lines by saying, "each romance line you write for will have varying amounts of love scenes and a varying degree of explicitness in those scenes ... the line itself

tells you how much physical love you need to fulfil that story”(Estrada & Gallagher 1999:100). The lines will also indicate details about the explicitness of language and guidelines about the depiction of sexual acts. No overt sexual acts are described in the Nollybooks besides kissing. However, there are many seductive references to body parts and descriptions of heterosexual physical attraction for both the hero and heroine. Since the representation of sex is stunted, the absolute pleasure of *jouissance* is denied to the reader. This is symbolically significant. Just as the heroines are deprived of the physical heights of sexual intimacy and orgasm, so too are the readers’ joyful responses subdued.

In *Lights, Camera, Love*, Thuli and Jake’s first kiss is not merely a kiss but ignites her whole body: “when his lips finally reached hers, she felt a rush like an electric tidal wave pulsate through her” (Desjardins 2010:148). The heroine in *Finding Arizona* is also sexually awakened when Jason’s lips graze hers, “sending shivers of anticipation down her spine” (Atagana 2010:126). In terms of Iser’s theory regarding the filling in of blanks, the reader perceives that these heroines are far from passive in their sexuality and are actively expressing a desire to be ravished by the heroes. However, the Nollybooks curtail this desire and I am of the view that, even if Radway’s conservative Smithton women readers of the 1970s would have hypothetically sampled the Nollybooks, they too would have felt frustrated at the unfulfilling sexual descriptions. These women who prized virginity, nevertheless saw female sexual response as “something to be exchanged for love and used only in its service” (Radway 1991:126). Ultimately, true love merits the generosity of the heroine bestowing on the hero her most

prized gift, namely her virginity, in exchange for his complete dedication to her. After all the trials and tribulations that the heroines have endured, it is unrewarding for the reader to have the Nollybook heroines depart with a mere promise of future happiness and fulfilment. Possibly, a counter-argument could hold the notion that, according to convention, women's sexuality is less focused on a particular body part than men's. Taking this into account, the diffuse descriptions of sexual arousal could be seen as more suited to women readers.

Sexist language

Previous chapters have discussed gender issues related to both the Nollybooks and *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. Since this chapter focuses on the language of the Nollybooks, it is necessary to delve deeper into the sexist nature of the Nollybooks and how specific words reinforce issues of power and powerlessness. Linguist Robin Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place* (1975) was written close to forty years ago and is a controversial piece of writing since it was criticised for its lack of evidence. Nevertheless, she still makes pertinent observations about gender and language. Her argument is that feminine verbal behaviour disadvantages women in many ways. For example women, unlike men, use qualifiers like "a bit" or "sort of", use empty adjectives such as "lovely", were "super polite" and avoid taboo language. Lakoff's insights can usefully be applied to *Unfashionably in Love*. When Joe takes Fikile out to a fancy restaurant in *Unfashionably in Love*, she thanks him for "a lovely evening" (Mutangadura 2010:109). The opening scene in *Lights, Camera, Love* is a good example of Thuli remaining polite even after being the target of Jake's brusque behaviour.

When he rudely asks her to “dispense with the chit-chat” (Desjardins 2010:11), she meekly replies ““Oh, I’m so sorry. Yes, of course”” (Desjardins 2010:11).

Deborah Cameron summarises Lakoff’s position by stating that

Lakoff believed that women were caught in a double bind. If they did not use ‘women’s language’ they risked being judged unfeminine; but by using it, they risked confirming the belief that women could not express themselves decisively or authoritatively, and were therefore unfit to occupy positions of responsibility. Women had a choice, but whatever choice they made, they paid a price (Cameron, 2007:12).

The following four examples from the Nollybooks confirm that the authors were not concerned with women “paying a price” and, in fact, the authors deliberately chose the language of submissiveness for their heroines as opposed to the language of assertiveness for their heroes. Consider Arizona’s classic response when Jason takes her out for dinner on the yacht in *Finding Arizona*: ““It’s really nice, you shouldn’t have gone to so much trouble,’ she finished demurely”” (Atagana 2010:66). The obvious implication is that she denigrates herself in implying that she is not worth the trouble. Jason’s comment on her “demure” behaviour: ““you are so much more beautiful when your defences are down,”” is a telling comment. Simply put, her physical attractiveness is equated to her submissiveness. As a male, he is qualified to reach verdicts on both her beauty and personality but of course she does not have this privilege.

Cassandra’s failure to find a husband in *Looking for Mr Right* labels her a failure from both her mother’s and her own viewpoint. Because all her relationships

peter out, her mother asks her; ““what are you doing wrong?”” (Ntuny 2010:127) and her retort is ““everything”” (Ntuny 2010:127). Not only is Cassandra considered doomed without a man, she is the cause of this disastrous situation!

I observe that Fikile in *Unfashionably in Love* is skilled in self-denigration and feels a need to justify herself constantly. Her rambling on to Chief when she gets the internship at Cocoa Rouge are not the words of a newly qualified, confident fashion graduate who has found work at a distinguished fashion house. Instead they are apologetic and charged with powerlessness as she says: ““I never expected the internship and there was no time or money to find out about it. Truthfully, I’ve never been able to afford clothes from there and the jeans I got last week...well, they were supposed to be a twenty-fifth birthday present from my grandmother and her friends from church”” (Mutangadura 2010:46). In the best scenario these words might elicit a sympathetic response, but a more critical reader might feel frustrated at her self-pity and her victim persona whilst also noticing that none of the male protagonists ever express this type of self-denigration.

Thuli in *Lights, Camera, Love* has never acted before but has difficulty in turning down the request to be a stand-in for the lead actress in *Zulu Valentine*. Her difficulty in saying “no”, her desire to please others and her need to satisfy Jake’s needs are evident in the following quotation: ““He was begging in his own way. He needed her, and the whole crew was waiting for an answer. She knew delays

like this cost money and she hated letting people down” (Desjardins 2010: 88). Thuli, like Cassandra and Fikile in the above discussion, has become a people-pleaser. Their low self-esteem prevents the heroines from expressing themselves forcefully and decisively, and the implied lesson for women is that they have to please others (preferably men) in order to achieve anything.

Lakoff also mentions that women’s descriptions of colour are different to those expressed by men since men would find words reflecting colour differentiation trivial. As she says, “Men tend to relegate to women things that are not of concern to them, or do not involve their egos. Among these are problems of fine colour discrimination” (Lakoff 1975: 244). Fikile’s fashion designs are “a dreamy aqua with silver” (2010:94) and “a slightly darker hue of cobalt blue” (2010:94). This substantiates Lakoff’s theory that such descriptions are feminine, whereas more dynamic language about real issues is used by men. Jake’s profane words to express his intolerance of bad service on the second page of *Lights, Camera, Love* are justified as they come from an important male Hollywood film director. He says, ““For God’s sake will you open the door? I need to check in!”” (2010:10). The reader is not consciously aware of how neither she nor the heroine justifies this disrespectful, profane language because it emanates from a powerful alpha male. Lakoff draws attention to the typical Western socialising process of little boys, which is so distinct from that of little girls. Quite simply, Lakoff asserts: “Little girls are indeed taught to talk like little ladies, in that their speech is in many ways more polite than that of boys or men, and the reason for this is that politeness involves an absence of a strong statement, and women’s speech is

devised to prevent the expression of strong statements” (1975:252). Thuli might secretly consider Jake uncouth but she cannot possibly convey this to him, nor ever express herself in similar terms to these.

Lakoff also claims that women often insert a “tag question” at the end of a statement as a means of gaining approval from others. However Janet Holmes’s research in 1984 found women asked more questions not as a result of their insecurity but, rather, as facilitators of conversations. Deborah Cameron (2007) in her book, *The Myth of Mars and Venus*, challenges John Gray’s bestseller *Men Are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, which contains typical gender stereotypes. Gray believes that misunderstanding between the genders is inevitable since men and women originate from different planets. Cameron, in response, addresses typical gender assertions such as the idea that men are less talkative, less expressive and that they prefer action over words. When men do talk, their talk is about practical matters, is more competitive, and less intimate and supportive than women’s speech. She stresses that these are generalisations and that it is more accurate to identify language based on “roles, relationships, expectations, and obligations that are operative in a particular context” (Cameron 2007:51). She insists that there must be individual differences within gender as well as culture and race. The male heroes in all four bookazines become more expressive towards the end of the books as the plots are resolved and their placating voices are essential to the heroines’ and readers’ satisfaction. They do not shy away from intimacy or exposure, despite remaining in dominant positions. However, in examining the concept of love, it is important to ask

whether the hero and heroine could possibly have very different perceptions of this important word. The heroines of the Nollybooks are desperate for love, which is seen as the panacea to every issue. The male heroes do not have this idealised perception and at times might regard love as secondary, frivolous and even overrated (Burns 2002: 167).²

Gynocriticism

Elaine Showalter's term "gynocriticism" proposes a female experience in reader responses – "we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit woman between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture" (Showalter 1979:131). However, the Nollybook formula or "recipe" does not embrace the philosophy of creating a female culture. Ironically, all four bookazines in this study are written by women writers and published by a female publisher. *Finding Arizona* is written by Michelle Atagana, *Lights, Camera, Love* by Bronwyn Desjardins, *Unfashionably in Love* by Sabina Mutangadura and *Looking for Mr Right* by Cheryl Ntuny. Showalter points out that although there might be differences between English, French and American feminist criticism, they are all "gynocentric" in that "all are struggling to find a terminology that can rescue the feminine from its stereotypical associations with inferiority" (Showalter 1981:249). She notes that English feminist criticism focuses on the oppression of women, French feminist

² Several other authors have also written about the gendered nature of the language used to portray romance (e.g. Burns 2002). Burns' article ("Women in love and men at work The evolving heterosexual couple?") explores the different uses of the word "love" by men and women.

criticism stresses the repression of women and in American literary criticism, the emphasis is on the expression of women. Showalter identifies four models of gynocriticism — biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic and cultural.

Biological gynocriticism is an obvious reference to anatomical gender differences, and Showalter notes that, historically, women have been regarded as less intelligent, with the Victorians even believing that the male brain was heavier. She speaks of “literary paternity” (Showalter 1981:250), where male writing metaphorically is generated from the penis and comments that “the process of literary creation is analogically much more similar to gestation, labor [sic] and delivery” (Showalter, 1981:251). Women therefore have a different, more authentic expression of body imagery, and Showalter says that female physical nakedness might have different connotations to women such as expressions of the “objectified or sexually female nude” (Showalter 1981:251). The examples cited in this study have repeatedly stressed that the Nollybooks do not embrace a respectful portrayal of a woman’s anatomy. Instead her body, objectified, is frequently described as a means of attraction, allure and as a tool for ensnaring the hero. Her body is therefore a means to an end and not valuable in its own right.

I have already commented on the Nollybooks’ emphasis on the heroes and heroines’ physical attractiveness, and it is useful here to highlight the fact that this is a conscious part of the romance formula which can be explored using the lens

of gynocriticism. Romance handbooks use a number of different methods to teach writers how to write romance novels. One method that is used to coach aspirant writers of the romance genre is the presentation of poor examples of language. These poor examples are then rewritten with improvements so that the aspirant writer can observe the difference. An example that De Geest and Goris provide is when the first person is used by the heroine to describe her own beauty. This may make her sound vain. They rather advise the romance writer to allow other characters to comment on her beauty. The heroine must be seen as humble and is seen through the eyes of the male instead of through her own eyes. An example from *Lights, Camera, Love* will demonstrate this point when the author wishes to convey Thuli's exceptional beauty at the chief's niece's wedding. If the author had written it from Thuli's viewpoint, the whole point of her impact on Jake would be lost and, thus, the reader's identification with Thuli would also be diluted. Instead, the author writes from Jake's observation: "Thuli was celestial in her grace and beauty. She wore a short, colourful, beaded skirt: her hair had beads in the braids which hung over her shoulders and around her bare breasts. He had to tear his eyes off her and that's when he realized that, for a moment, he'd stopped breathing — she'd literally taken his breath away" (Desjardins 2010: 108). This description reinforces Radway's viewpoint that the romantic heroine is unaware of her own beauty and her alluring power. This is important as it enhances the reader's pleasure when she considers the mind-blowing fact that the dominant hero has an "inability to master his desire for her once she is near him" (Radway 1991:126). This is an important part of the reader's fantasy: that, in the final analysis, she herself may be irresistible.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the female writer traditionally feels disadvantaged or a “lack” (Showalter 1981:257) which is a result of penis envy, a castration complex and the Oedipal complex. This results in the female writer’s alienation and feelings of inferiority which, traditionally, corresponds with the inferior writing of women’s romantic novels. Radway cites Nancy Chodorow’s revision of Freudian theory in *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978) in explaining gender identity in relation to the mother. Radway believes that romantic heroines break away from their mothers and form new bonds with the romantic heroes. The mothers’ roles in the Nollybooks might be minor. However whenever they are mentioned, they are instrumental in reinforcing traditional gender roles. Arizona and Fikile, typical of many Black South African families, are raised by single caregivers. Arizona is raised by a single mother in *Finding Arizona*, and Fikile’s mother abandoned her in *Unfashionably in Love* so she is raised by her grandmother. Cassandra’s mother in *Looking for Mr Right* reinforces Cassandra’s “freakish” single status by constantly hunting for a man for her daughter. Jake in *Lights, Camera, Love* rediscovers his mother’s buried diamond ring as a symbol of his transferred love for Thuli. Female bonding in the bookazines is also represented by the intimate best girlfriend relationships, discussed in chapter two, where sisterhood supports the heroines’ struggles in contrast to the male characters who must learn both empathy and humility.

Culture, according to Showalter, is more holistic in explaining gynocriticism and is based on historically presenting women from a male perspective. It is complex

and relates to a woman's identity in relation to muted or dominant groups. Ortner and Whitehead's collection of essays, *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality* (1981) reinforces Showalter's point about the primacy of culture as they acknowledge that sex and gender are complex manifestations of social and cultural processes. The Black writers of the Nollybooks might be influenced by dominant, White Western male culture and include a muted female, Black culture. The gender stereotypes are prestige structures where men are prized in terms of social value. They might convey definitions of men according to their roles - Jason Khoza, the maverick BEE entrepreneur, Kagiso, the highly educated veterinarian, Jake Mkhize, the venerated Hollywood film director, and Joe Silongo, owner of the exclusive fashion brand, Cocoa Rouge. The women clamber through the plots in search of their own definitions but, for the most part, are defined as potential girlfriends or future wives. These definitions conform to Ortner and Whitehead's views of women's position as units of exchange between men. I acknowledge that these are limited representations and I have repeatedly made the point that the Nollybooks are not enlightened real representations of the multiplicity and richness of South African culture. Instead they stick to stereotypical, formulaic recipes, not risking deeper exploration of the layers of South African culture.

Showalter's linguistic model is especially pertinent and she in fact refers to gender issues of language as "one of the most exciting areas in gynocritics" (Showalter 1981:253). My earlier discussion of Deborah Cameron and Robin Lakoff's theories support Showalter's argument that "women have been denied

the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism, or circumlocution” (Showalter 1981:255). Earlier, in chapter one, I mentioned Ruthven’s identification of patriarchal mythologies, especially those pertaining to romance. My plot discussion in chapter one noted that the Nollybooks are modelled on the Cinderella motif, but fairytales convey distorted truths, as Ruthven aptly describes what the female learns:

Submissive and helpless, she must expect to drift from one kind of dependency to another without ever exercising her autonomy, her consciousness of which has never been raised. She should hope she is beautiful because beauty ranks as worthiness in androcentric scales of value. She should avoid being an ugly sister, cruel stepmother, hag or witch, for men find all such women sexually undesirable. Fairy tales fragment the continuities of female life into discontinuous states, with the result that young princesses tend to regard hags and witches as belonging to a different species, rather than as possible versions of themselves in a few years’ time (Ruthven, 1984:80).

So, when Shezi goes on her first date with Jason in *Finding Arizona* and she tells him “it’s absolutely magic” (Atagana 2010:67), warning bells should ring. Instead she, like the reader, is enchanted by the perfect, farfetched fantasy world of the romance.

Language in the service of the romantic formula

Having examined the language and presentation of the Nollybooks, I concede that the Nollybooks are not sophisticated literary works by notable writers. The descriptions may be unmemorable and the plots unoriginal, but the thrust of my argument is not an appreciation of the Nollybooks’ literary value. I argue, rather,

that their status must be reassessed as they are reflections of popular culture in South Africa from 2010 onwards. Despite the negative reputation given to “chick lit” and romantic fiction by many critics and academics, it becomes increasingly important to reconsider these dismissive attitudes and acknowledge the popularity of the genres. We know that “chick lit” is a publishing phenomenon and that *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, published in 1996, launched one of the “biggest tidal waves in publishing history” as “women cried out for more funny, light hearted novels about singletons like Bridget who were searching for love, job satisfaction and the perfect pair of shoes” (Memmott 2006). But the South African Nollybook is not a Bridget Jones duplicate. It is far more complex and is an example of post-apartheid fiction in a South African society that has metamorphosed into a diverse country with eleven official languages and a multiplicity of identities. As Christopher Warnes comments on the explosion of popular culture since 1994: “the creative energies that have filled the void left by the departure of the struggle aesthetic in the years since 1994 have been most noticeable in the explosion of genres such as crime fiction, romance, chick lit, science fiction, gangster noir, and comedy” (Warnes 2014:156). The Nollybooks and *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* are part of this explosion. Ultimately, the books should be assessed not on stylistic merit, as Narunsky-Laden says, not as “stories people tell” but “most significantly, stories that tell people” (Narunsky-Laden 2010:72). Ultimately, the impact of the Nollybook story is dependent on the plot and character, rather than the intricacies of language.

Conclusion

‘One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life: That word is love’

(Sophocles)

This dissertation has established several interesting details about South African popular culture. First, I established that the Nollybooks are indeed a phenomenon. In the initial phases of this study they were, surprisingly, extremely well received by a group of aliterate university students and then became more popular amongst young Black female readers. The fact that they are bookazines with a simple style, structure and formatting, and colourful soft covers make them short, accessible reads. Nollybooks are also more affordable than many books in bookstores today and their availability in grocery stores, online stores and in electronic format make them easily attainable. There are no unexpected surprises and the Nollybook reader is secure in her expectations. Before the reader has even started reading the narrative, “Sis Nolly” in her editorial (which appears on page 6 of each title) gives a brief description of what she can expect in each Nollybook and every title makes the same comments on the intellectual benefits of becoming a Nollybook reader. She says: “As usual, when you’ve finished, get together with your sista’hood and discuss the book’s issues. Check out the Talking Points section at the back. You can also test your brain power with our word games ... remember being smart is the new sexy!” (Ntummy 2010:6). According to the Nollybook ethos, reading is portrayed as an entertaining, intelligent choice. I also emphasised that the reading of Nollybooks is not a passive activity and prompts a

two-way flow of communication because of “Sis Nolly’s” requests for reader feedback. For example, at the end of one editorial she writes: “Don’t forget to let me know what you think about *Lights, Camera, Love*. You can reach me on sisnolly@nollybooks.co.za” (Desjardins 2010:6). This mechanism feeds into the reader’s social belonging needs as she becomes part of the Nollybook community.

In reviewing my classroom experiment, I realised that the creator’s aim of addressing the needs of aliterate readers had been achieved. It is for this reason that the various reviews laud Makura’s creations. The *Daily Maverick* review on 12 January 2011 announces in its title: “Nollybooks open the romance of reading for a new generation of SA readers” (De Waal 2011). Most certainly, readers were drawn to the romantic formulas applied to a recognisable South African context. My dissertation has explored this reader identification with the plots, characters, language and familiar locales of the Nollybooks. The same appeal can be applied to *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style* where Monde Twala, etv’s channel head, openly asserted: “Our audience wants more local content” (Lindsay 2012). Chapter three, in considering the television transmissions, and chapter four, in discussing the language used in the Nollybooks, observed that, despite this preference for local content, South African readers and viewers are multilingual and reflect a diversity of cultures. Thus there are numerous references to global brands as well as those indigenous to South Africa. Code switching, discussed in chapter four, is indicative of blended cultures and an instrument that Nollybook authors use to try to bridge diverse ethnicities in their writing.

Second, a significant portion of my study focused on the crucial role of the romantic fantasy. I have discussed how an essential component of this fantasy is that the heroine and reader must believe in the “fairy tale”, which ends with the union of the hero and heroine, no matter how far-fetched the plots are, nor how idealised the depictions of the characters. Realistically, a more cynical reader might scoff at these portrayals. This reader may question the critical thinking of the Nollybook reader who readily accepts the narratives. She may ask why the reader doesn’t comment on the unlikelihood of Jake, a celebrity Hollywood film director in *Lights, Camera, Love*, suddenly discovering a miraculous untapped acting ability in his beloved, the inconsequential Thuli. She may question the credibility of Kagiso’s fiancée conveniently dying, so that Cassandra is instantly made available in *Looking for Mr Right*. Surely it seems highly unlikely that Joe will appear like a superhero, to rescue Fikile from the embarrassing split pants fiasco, in the first pages of *Unfashionably in Love*.

However, most readers do in fact know that real life is not a fairy tale. On 26 October 2014, South Africans were devastated by the murder of Senzo Meyiwa, captain of the national soccer team, Bafana Bafana and goalkeeper for the fêted Orlando Pirates soccer club. His funeral was attended by thousands of bereft supporters. It was not, however, the brutal murder of this sporting idol that monopolised the media’s reports and social media platforms. Rather it was the mudslinging between supporters of his wife and those of his girlfriend, celebrity singer Kelly Khumalo, who was with him at the time of his death. At his

memorial service, fans chanted derogatory slogans such as “*Uyinja Kelly*” translated as “Kelly is a dog” (*Senzo honoured in Durban* 2014) as she was accused of being a home wrecker. Obviously real life heroes and heroines have more complex romantic relationships than those portrayed in the Nollybooks, nonetheless readers are still drawn to the fantasy script. Moky Makura understood this perfectly when she instructed her writers to construct blissful universes for her readers. *The Global Post* in an article, “South Africa: ‘Sex in the City’ comes to Soweto”, reported that Makura “instantly rejects any book proposal featuring, for example, a woman who has AIDS and three children because she doesn’t want depressing books” (Conway-Smith 2011). Thus I believe, in the final analysis, readers of romance cling to the hyperbolic fantasies of “happily ever after”, despite what logic dictates. Like Janice Radway’s Smithton women in the 1970s, the readers of the Nollybooks are wholly invested in escaping from life’s harshness by believing in make-believe worlds. Surely then, against the backdrop of South Africa’s high levels of crime, rampant corruption and 36.1% youth unemployment (Dawjee 2014), the Nollybook reader should not be deprived of this fantasy, nor should she be dismissed as foolish.

Third, I conclude that an important shortcoming of the Nollybooks is their diminished sexual content. This was identified as reducing the Nollybooks’ appeal. This is an area which I noted that I would sincerely like to explore further, possibly through researching Nollybook readers’ reading preferences. Ironically, in promoting reading, “Sis Nolly” asserts: “Reading ... it’s foreplay for the mind” (Lewis 2011), a strange statement since the books, unlike the television programmes, steer away from representing any kind of sexual foreplay.

Perhaps the most important finding of this dissertation is my investigation of paradoxical gender messages. I have highlighted the stereotypical gender roles of the heroes and heroines: I have also identified ways in which they attempt to break away from these conventions. This continual tug-of-war characterised much of my discussion and, in reviewing this, I wish to revert to Hubbard's visions, discussed in chapter two, which are useful in understanding historical gender progressions in romantic fiction.

The Nollybooks contain elements of different visions at different stages of the narratives. Many romances do not make these progressions. For example, the prolific writer, Barbara Cartland, still, after 50 years of writing, "consistently defines woman's primary job as providing romance and beauty for men through purity, charm and total devotion to their needs" (Hubbard 1985:122). Hubbard looks at the romances of the 1950s and early 1960s as samples of vision one and speaks of rigid gender patterns and the complete dominance of men over silent women. She describes this in detail by saying, "career women were faulted for causing their husbands and children psychological damage. Men were described as having a greater sex drive and as needing to have a fragile male ego reinforced with approval and admiration even if this meant, for example, deceiving them during sexual intercourse in order to make them feel kinship with the gods" (Hubbard 1985:122). It is no wonder that Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, published in 1970, referred to formula romances as "trash" and "mush" (Greer 1970:185). Susan Ager, of *the Detroit Free Press*, went further when she

denounced the romance as being both bad for women and evil (Harzewski 2006:36).

However, the Nollybook heroines are far removed from these passive, silent women; they do not shy away from asserting themselves. Careers feature visibly in all the bookazines. True, the narratives are sexually undeveloped and my study has repeatedly questioned whether this decision to edit sexual content was in fact, the correct decision. Whilst the publisher's motives behind this decision are understandable, I question whether the cognisant reader was carefully considered. The Nollybook reader is an informed, open-minded, critical reader, and it is my view that she has the ability to control her own sexual behaviour and not fall victim to promiscuity as a result of reading explicit descriptions of sexual activity as the publishers fear.

Hubbard's progression to the second vision sees that the heroine is no longer silent in that "she has become articulate and feisty in rebellion" (Hubbard 1985:123). However this is seen as a "temporary aberration" (Hubbard 1985:123) as she is incapable of true independence. This vision accommodates revolutionary changes in the mind-sets of the 1960s and 1970s. Hubbard says "Specialists began to examine the model marriage as myth and declare that universal conventions could not be applied to all relationships. Advice was given on self-fulfilment and talking through conflict. The world of this vision, like that of romances, was not the safe, predictable world of the past but a world which must accommodate change" (Hubbard 1985:123). This is largely Cassandra's world in *Looking for Mr Right*, where she eventually turns her back on her preconceived

ideas of marriage and realises that she can defy societal and familial pressures. As I quoted in chapter two, she assertively states: “I finally understand myself. I don’t need a wedding. I don’t even need a man” (Ntuny 2010:145). This pursuit of self-actualisation is developed in vision three, which is common in the romances of the 1970s, and an important part of Cassandra’s final psyche. Her momentous letter to Kagiso is indicative of Hubbard’s description of vision three, as “her consciousness has been raised, her demands are explicit, and her resolve strong” (Hubbard 1985:123). Nevertheless she is not strong enough to stick to her convictions. The hero’s supreme dominance causes her to “recant” (Hubbard 1985:123) so that she accepts her limitations as a sacrifice for the happy ending. The fourth vision, prevalent in the 1980s, eschews feminist ideals of sexual equality but, interestingly, also contains the “female control fantasy” (Hubbard 1985:123). This is appropriate for Cassandra who, on the second-last page of the novel, imagines herself in charge of her own decisions. She delays going out with Kagiso since she has already committed to an arrangement with her friends. When her friends question her calculated choice, she announces “At this point, I kind of like being on my own” (Ntuny 2010:166). Indeed, her character has undergone a metamorphosis as the final page refutes the stereotypical gender values of the book. This illustrates Hubbard’s main point that romances have not remained static. She summarises her argument by saying:

Over 33 years, the four rhetorical visions in category romances have reflected the ongoing changes in social structures and the gradual movement from patriarchy toward equality of the sexes. They have indicated that in fiction as well as in reality conceptual and social frameworks are open to revision, gender definitions are not universally given nor relationship styles unchangeable. But the visions are obviously not authentic reproductions of the real world. By omission and deception they deny the complexity of human relationships and promote impossible dreams. Yet these dreams

are so seductive that millions of modern women have made romances a publishing phenomenon (Hubbard, 1985:124).

Ultimately, I suggest that the students in my initial experiment are lured by the seductive dreams of a perfect romantic union, as are the South African Nollybook readers who continue to purchase the bookazines and the viewers of *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style*. They all buy into the Nollybook promise of romance, and greedily endorse the phenomenon as they vicariously become Cassandra, Fikile, Shezi and Thuli.

Whilst researching this dissertation, I came across a well-worn book in the University of Johannesburg's Doornfontein Campus library entitled *How to seduce your dream man* by Anna Maxted. The subtitle on the cover reads "100 Strategies to bring Mr Right to Heel". On closer inspection, I noticed that many students had taken out this book from 2003 until the present. Palesa, one of the readers, had also written her own notes alongside her name on the front cover which read, "Use this to your own advantage, coz [sic] it really has done miracles 4 [sic] me". Another reader, Madichaba, wrote beside her name: "You won't stay single if u [sic] use this book". The introduction to this "miraculous" book had echoes of Cassandra's marriage manual in *Looking for Mr Right*, promising a fantasy future with a perfect man once the reader has managed to ensnare him. The author writes: "Once you've brought Mr Right to heel — and there are a wealth of strategies to lure him there so take your pick — the next trick is getting him to sit and stay" (Maxted 1999: xiv). Readers who relate to this description will understand the metaphor that once she captures the desirable man's heart, he

will be no less than an obedient, loyal dog. When I browsed through the contents page, I was appalled by the blatantly sexist chapters with titles such as “Clothes to make him dribble”, “Puffing up his ego” and “Reeling him in”. Can this advice, offered to female university students who are supposedly critical thinkers, possessing some level of intelligence, be taken seriously? If teachers and lecturers aim to encourage deep-level thinking in the classroom, this popular paperback in the University of Johannesburg library was doing the opposite. It warned its female readers against expressing themselves and asking “stupid pointless questions” (Maxted 1999:180) such as “Am I annoying you?” (Maxted 1999:181). Perhaps this book is, in reality, no different from the 1950s textbook, *The Good Wife’s Guide and Advice for Young Brides* which advises the new bride to be quietly acquiescent and obsequious when her husband returns from work. She is advised: “Don’t greet him with problems or complaints” and “a good wife always knows her place” (*The Good Wife’s Guide and Advice for Young Brides* n.d.).

Further back in time, young brides in 1894 were advised to be passive recipients of sex and to abhor intimacy. In an article entitled “Advice for young brides” by Reverend Smythers wife, Ruth Smythers, she wrote: “give little, give seldom, and above all, give grudgingly” (*The Good Wife’s Guide and Advice for Young Brides* n.d.). Her advice borders on absurdity as she encourages the young bride to be an unreceptive participant in the sex act: “she will be absolutely silent or babble about her housework while his [sic] huffing and puffing away” (*The Good Wife’s Guide and Advice for Young Brides* n.d.). These old-fashioned viewpoints might appear humorous to the reader today, but my research has added weight to the

argument that, two centuries later, the Nollybooks continue to portray stereotypical gender roles and it is truly remarkable that female readers still cling to the offerings of Maxted and her ilk. The gender roles portrayed in the Nollybooks are as conservative as these portrayals, especially with regard to sex.

In her essay, “Tradition and Displacement in the New Novel of Manners”, Stephanie Harzewski argues that many female readers are abandoning traditional romance novels in favour of the “chick lit” novels of the 1990s since they relate better to progressive depictions of women. Although romance is an important element in these novels, she says that “Chick Lit replaces romance conventions in the heroine’s union with Mr Right, though this is not requisite. Frequently, Mr Right turns out to be Mr Wrong or Mr Maybe. The quest for self-definition and the balancing of work with social interaction is given equal or more attention than the relationship conflict” (Harzewski 2006:37). No longer is the heroine bound to a single hero, which Radway articulated as the romance’s “stipulation that a romance focus only on ‘one woman-one man’” (Radway 1991:171). Indeed, the novels that Radway explores are broader in content and do not shy away from sexual depictions as the Nollybooks do. Suzann Ferris and Mallory Young, in their influential book *Chick Lit: The New Women’s Fiction*, elaborate on why female readers might favour “chick lit” over traditional romances by saying that: “unlike traditional, convention-bound romance, chick lit jettisons the heterosexual hero to offer a more realistic portrait of single life, dating, and the dissolution of romantic ideals” (Ferris & Young 2006:3). However, I note that “chick lit” is also not exempt from the criticism often levelled at romance novels. Renowned novelists Beryl Bainbridge and Dorris Lessing have scathingly denounced these

books. Anna Weinberg's derisive comment is worthy of relating: "Inside their dust jackets covered with shopping bags, martini glasses, shoes or purses, many of these titles really are trash: trash that imitates other, better books that could have ushered in a new wave of smart, postfeminist writing" (Ferris & Young 2006:9).

Naturally, there will always be equivocal responses to literature. My dissertation implores the reader and critic not to dismiss the Nollybooks as puerile paperbacks, fit for the garbage pile. Language experts will also note the glaring grammatical errors that sporadically appear in the Nollybook texts. For example, in *Lights, Camera, Love*, the word "stationery" is misspelt as "stationary" (Desjardins 2010:20). *Unfashionably in Love* requires tighter proofreading as words are occasionally omitted in sentences such as "Sure she's heard of it, but she'd never bothered to find anything out it" (Mutangadura 2010:48). Similarly, *Finding Arizona* contains several errors, such as the typographical error "Dr Flower" instead of "Dr Flowers" (Atagana 2010:92). The word quizzes at the end of the Nollybooks also require revision since, in the vocabulary exercises, isolated words are supplied out of their contexts. If the Nollybooks' primary objective is to inculcate a culture of reading and enhance language fluency, these errors are indefensible. However, my study has established that there is eclectic value to appreciating these little gems besides their role as educational texts in the use of the English language. Instead of dismissing the Nollybooks, I propose a more considered response that will instigate further studies into the South African romantic novel.

Bibliography

- Alexander, M. (2011). *Nollybooks: Literacy with Love*. Available from <http://www.medioclubsouthafrica.com/africa/2137-nollybooks-literacy-with-love> (Accessed 8 February 2014).
- Atagana, M. (2010). *Finding Arizona*. Johannesburg: MME Media.
- Austen, J. (1998). *Pride and Prejudice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baloyi, F. (2008). "Meet Mr and Mrs New Black". *True Love Babe*. March: 62.
- Bereska, T.M. (1994). "Adolescent Sexuality and the Changing Romance Novel Market". *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*. 3(1): 35-44.
- Bhabha, H.K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Book review-Nollybooks Romance* (2011). Available from: <http://www.citypress.co.za/lifestyle/book-review-nollybooks-romance-20110225/> (Accessed 22 August 2014).
- Brophy-Baermann, M. "True Love on TV: A Gendered Analysis of Reality Romance Television". *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 2-September 5 2004*. 1-43.
- Brusso, C. (2011). *Romance Pros, Romance Cons: Focus on Romance 2011*. Available from: <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20110606/47519-romance-pros-romance-cons-focus-on-romance-2011.html> (Accessed 25 July 2014).
- Burns, A. (2002). "Women in Love and Men at Work The evolving heterosexual couple?" *Psychology, Evolution & Gender* 4(2): 149-172.
- Cameron, D. (2007). *The Myth of Mars and Venus*. New York: Oxford.

- Carolyn. (2011). *Black Romance Report: Sapphire Press and Nollybooks Interviews*. Available from: <http://bookslive.co.za/blog/2011/02/02/black-romance-report-sapphire-press-and-nollybooks-interviews/> (Accessed 10 November 2014).
- Chinweizu, I., Jemie, O. & Madubuike, I. (1983). *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*. Washington: Howard University Press.
- Claassens, J. (2014) *To Tell or Not to Tell: Feminist Fairytales?* Available from: <http://www.all4women.co.za/lifestyle/parenting/to-tell-or-not-to-tell-feminist-fairy-tales> (Accessed 2 November 2014).
- Conway-Smith, E. (2011). *South Africa: 'Sex in the City' comes to Soweto*. Available from: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/south-africa/110119/south-africa-romance-novels-young-black-women?page=0,1> (Accessed 17 November 2014).
- Corday, K. & Langan, T. (Executive producer). (1 September 2014). *Morning Live* (Television broadcast). Johannesburg: SABC.
- Culler, J. (2004). "Feminism in Time: A Response". *Modern Language Quarterly*. 65:1 (March): 177-194.
- Dahl, R. (1982). *Revolting Rhymes*. United Kingdom: Jonathan Cape.
- Davis, H. (2004). *Understanding Stuart Hall*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Dawjee, H. M. (2014). *Youth, Unemployment and the South African Dream*. Available from: <http://mg.co.za/article/2014-06-10-south-african-youth-unemployment-and-the-american-dream> (Accessed 29 October 2014).
- De Geest, D. & Goris, A. (2010). "Constrained Writing, Creative Writing: The Case of Handbooks for Writing Romances". *Poetics Today*. 31(1): 81-106.
- Desjardins, B. (2010). *Lights, Camera Love*. Johannesburg: MME Media.

- De Waal, M. (2011). *Nollybooks opens the romance of reading for a new generation of SA readers*. Available from: <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2011-01-12-nollybooks-opens-the-romance-of-reading-for-a-new-generation-of-sa-readers/#.VLqsaiuUd1A> (Accessed 15 February 2014).
- During, S. (ed.). (2007). *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Dugger, J.M. (2014). “‘I’m a Feminist, But...’ Popular Romance in the Women’s Literature Classroom”. *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*. Available from: <http://jprstudies.org/2014/10/im-a-feminist-but-popular-romance-in-the-womens-literature-classroomby-julie-m-dugger/> (Accessed 25 November 2014).
- Estrada, R.C. & Gallagher, R. (1999). *You Can Write a Romance*. Cincinnati: Writer’s Digest Books.
- e.tv’s new Romantic drama series – *Mzansi Love: Kasi Style returns for season 2*. Available from: www.yomzansi.com (Accessed 14 May 2014).
- Even-Zohar, I. (1990). “Introduction to Polysystem Studies”. *Poetics Today*. 11(1): 1-6.
- Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women*. New York: Crown.
- Fanon, F. (2008). *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press.
- Ferris, S. & Young, M. (ed.). (2006). *Chick Lit: The New Woman’s Fiction*. New York: Routledge.
- Fetterley, J. (1978). *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*. USA: The University of Massachusetts Press.
- Fihlani, P. (2014). *Generations: Entire cast of South African soap fired*. Available from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-28879629> (Accessed 19 October 2014).

- Finlayson, R. and Slabbert, S. (1995). “‘We just mix’: Code switching in a South African township”. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. 125: 65-98.
- Game On*. (2012). (Motion Picture). Johannesburg: MME Media & Fireworx Media.
- Glasburgh, M.M. (2006). *Chick Lit: The New Face of Postfeminist Fiction?* Masters Dissertation. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.
- Gray, J. (1992). *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. United States: Harper.
- Greenfield, M.B. (2008). *The Interactive Online Romance Community: Contests and ‘Covers Gone Wild’*. Available from: http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/3/4/0/7/pages234077/p234077-1.php (Accessed 5 January 2015).
- Greer, G. (1970). *The Female Eunuch*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Hall, S. (1990). “Encoding, Decoding”. In During, S. (ed.) *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London & New York: Routledge. 477-487.
- Hall, S. (1997). “The Work of Representation”. In Hall, S. (ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: SAGE. 13-64.
- Harzewski, S. (2006). “Tradition and Displacement in the New Novel of Manners”. In Ferris, S & Young, M. (eds), *Chick Lit: The New Woman’s Fiction*. New York: Routledge. 29-46.
- Heilbrun, C.G. (1988). *Writing a Woman’s Life*. London: The Women’s Press Ltd.
- Hoffmann, R. (2010). *A Novel Approach*. Available from: <http://mg.co.za/article/2010-09-17-a-novel-approach> (Accessed on 10 July 2014).

- Howden, S. (2014). *Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes pulled from Aldi shelves over use of word 'slut'* (2014). Available from: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/roald-dahls-revolting-rhymes-pulled-from-aldi-shelves-over-use-of-word-slut-20140828-109p0o.html> (Accessed 13 October 2014).
- Hubbard, R.C. (1985). "Relationship Styles in Popular Romance Novels, 1950 to 1983". *Communication Quarterly*. 33(2): 113-125.
- Ives, S. F. (2008). "Visual methodologies through a feminist lens: South African soap operas and the post-apartheid nation". *Geojournal* 74: 245-255.
- James, E. L. (2012). *Fifty Shades of Grey*. New York: Vintage.
- Johnson, N. (2008). "All Consuming Love: A Feminist Critique of the Unconventional Pairing of Advertising and Teen Romance Novels". Conference proceedings *National Communication Association*. 1-30.
- Juhasz, S. (1988). "Texts to grow on: Reading Women's Romance Fiction". *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*. 7 (2): 239-259.
- Kavanagh, K. et al. (2005). *South African Concise Oxford Dictionary*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
- Label it Love*. (2014). (Motion Picture). Johannesburg: MME Media & Fireworx Media.
- Lakoff, R. (1975). "Extract from *Language and Woman's Place*". In Cameron, D. (ed.) *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Lauzen, M.M., Dozier, D.M., Horan, N. (2008). "Constructing Gender Stereotypes through Social Roles in Prime-Time Television". *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*. 52(2): 200-214.
- Lewis, A. (2011). *Could Nollybooks become the African Mills & Boon?* Available from: <http://www.iol.co.za/tonight/books/could-nollybooks-become-the->

[african-mills-boon-1.1009049#.VKuBZiuUd1A](#) (Accessed 8 February 2014).

Lindsay (2012). *Nollybooks to be made into Romantic Comedy Television Series*. Available from: <http://bookslive.co.za/blog/2012/07/18/nollybooks-to-be-made-into-romantic-comedy-television-series/> (Accessed 18 December 2014).

Mabuse, N. & Wither, E. (2011). *New Wave of Chick Lit Has Romance — But no Sex*. Available from: <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/02/16/nollybooks.romance.reading/> (Accessed 12 November 2014).

McRobbie, A. (1991). *Feminism and youth culture: From 'Jackie' to 'Just Seventeen'*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Memmott, C. (2006). "Chick lit, for better or worse is here to stay". Available from: http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/books/news/2006-06-20-chick-lit_x.htm (Accessed 23 October 2014).

Mesthrie, R. (2011). *Eish but is it English?* Cape Town: Zebra.

Mesthrie, R. (2006). "Undeletions in Black South African English". *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics*. PLUS 34:75-99.

Most watched TV shows in South Africa this August. (2012). Available from: <http://orgellaonline.com/2012/08/28/list-most-watched-tv-shows-in-south-africa-this-august> (Accessed 25 September 2014).

Motsaathebe, G. (2009). "Gendered Roles, Images and Behavioural Patterns in the Soap Opera *Generations*". *Journal of African Media Studies*. 1(3): 429-448.

Moudelino, L. (2008). "The Troubling Popularity of West African Romances". *Research in African Literatures*. 39(4):120-132.

Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. In Evans, J. and Hall, S. (eds). *Visual Culture: The Reader*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Mutangadura, S. (2010). *Unfashionably in Love*. Johannesburg: MME Media.

Narunsky-Laden, S. (2010). Popular Writing in Post-Transitional South Africa as an Agency of Socio-Cultural Change: or, “Meet Mzansi’s Mr and Mrs New Black”. *English Studies in Africa* 53(1): 62-78.

New Generation events at 2011 FLF 2011. Available from:

<http://flf.bookslive.co.za/blog/2011/03/24/new-generation-events-at-2011-flf/> (Accessed 21 April 2014).

Newton, J., Rosenfelt, D. and Rabine, L.W. (eds). (1985). *Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o. (1986). *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Kenya: Heinemann.

Nollybooks (2014). Available at: www.nollybooks.co.za (Accessed 12 January-November 2014).

Ntuny, C.S. (2010). *Looking for Mr Right*. Johannesburg: MME Media.

Ortner, S.B. and Whitehead, H. (1981). *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Parv, V. (1997). *The Art of Romance Writing: How to Create, Write, and Sell Your Contemporary Romance Novel*. NSW: Allen and Unwin.

PhD (2012). (Motion Picture). Johannesburg: MME Media & Fireworx Media.

Rabine, L.W. (1985). “Romance in the Age of Electronics: Harlequin Enterprises”. In Newton, J. and Rosenfelt, D. (eds). *Feminist Criticism*

and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture.
Abingdon: Routledge. 249-267.

Radway, J. (1991). *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature.* North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press.

Ramsay-Brijball. M. (1999). "Understanding Zulu-English Code Switching: A Psycho-social Perspective". *South African Journal of Linguistics*. 17 (2/3): 161-172.

Readability Formulas. (n.d). Available from: www.readabilityformulas.com
(Accessed 18 November 2014).

Reid, K. (2012). *The Cape Town Book Fair 2012-new directions in fiction (and some recommended reads).* Available from:
<http://africainwords.com/2012/08/07/the-cape-town-book-fair-2012-new-directions-in-fiction-and-some-recommended-reads/> (Accessed 21 April 2014).

Representations & the Media: featuring Stuart Hall. Available
from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTzMsPqssOY> (Accessed 20 October 2014).

Ruthven, K.K. (1984). *Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available
from: www.sabookcouncil.co.za.2013 (Accessed 1 September 2014).

Schmid, W. (2013). *The living handbook of narratology Implied Reader.*
Available from: http://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Implied_Reader (Accessed 12 November 2014).

- Senzo honoured in Durban*. (2014). Available from: <http://www.sport24.co.za/Soccer/BafanaBafana/Senzo-honoured-in-Durban-20141031> (Accessed 17 November 2014).
- Showalter, E. (1979). "Toward a Feminist Poetics". In Jacobus, M. (ed.). *Women's Writing and Writing About Women*. London: Croom Helm. 22-41.
- Showalter, E. (1981). "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness". *Critical Inquiry* 8 (Winter). 243-267.
- Sidley, K. (2011). "Love in Africa". *The Sunday Times* (20 February), 32.
- Sidley, K. (2012). *A fair full of stories*. Available from: <http://katesidley.bookslive.co.za/blog/2012/10/22/a-fair-full-of-stories/> (Accessed 8 February 2014).
- Stacey, J. (1988). "Desperately Seeking Difference". In Evans, J. & Hall, S. (eds). *Visual culture: The Reader*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. 390-401.
- Sterkowicz, J. (2012). *etv's New Local Romcom Series*. Available from: <http://www.screenafrica.com/page/news/television/1320927-e-TVs-new-local-romcom-series>. (Accessed 13 October 2014).
- Stuart Hall-Representations & The Media 1-4* (2011). Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHTSh9GGm-uaQaaHielW5FYG8svHlCgpP> (Accessed 13 October 2014).
- Tager, M. (2010). "The Black and the Beautiful: Perceptions of (a) New Generation(s)". *Critical Arts: A South-North Journal of Cultural & Media Studies*. 24(1): 99-127.
- The Good Wife's Guide and Advice for Young Brides*. (n.d). Available from: <http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/historical/Good-Wifes-Guide.html> (Accessed 12 November 2014).

- The Cape Town Book Fair 2012 — new directions in fiction (and some recommended reads)*. (2012). Available from: <http://africainwords.com/2012/08/07/the-cape-town-book-fair-2012-new-directions-in-fiction-and-some-recommended-reads/> (Accessed 8 February 2014).
- Ubuntu (philosophy)*. (2014). Available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_%28philosophy%29 (Accessed 23 October 2014).
- Van Dulm, O. (2007). *The Grammar of English-Afrikaans Code Switching: A Feature Checking Account*. Doctoral dissertation. The Netherlands: Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen.
- Valance, L. (2012). "Feminism and Early Twenty-First Century Harlequin Mills & Boon Romances". *The Journal of Popular Culture*. 45(5): 1060-1089.
- Veros, V. (2012). "The Romance reader and the public library". *The Australian Library Journal*. 61(4): 298-306.
- Vivanco, L. (2012). "Feminism and Early Twenty-First Century Harlequin Mills & Boon Romances". *The Journal of Popular Culture*. 45(5):1060-1089.
- Wainger, L. (2004). *Writing a Romance Novel for Dummies*. Hoboken: Wiley.
- Walker, K. (2004). *Kate Walker's 12 Point Guide to Writing Romance*. Somerset: Studymates.
- Warnes, C. (2014). "Desired State: Black Economic Empowerment and The South African Popular Romance". In Newell, S. & Onookome, O. (eds). *Popular Culture in Africa: The Episteme of the Everyday*. New York: Routledge.154-171.
- Westland, E. (1993). Cinderella in the Classroom. Children's Responses to Gender Roles in Fairy-Tales. *Gender and Education*. 5(3): 237-249.

Young, C. (1987). "Readers, Texts, Teachers". In Corcoran, B & Evans, E. (eds), *Readers, Texts, Teachers*. NJ: Boynton/Cook. 7-21

2011 Franschhoek literary festival. (2011). Available from: <http://www.franschhoek.co.za/aboutfestivals/festivalprogram.pdf> (Accessed 8 February 2014).