

Romance writer Anna Campbell loves happy endings

She finished her first full length book after high school but it took 27 years before it was published

BY BELINDA GOLDSMITH

Romance writer Anna Campbell spent 27 years defending her passion for writing steamy love stories and now she has the last laugh, with a string of awards and best-selling novels to her name.

Campbell, who grew up on an avocado farm in the Australian state of Queensland, has just released her third Regency romance called "Tempt the Devil" which follows on from "Claiming the Courtesan" and "Untouched."

She speaks about writing, romance and sex:

This is your third book in two years. That's quite a pace.

"Actually in the romance world that is as slow as a glacier. Mills and Boon have people who can do 10 books a year which is scary when you do only one a year."

What started you writing?

"I had always wanted to be a writer. My mother kept an essay from Grade 2 when I said I was going to be the next Enid Blyton. I finished my first

full length book in the gap between high school and university but it was 27 years before I sold."

When did you first get interested in romance novels?

"My mother gave me a Mills and Boon to read when I was 8 to stop me talking and romance had been shutting me up ever since. I love the happy ending. People make fun of the happy ending but in a murder you find out who the murderer is and in a thriller you get saved in the end. I like that

people go through all that pain but earn a loving, committed relationship at the end."

It took 27 years get published?

"Yes. It is amazing the number of people who say to me that they have a free weekend and will knock off a Mills and Boon. But Mills and Boon take something like 2 per cent of the books submitted to them. It is a very hard genre to break into and it is much harder than people outside the genre realize."

My mum gave me a Mills and Boon when I was 8 to keep me silent and romance has made me shut up since then



Romance writer Anna Campbell now has the last laugh, with a string of awards and bestselling novels to her name. FILE

Were you teased a lot over the years?

"Since it has become my source of income and I live on it, it has brought respect. When I was unpublished I was always having to defend it. It is strange how the people with the most definite ideas on romance are the people who have not read one."

Have romance novels changed over the years?

"Absolutely. Any commercial fiction tends to reflect the society it is in. For romance now, there is a huge range you can buy, from Christian romances to hotter-than-hot. There has been a huge surge of paranormal romances. That whole genre in romance is go-

ing mad and it has been for about 10 years now."

Where did the vampire theme come from?

"It came from nowhere and took the romance world by storm and now seems to be taking the whole entertainment world by storm as well. I sometimes think romance is ahead of itself. There were Knights Templar romances before "The Da Vinci Code." I think we are so in touch with readers we can be ahead of the game."

Is sex a large part of romances?

"Well, in historicals the hotter the better, the sexier the better. It would be boring without it and it does move

the plot on. Mine are all quite sexy. My parents paid for all that education and I grew up to write dirty books! But the terrible thing about a sex scene is that is so easy to get it wrong. I think the thing about my sex scenes is that they are emotional and sensual rather than graphic. As long as you have the deep emotion, readers will get it."

Do you have any advice for aspiring writers?

"Don't take 27 years! The best advice I can give someone is to sit down and write a whole book. Finishing a manuscript teaches you so many things about writing a book. It teaches you that this is not a breeze."

Can Kenyans afford this lifestyle of luxury?



RICKY'S MYTHS

RICHARD GITONGA



At a children's birthday party recently, the parents in attendance had the opportunity to witness an animated argument between the children regarding the latest car registrations on the road.

Some children indicated that they had seen KBGs on the road while others insisted that the number coding registration had only reached as far as KBF. Although the argument was inconclusive, there was a general agreement that the number of new cars on our roads appears to be growing at an exponential rather than a linear trend.

It is important to bear in mind that

a couple of years ago, the Government extended the number coding for vehicle registration to include more digits and letters due to the increasing numbers of vehicle imports into the country. One wonders how recent car buyers manage to observe obstacles on the road, more so at night.

My personal experience with them is that they tend to have a higher propensity to bend traffic rules, especially because the drivers appear to be driving incognito, shielded behind the visually impenetrable tints.

In developed economies, an increase in the purchase of consumer items such as vehicles, electronics

and luxury items is a positive indicator of the rise in the Consumer Confidence Index (CCI). In simple terms, increased Consumer Confidence indicates economic growth in which consumers are spending money, indicating higher consumption.

Decreased Consumer Confidence implies slowing economic growth, meaning consumers are likely to decrease their spending. The idea is that the more confident people feel about their economy, their jobs and incomes, the more likely they are to make purchases.

In our local scenario, it will be interesting to get opinions from our highly trained economists leveraging their complex econometric models on whether consumer confidence fluctuations reliably reflect the health of the economy.

Notwithstanding, it would probably be interesting to gain an understanding of the underlying factors driving the increase in the number of cars on our roads.

Some pessimists may draw a parallel between the Ministerial directive to destroy cars at our congested port as a plausible reason for sudden

upsurge of cars being driven up from Mombasa. The reasoning behind this is that procrastination and accumulation of demurrage charges is no longer an option and a major motivator for more efficient clearance at our inefficient port.

Others who are more thoughtful and financially inclined may draw a linear correlation with the increase of cars, to the easier access of unsecured loan facilities from our friendly local commercial banks.

Loses value

Assuming that the first explanation is more anecdotal and the latter one more measurable, it may be arguable that the increased access of Kenyan consumers to unsecured credit is probably a major variable in the vehicle demand equation.

In this regard, it is therefore appropriate to infer that many Kenyans are borrowing money to "invest" in second hand depreciable assets.

Assuming that a borrower gets money from a bank to buy a car from Japan that is four years old, he or she will continue to pay an interest expense on an asset that loses significant value

over the tenor period of the loan. The overall total cost of ownership, known as TCO, increases further when you factor in the wear and tear of the vehicle and high costs of maintenance.

Some sceptics have defined a bank as a financial institution where you can borrow money if you can present sufficient evidence to show that you do not need it.

Assuming that there is some element of truth in this observation, it is not surprising that most banks have invested heavily in communication strategies and tactics that are geared towards selling "lifestyle".

Unlike the olden frugal days, younger consumers are becoming highly leveraged to finance lifestyles they can ill afford such as exotic holidays, "investment" cars, high end electronics and exquisite furnishings.

These seemingly excited consumers need to be weary of the fact that a luxury is something the average person manages to pay for by buying his necessities on credit.

Put in another way, the difference between a luxury and a necessity depends on whether your neighbour has it and you don't!