HAUSA
PROSE-FICTION
A READER

EDITED BY

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With introduction by SANI ABBA ALIYU

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GENESIS TO REVELATION: LITERATURE BUREAUS, LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS AND THE HAUSA NOVEL

ABDALLA UBA ADAMU

Introduction

In any society, popular literature is produced either to be read by a literate audience or to be enacted on television or in the cinema; it is produced by writers who are members, however lowly, of an elite corps of professional literates. This is more so because literature, like all other human activities, necessarily reflects current social and economic conditions, and human activities are widely accessible to all members of the society. However, class stratification was reflected in literature as soon as it had appeared in life. In the Hausa society, for instance, the chants of the *bori* cultists, differ from the secret, personal songs of the individual, and these likewise differ from the group songs of entertainment sung in community.

Of the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Muslim Hausa have the most extensive and well-established literary tradition. This was made possible by contact with Islam as far back at the 1320s in Hausa land, which exposed the area to the literary polemics and activities of the Muslim world at large. Thus, while most Nigerian communities glorified their literary antecedents through extensive collections of oral traditions and folk tales, the Muslim Hausa, in addition to similar extensive collection of oral traditions, had the instruments to *write* down their literature through the medium of the Arabic language earlier than all the groups. And while classical Arabic remained the preserve of the clerics and courtiers in Muslim Hausa communities for centuries, subsequently, even the Hausa language became Arabicised in the form of a locally adapted script, *ajami*, that opened up literary expressions for millions of literate, but not scholastic, members of the community.

The scholastic and literary tradition of the Hausa was further enhanced by the 1804 Islamic reform initiated by Sheikh Usman bn Fodiyo which established a cultural framework that provided inspiration for subsequent literary traditions in Hausa land and which has sustained itself. Therefore, the scholastic tradition in Hausa land was essentially religious having been generated and sustained by clerics.

The British arrival in Hausa land in 1903 (and what later became Northern Nigeria) introduced new elements of literary tradition among the Hausa. The establishment of the Translation Bureau in 1929, which became the Literature Bureau in 1935 (Hayatu 1991) by the colonial government ensured, through a literary competition in 1933 that a whole new set of reading materials, and consequently literary style, was created. The literary competition of 1933 yielded the first clutch of now Hausa *boko* literature written in classical Hausa, (*Ruwan Bagaja*, *Shehu Umar*, *Gandoki*, *Idon Matambayi,* and *Jiki Magayi*) published in 1935. Since the scholastic tradition of the Hausa has always been the preserve of the *malam* (teacher, scholar) class; consequently, even in popular literature the fountainheads, being carved out of that class, reflect their antecedent scholastic traditions. Consequently, these novels were written mainly by scholars, some, like Abubakar Imam who wrote *Ruwan Bagaja*, were young (he was 22 when he wrote the novel), with deep Islamic roots (who actually took some convincing to even agree to write in the *boko* — Romanized — scripts in the first place, considering such activity as dilution of their Islamic scholarship). As Dr. Rupert East, the arch-Evengali of the Hausa classical literature, exasperatedly noted,

> …the first difficulty was to persuade these Mallams that the thing was worth doing. The influence of Islam produces an extremely serious-minded type of person. The art of writing moreover, being intimately connected in his mind with his religion, is not to be treated lightly. Since the religious revival at the beginning of the (19th) century, nearly all the original work produced by Northern Nigerian authors have been either purely religious or written with a strong religious motive. Most of it was written in Arabic, which, like Latin in Medieval Europe, was considered a moreworthy medium of any work of importance than the mother tongue. (East 1936: 350).

In 1945, the Literature Bureau transformed into Gaskiya Corporation and in 1953, the colonial government established North Regional Literature Agency (NRLA, or more commonly, NORLA) to supplement the activities of the Literature Bureau/Gaskiya Corporation. However, in 1959 NORLA was disbanded and replaced in 1960, the year of independence, with a publishing outfit, Gaskiya Corporation, which relied more on commercial outlets for sustenance, than government grants. In 1965 the Corporation entered into an agreement with Macmillan (UK) to establish a book publishing unit in order to revitalize the book publishing industry. Subsequently in October 1966 the Northern Nigerian Publishing Company (NNPC) was registered, with Gaskiya eventually owning 60% and Macmillan 40% of the shares of the company.

This chapter analyses the evolutionary trends of the contemporary Hausa novel, focusing attention on the role of literature bureaus and writers' organisations, and readerships in the emergence of the genre of the Contemporary Hausa Novel. It argues that availability

of media technologies has altered the interpretation of the traditional Hausa society as reflected in novels written, printed, distributed and read by principally, the Hausa urban youth.

Generations of Hausa Fiction Writers

The efforts of the British colonial administration to instill written literature among the Muslim Hausa led to the establishment of distinctly colonial literature of the mid-1930s in northern Nigeria. Such literature that saw the emergence of *Magana Jari Ce* by Abubakar Imam as the quintessential Hausa literature was rooted in a society that approached Western education with suspicion and as subversive to religious and cultural norms of the Muslim peoples of Northern Nigeria (among whom the British literary efforts was focused).

> *Magana Jari Ce* occupies a cross-road in Nigerian postcolonial studies. While a colonial creation, yet it provides a postcolonial mechanism of hybridity – creating literature that borrows from other literatures, weaves and adapts it to African settings and contexts. Homi Bhabha's (1993) neologism of hybridity would seem to sit in quite well with Imam's transformations of tales from Europe and the Middle East and recasting them in Hausa. The colonial deliberate process of imposing European children's literature and fairy tales attests to what I refer to as 'artificial insemination of literature'.

Published in 1937 in three volumes, *Magana Jari Ce* established itself as the quintessential Hausa literature because of its clever weaving of local mind-sets, with transnational fictional landscapes in its more than 80 stories. For instance, 11 stories are from the Arabian One Thousand and One Nights; 14 fables are German folklore from the collection of Brothers Grimm; 7 short stories from *Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio from Italy; 2 fables are from Danish Hans Andersen; 5 stories are from a Persian version of the Indian collection *Shuka Saptati*; 2 stories are from the Indian collection *Panchatantra*; 1 each are based on a Greek myth about the king of Macedonia, and a fable by the German, Wilhelm Hauff.

Imam's inter-textual re-reading of these various European and Arabian works – running away from African literature – established a template for colonial acceptance of literature among Muslim northern Nigerians. Perhaps Imam's subversion was in how he went out of his way to domesticate these translational literatures and create a subterranean script underneath the translations that convey these tales as reflecting Hausa Muslim societies of his period, without acknowledging the antecedent sources of such literature.

The British device of Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria created a cosy relationship between the colonial administration and the traditional hierarchy, such that the latter

endorsed whatever the former did. Imam was 'released' from teaching by the Emir of Katsina to work on *Magana Jari Ce* as a result of a request by the British colonial administration. What emerged subsequently was a literature that must be cast in the image of *Magana Jari Ce* to be accepted by the traditionalist public culture in Northern Nigeria.

Generations of Hausa writers passed through the same hybrid spectrum created by Imam. The first generation (1933-1945) were writers of what I can call *classical Hausa literature*. There is no meter for making this judgement, except for linguistic style. I argue that the linguistic styles used in this category of books was the quintessentially "correct" and therefore classical Hausa. The strong links between literary acquisition and the Islamic erudition connotes an Islamic and cultural respectability to this mode of expression.

Further, the sentence structure in the early classical Hausa books no longer reflect contemporary common modes of speech. The language used in the books was the "accepted gentleman's" mode of speech, free of vulgarities and virtually academic. It has to be, considering that the books were State-sponsored, and that also they were essentially aimed at grade schools. The sponsorship by the State, in the form of colonial administration, itself under British Conservative Party influence, ensured books written in prose that the British would approve. Thus books such as *Ruwan Bagaja, Magana Jari Ce, Shehu Umar* and *Gandoki* reflect these styles, and as earlier argued, represent classical Hausa literature. Consequently, the strong links between these early Hausa classics and educational endeavours confer on them an elite status not afforded to other forms of Hausa fiction.

The second generation (1950-1979) of writers are what I consider writers of *neo-classical Hausa* literature, who seemed to be awed by, and rooted to, the literary aesthetics of the classical Hausa generation. There was a studied attempt at humour and correct mode of speech, and behaviour. The censoring hand of the State machinery was also very present in these books, especially as the task of publishing them was undertaken by the State-sponsored agencies. Further, the creation of more high schools in the era, meant more books needed to be used as set books for Hausa studies, and as such a large volume of these books were produced and the major examination body recommended them as textbooks. Consequently, books such as *Gogan Naka, Kitsen Rogo, Iliya Ɗan Maikarfi, Sihirtaccen Gari,* and *Taurariwa Mai Wutsiya* all became comparable with the classics, but with an admixture of fantasy, realism and even a dash of inter-stellar travel (*Taurariwa Mai Wutsiya*). Their focus also altered to reflect problems of urbanization and the greater complexities of an emergent semi-technological society.

The third generation (1980-1985) can be considered writers of *modern Hausa classical literature*, where socially accepted linguistic modes were used in the narratives. However,

it seemed that Hausa fiction was emerging from the era of fantasy into a firmer reality. The novelists in this category were still part of the State chaperonage. This was because in 1980, the Department of Culture of the then Federal Ministry of Social Welfare and Culture, organized a literary competition for creative writings in the three major Nigerian languages, that is; Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. This was in line with the Federal Government's focus on culture (spawning off *Nigeria Magazine* from the same Department). The winning Hausa novels were *Tsumangiyar Kan Hanya*, *Zaɓi Naka*, *Karshen Alewa Kasa*, and *Turmin Danya*. The linguistic styles as well as the themes of these novels reflected attempts to retain a degree of relevancy in an increasingly changing world. But the stilted presentation of "correct" behaviour could not capture the attention (or the money) of a new age generation of readers still in their adolescence. The writers did not continue much writing beyond these first attempts. In order to create relevance for itself under dwindling patronage, NNPC decided to hold another literary competition in 1981, harking back at the one held in 1933 to boost sales. Although eight books were selected as the best, only three were published. These included *So Aljannar Duniya*, *Amadi Na Malam Amah*, and *Mallakin Zuciyata* (a play).

Each of the first three generations operated under more or less isolated and protected medium. The novels were published by large multinational publishers, and they were keen to emphasize marketability and acceptability. Matters of style, language, format and presentation therefore were rigorously enforced if not by the authors, then by the copy editors of the companies. Table 1 shows a bibliographical summary of the representatives of the Hausa literary generations.

Table 1: Generations of Hausa Novels

First Generation (1933-1945)	**Classical Hausa**	**Publisher**
Ruwan Bagaja	A. A. Imam	Hukumar Talifi (Competition), 1935
Shaihu Umar	A. A. T/Balewa	Hukumar Talifi (Competition), 1935
Gandoki	M. Bello Kagara	Hukumar Talifi (Competition), 1935
Jiki Magayi	J. Tafida Wusasa and R.M. East	Hukumar Talifi (Competition), 1935
Idon Matambayi	M. Muhammad Gwarzo	Hukumar Talifi (Competition), 1935
Dare Dubu Da Ɗaya	M, Kano and F. Edgar	Hukumar Talifi , 1933
Magana Jari Ce (1-3)	A.A. lmam	Hukumar Talifi/NNPC, 1937

Second Generation (1950-1979)	**Neoclassical Hausa**	**Publisher**
Littafin Mamaki	M.M. Kumashi	Norla, 1954
Ban Dariya	A.B. Ahmed	Norla, 1958
Masu Hikima Sun Ce	A.B. Ahmed	Norla, 1958
Shahararrun Hikayoyi Hudu	—	Norla, 1958
Da'u Fataken Dare	Tanko Zango	Norla, 1959
Iblis dan Lis	M.U. Mairiga	Norla, 1959
Nagari Na Kowa	J. Abdullahi	Gaskiya, 1959
Taurarawar Hamada	S.A. Daura'	Norla, 1959
Mukamar Abu Zaidi (1-5)	A.I. Argungu	Gaskiya, 1959
Littafin Mafarki	S. Gamagira	Gaskiya, 1963
Yawon Duniya Hajji Baba	A. Tunau	Gaskiya, 1966
Iliya 'Dan Maikarfi	Ahmadu Ingawa	Gaskiya, 1968
Ba Ruwan Maza Da Wankan Biki	A.A. Aminu	Gaskiya, 1968
Tauraruwa Mai Wutsiya	U. Dembo	NNPC, 1969
Duniya Ina Za Ki Da Mu?	A.N.S. Wali	Gaskiya, 1971
Gonar Dabbobi	Inuwa Garba	Gaskiya, 1971
Wannan Zamani Da Wuya Yake	U. Ringim	Kano, 1971
Dare 'Daya	A. Kato'ji	NNPC, 1973
Duniya Tumbin Giwa	I.Y.Muhammad	Gaskiya, 1973
Gimbiya Sakinatu	I.Y. Muhammad	Gaskiya, 1974
Baki Abin Magana	I. Y. Muhammad	Gaskiya, 1976
Gari Ya Waye	M.B. Umar	B.U.K., 1977
Qwal Uwar Bari (1-2)	I.Y. Muhammad	Gaskiya, 1977
Magana Ba Kaya Ba	I.Y. Muhammad	Gaskiya, 1977
Abokin Hira, 1 da 2	A.H. Aliyu	NNPC, 1978
Sihirtaccen Gari	A. Katsina	NNPC, 1978
Kitsen Rogo	A. Dangambo	NNPC, 1978
Third Generation (1980-1984)	***Modern Hausa***	**Publisher**
So Aljannar Duniya	Hafsatu Abdulwahid	NNPC, 1980 (Competition, 1978)
Amadi Na Malam Amah	Magaji Danbatta	NNPC, 1980 (Competition, 1978)
Mallakin Zuciyata	S.I. Katsina	NNPC 1980 (Competition, 1978)
Kunnenka Nawa?	I. Zakariya	Triumph, 1981
Tsumangiyar Kan Hanya	M.M. Bello	NNPC, 1982 (Competition, 1980)
Zaɓi Naka	M.M. Katsina	NNPC, 1982 (Competition, 1980)
Karshen Alewa Kasa	B. Gagare	NNPC, 1982 (Competition, 1980)

Third Generation (1980-1984)	*Modern Hausa*	**Publisher**
Turmin Danya	S.I. Katsina	NNPC, 1982 (Competition, 1980)
Tura Ta Kai Bango	S.l. Katsina	NNPC, 1983
Tafiyar Goga Tsibirin Lillifa	Inuwa Diko	Longman, 1983
Tsaka Mai Wuya	Kamaruddin Imam	Longman, 1983
Tsalle Daya	Idris Imam	Uniprinters, Kano, 1983
Ladi Da Kare Da Gugawa	U.I. Galadanci	UPL, 1984
Gizo Sarkin Wayo	U.I. Galadanci	UPL, 1984
Aljanar Bishiya	U.I. Galadanci	UPL, 1984
Aljanar Kabewa	U.I. Galadanci	UPL, 1984
Umma Da Giwa	U.I. Galadanci	UPL, 1984
Gishiri (1-3)	Dahiru Bebeji	Ade- Mike Printers, Kano, 1986

Adapted from Yahaya (1988)

Thus, almost all the books were published either by government subsidiaries or well-established publishers (e.g. University Press Limited and Longman). Only few (entries 24, 29, 47, 53, and 54) were privately published.

The rapid political and economic upheavals in Nigeria in the decade of the 1970s and 1980s created unstable market forces that had adverse effects on book publishing and led to government indifference in book publishing. Consequently, the patronage that the three generations of Hausa prose fiction writers enjoyed from government-owned firms rapidly evaporated. Vernacular prose fiction came to a virtual stand-still, especially from 1985. Consequently, creative fiction started to take a back stand in Hausa literary efforts. Thus in his categorization of Hausa literature, Skinner (1975) acknowledged that of the 118 titles in his *Bibliography of Creative Writing in Hausa* in 1975, only 18, many of which were no longer available, were fiction. The list seemed to barely increase even in the long essay by Piłaszewicz (1985). By the time late Professor Ibrahim Yaro Yahaya (1988) published his encyclopaedic *Hausa a Rubuce: Tarihin Rubuce Rubuce Cikin Hausa*, the prose fiction list had somewhat increased to more than fifty. *Hausa a Rubuce*, however, was written in Hausa, and as such, less accessible to many researchers with interest in African, especially Hausa literature and its development.

The Millennium Generation and Ballistic Urbanism

The fourth generation of Hausa vernacular prose fiction writers (from 1984) heralded the arrival of a New Age generation. The modern classical Hausa writers of the early 1970s seemed to have retired their pens, since most of them were one-hit wonders; producing a text that was well received and used as a textbook for West African School Certificate Hausa examinations (e.g. *Kitsen Rogo*), but no more. Just like the Hausa neoclassical and classical writers before them, they enjoyed the patronage of the State or multinational corporate publishing houses, eager to cash on the burgeoning high school population,

freshly spewed from the pools of the mass educational policy of Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme of 1976.

The newcomers gate-crashed the Hausa literary scene with ballistic urbanism and often raw sexuality, divesting readers from the village simplicity of the earlier Hausa classics. They were cultural cyborgs: an uneasy confluence between the two rivers of Hausa traditionalism and modern hybrid urban media-rich technological society. As Sheme (2001) argued, by the 1980s a lot of the traditional ways of life in Hausa land had drastically changed. The incursion of western lifestyle in our society was so great that when it captured young hearts, it was inextricably mirrored in our literature. Products of cross-cutting media parenting with visual media bombardment from Hollywood and Bollywood cinema, the new Hausa novelists that emerged from the 1980s refused to build on the thematic styles of their 'modernist uncles'. Thus this new generation of writers avoided giving too much attention to Marxist politics (as, for instance in the earlier *Tura Ta Kai Bango*), gun-toting dare-devils, drug cartels (e.g. as in *Karshen Alewa Kasa*), prostitution or alcohol consumption. Writing in uncompromising and unapologetic Modern Hausa (often interlaced with English words to reflect the new urban lexicon of "Engausa"), they focused their attention on the most *emotional* concerns of the urban Hausa youth: love and marriage; thus falling neatly into the romanticist mould, or *soyayya* (romance), — consequently borrowing inspiration and motifs from Hindi film cinema (Larkin 1996).

A series of developmental events combined to explain how Northern Nigerian Muslim Hausa youth suddenly embraced indigenous literature, especially prose fiction in the decade of the 1980s. Most of these events find comfortable niches in sociological theories of change and development. Locate some?

The main catalytic factor was the role of bold and innovative television melodramas from State-owned television stations of Nigerian Television Authority in major Nigerian cities, and the State-owned television stations, such as CTV 67 in Kano. By far, the most popular of the 1980s television programs in Kano State, *Bakan Gizo*, (chronicling the saga of Hanne and Kallamu), dealing with forced marriage, *Hadarin Kasa*, and *Farin Wata* (detailing with the tribulations of a Hausa boy wanting to marry a Yoruba girl against both parents' wishes), became the foundlings of romantic imagery amongst the young viewers. In most large streets, at least in Kano, little corner shops with small black and white television sets became massive viewing centres in the mid-1980s, during the showing of *Farin Wata* by the state-owned CTV 67 television studio (Bourgault 1996). The massive popularity of drama shows on public television in the period therefore evoked such intense interest amongst the youth that drama clubs, and societies were formed with the sole purpose of improvising dramatic sketches along similar lines. The drama clubs, already an existing force among the youth in the mid-1970s Kano, received a great boost with the popularization of everyday mundane events as reflected by the State-owned media. One of the early antecedents of these clubs was the ambitiously titled

Organization for Moral Concern, established in 1982, to cater for the youth in urban Kano in at least three different aspects.

The first was an adult literacy division that attempted to provide supplementary education to youth who dropped out of elementary and secondary schools. The second focused on self-help activities, especially clearing of gutters and drainages in the urban centre, road maintenance and removing accumulated trash from communal skips. The third division concentrated on use of drama for enlightenment (Babinlata 1999). Interview, Bala Anas Babinlata, author (*Zinaru*, *Xa ko Jika* etc), who was a secondary school student when the organization was formed, and took an active part in the drama/writing division. Kano, August 21, 1999.

The first division died off, especially due to the prominence of the Kano State Agency for Mass Education. The second broke away from the collective and transformed into Abdullahi Bayero Self-Help Group, and eventually drew the attention of the Kano State Social Welfare Department that supported its activities. The third transformed into an independent *Jigon Hausa Drama Club* in 1984. Its membership was boosted by the large scale absorption of many members of the *Gyaranya Drama Club* (GDC) which had been existing since 1982. The GDC was based in the Gyaranya sector of the old city, and in the neighbourhood of the defunct Palace Cinema. The most popular films in the period were Hindi, with many complex choreographed song-and-dance routines (e.g. *Raaste Ka Patthar*, *Waqt*, *Rani Rupmati*, *Dost*, *Nagin*, *Hercules*, *Jaal*, *Sangeeta*, *Charas*, *Kranti*, *Dharmatama*, *Loafer*, *Amar Deep*, *Dharam Karam*, and countless others). These inspired the GDC to start producing long songs in their drama sketches using the Indian song motifs of themes and structure, but with Hausa language lyrics. This did not go down well with many members, and as such when the *Jigon Hausa Drama Club* was being contemplated as a breakaway faction of the *Organization for Moral Concern*, a lot of the members of the GDC cross-carpeted to the new club.

The Lexicon of Love-Themes and Templates of the Fourth Generation

The drama sketches in the drama clubs were written by young aspiring members with imagination, determination and deep interests in developing their ideas from a written form to a dramatic performance. Lack of capital as well as lack of state-sponsorship curtailed many of the dreams of dramatic epics being staged in the urban centres of Northern Nigeria. Thus, while restricted to neighbourhood plazas (*dandali*) and club houses, the dramatists continued developing their scripts, which they eventually turned into full-length novellas. But even there, they also faced obstacles: lack of interest from the major book publishers. They had no alternative to getting their thoughts in print than private publishing processes in which they simply sponsored the production of their books through the printing presses, then becoming increasingly available due to the high profile party campaigns taking place, especially from 1979 to 1983, and from 1999 onwards when party politics returned to the country.

It was in the midst of this that the NNPC published the winners of its 1979 competition and *So Aljannar Duniya* became an instant hit. It was as if the novel was the script of

Farin Wata — the CTV 67 drama that explores an inter-ethnic love affair, to the strenuous objection of both parents. *So Aljannar Duniya* explored similar theme — this time a love affair between a purebred Fulani girl (the protagonist, and actually autobiographical to Ms. Hafsat AbdulWaheed, the authoress) and an "alien" (in real life an Arab from the Middle East whom she eventually married). The novel also provided a second catalytic factor in the development of Hausa prose fiction, in that it did away with the Fulani code of behaviour, *pulaaku* and introduces a brash, assertive, loud and anti-establishment heroine, Boɗaɗo who, armed with a degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences, came back to her village to set up a drug store and introduce her fiancé — all un-lady like behaviours in the Fulani mind-set. Thus she discarded *munyal* (self-control), *semteende* (modesty) and *haƙƙillo* (wisdom) — central components of *pulaaku*—and declared, openly, her love for an "alien" in her auntie's presence. The opening dialogue from the novel sets the pace in which Boɗaɗo, speaking, informed her aunt (Abdulwaheed 1980):

> Aure! Inna ni fa na gaya muku ba zan auri kowa ba sai wanda nake so. Kun san zamani ya sake.
>
> (trans) Marriage! Aunty, I have told you that I will only marry the man I love. You know times have changed. (*So Aljannar Duniya*, p. 1)

Such direct confrontation in a Fulani village was uncommon, and reflected the author's autobiographical rebellion against tradition. Her aunty - delegated to mediate in these matters on behalf of protagonist's mother - was shocked. As she lamented:

> Mhm! Wannan zamani, Allah Ya sauƙaƙa. Yarinya ki zauna ki na zancen auren ki, sai kace hirar nono da mai. Don haka fa ba ma son sa ɗiyar mu makarantar boko. In kun yi karatu sai ku ce kun fi kowa. Me ku ka ɗauke mu ne?
>
> Mhm. These times of ours. May Allah save us. Listen to you talking about your marriage, as if you are talking about milk and butter. That is why we don't want to send our daughters to school. After you finish you feel you are superior to everyone. What do you take us for? (*So Aljannar Duniya*, p. 2)

Thus the battle ground and the rules of engagement have been established — female empowerment through education; and Ms. AbdulWaheed chose the most conservative arena: a Fulani settlement, considered generally more trenchant about *pulaaku* than urban Fulani.

The success of *So Aljannar Duniya* seemed to have sent a message to potential literati to pick up their pens and set to work — thus spawning a genre which the organizers of the competition that produced the novel did not envisage, or desire. Further, the combined effects of harsh economic realities of 1980s (the decade of coups and counter-coups in Nigeria) ensured reduced parental responsibility in the marital affairs of their children. Therefore, fantasy media parenting from especially Bollywood Hindi films, anti-authority

and a loud persistent message from bursting testosterones in a conservative society that sees strict gender separation, combined to present Hausa youth with *soyayya* (romance) as the central template for creative fiction. It was a safety valve to repress sexuality. In particular Hindi cinema played a strong role in providing inspiration for first Hausa novelists, and later Hausa video dramatists.

The biggest boom for Hindi cinema in Northern Nigeria was in the 1970s when state television houses were opened and became the outlet for readily available Hindi films on video tapes targeted at home viewers. For instance, the NTA Kano alone had shown 1,176 Hindi films on its television network from 2nd October 1977 when the first Hindi film was shown (*Aann Baan*) to 6th June 2003 (NTA Kano 2003). At the time of starting the Hindi film appearance on Hausa television houses, young school boys and girls aged seven or less became avid watchers of the films and gradually absorbed templates of behaviour from screen heroes they thought share similar behavioural pattern. By early 1990s they had become novelists, moving to the home video arena towards the end of the decade.

Lack of government patronage led to the spate of private publishing phenomena in Northern Nigeria, especially of the Hausa prose fiction from 1984. The private publishing route was forced on the authors by the virtual collapse of the NNPC which was the main publishing outfit in Northern Nigeria. Furthermore, there was considerable reluctance on the part of the major mainstream Nigerian publishers to accept works in Hausa language, certainly fiction, or even establish offices in the north of Nigeria. For instance, a study of the major publishing outfits and their zonal distribution, in Table 2, reflected the pattern of the period (after Amali 1999).

However, Longman Nigeria Ltd bucked the trend by diving headlong into the Hausa literature publishing market, essentially to capture high school students studying the language. For instance, under the firm's "*Abokin Hira*" series, various genres were published which included prose fiction, poetry and drama. Titles include *Ciza Ka Busa* by Isma'ila Junaidu; *Kowa Ya Sha Kidî* by M.S. Ibrahim; *Tafiyar Goga Birnin Lillifa* by Inuwa Dikko; *Tauna Ka Hadîye* by M.W. Hamza; *Tsaka Mai Wuya* by Kamaruddin Imam; *Jiya Da Yau* by Abdullahi Umar Kafin Hausa; *Kama Da Wane* by Inuwa Dikko, and *Taura Biyu* by M.W. Hamza.

Table 2: *Spread of Publishing Outfits in Nigeria, 1986*

South-West		**South-East**		**North**	
Ibadan	14	Enugu	6	Zaria	3
Lagos	13	Onitsha	4	Kano	1
Ife	2	Benin	2		
Akure	1	Port Harcourt	2		
Osogbo	1	Calabar	1		
Ilesha	1	Owerri	1		
Ijebu-Ode	1				
Totals	**33**		**16**		**4**

As indicated these series were essentially aimed at high school market and do not really

satisfy the burgeoning prose fiction writers. Therefore, with no one to assess and publish their manuscripts, the young Hausa prose writers in Northern Nigeria had no alternative than to privately publish their books themselves. A selection of the most notable (and printed, thus, available) pioneer independent authors is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *A Selection of Pioneer Millennium Generation Hausa Prose Fiction Writers*

S/N	Title	Author	Year
1.	So Aljannar Duniya	Hafsat AbdulWaheed	1981
2.	Wasiyar Baba Kere	Ibrahim Saleh Gumel	1983
3.	Inda Rai Da Rabo	Idris S. Imam	1984
4.	Rabin Raina I	*Talatu Wada Ahmad	1984
5.	Soyayya Gamon Jini	Ibrahim H Abdullahi Bichi	1986
6.	Budurwar Zuciya	*Balaraba Ramat Yakubu	1986
7.	Rabin Raina II	*Talatu Wada Ahmad	1987
8.	Wa Zai Auri Jahila?	*Balaraba Ramat Yakubu	1987
9.	Kogin Soyayya	A. M. Zahraddeen Yakasai	1988
10.	Alhaki Kwikwiyo	*Balaraba Ramat Yakubu	1988
11.	Rabin Raina III	*Talatu Wada Ahmad	1988
12.	Mata Masu Duniya	*Kulu M.B Tambuwal	1988
13.	Kaiƙayi	Abubakar Bala Gyadi-Gyadi	1989
14.	Kashe Makashin ka	Alhaji Y. Abubakar Mohammed	1989
15.	Rabon Kwaɗo	*Sadiya T. Umar Daneji	1989
16.	Garin Masoyi	A. M. Zahraddeen Yakasai	1989
17.	Idan So Cuta Ne	Yusuf M. Adamu	1989
18.	In Da So Da Kauna	Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino	1990

* Women authors

Of the 18 titles in Table 3, only two (*Budurwar Zuciya, Wa Zai Auri Jahila?*) were *printed* on a commercial payment, by the Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria. They were thus not *published* by the NNPC. The apparent reluctance by the NNPC to be associated intellectually with the nascent literature seems to indicate its disdain for the emergent genre. For instance, in an interview in 2000, Alhaji Ja'afaru D. Mohammed, General Manager of the Northern Nigerian Publishing Company (NNPC), Zaria believes that the "bulk of these works are unhealthy for both academic and social well-being of the young ones…The contents are mostly alien to the Hausa cultures which they pretend to explore." Alhaji Ja'afaru gleefully and scornfully declared that NNPC does not publish such books because "…they know we won't accept, so they don't even bring to us." This is from *soyayya* novels get a kick in the face[1].

Thus, the overwhelming focus on romance (*soyayya*) as a theme from the early writers, as well as negative criticism from academics and clerics put off major publishers from investing into the genre and further created a gulf between authors and publishers. For instance, from the titles alone, many of the novels contain their thematic structure with

[1] Find the original source. *Soyayya Novels* Get a Kick in the Face, *New Nigerian Weekly*, Saturday February 19, 2000.

the word "*soyayya*" and its derivatives (e.g. "*so*", "*masoyi*") recurring in many of them.

It is interesting that Hausa women seem to feel sexual repression more than their male counterparts do. This is because the first three novels by the fourth generation were by women. A woman, Hafsat AbdulWaheed, indeed wrote the first novel of the generation (*So Aljannar Duniya*).

There are no specific records to show which urban cluster in the north started the private publishing phenomena, but it would seem to have been kick-started by the appearance of Ms Talatu Wada Ahmed's *Rabin Raina* — a series of three similarly titled, but unrelated novels, privately printed in Zaria from 1985 to 1988. The three *Rabin Raina* novels were seminal for many reasons. Not only were they the first by a Muslim Hausa woman (and a graduate with a degree in Biology) since Hafsat AbdulWaheed prize winning *So Aljannar Duniya*, but they also set the tune for the battle cry of Muslim Hausa *womanism* - which as Alice Walker explains, is a woman displaying "outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behaviour. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one" (Walker 1984: xi-xii) by encouraging, quite forcefully, the idea of Muslim Hausa woman's contemporary western education.

Hitherto the cultural perception of an educated girl in the Muslim Hausa society was generally unfavourable: educated girls were perceived as wayward and impertinent. To avoid girls committing embarrassing and immoral acts, more often than not parents were eager to see that their daughters get married as soon as they are biologically mature, regardless of their level of education; if at all they did get to attend school. Thus, pulling girls out of school to marry them off was a common occurrence. Each of the female protagonists in the early novels written by Hausa women displayed such outrageous (to her traditional mind-set) behaviour.

In *Rabin Raina I* (1985), the father of the hero refused to allow her to even have a boyfriend while still in a lower level form of education; insisting that all matters and affairs of the heart should wait until she finishes her schooling. Furthermore, not only are the parents of the heroine pro-education, so is also her suitor, who while pursuing his own medical degree program in Britain, insists on his fiancée obtaining high school education (so that they actually finished their programs together). Even the cover of the novel is anti-authority: showing a couple in a tender moment; the man clearly wearing western dressing (and looking more like a Hindi film star) kissing the hand of the girl.

In *Rabin Raina II* (1987) the protagonist had to drop out of school for one reason or another, but her fiancé insisted on her getting back to complete her education. Indeed, he often goes to her house to give her extra-lessons to catch up. After her schooling she is employed as a personnel officer in an organization - with an amorous boss who fancies her, to the chagrin and distress of her fiancé who, incidentally, also works in the same

organization. The hero eventually extricates herself by simply blackmailing her boss by recording a conversation with him covering a shady deal.

In *Rabin Raina III* (1988), the art of blackmail to escape from the apparently inescapable was perfected by the protagonist who was to be married, against her wish, to another person who was her parent's choice. She escaped by simply arranging a relationship between the suitor she detested and a commercial sex-worker. The suitor was caught red-handed by the protagonist's father, and this was used as a basis for dissolving the "gentleman's agreement" for the suitor to marry the protagonist. Thus free, she was given an opportunity to bring another person, of her own choice and whom she loves. The themes - voicing out a choice of whom to marry, engaging in wily blackmail to obtain what they want, and aggressive pursuit of contemporary education - are all counter-reality to Muslim Hausa socio-cultural pattern which insists on getting a girl married off as soon as she becomes "biologically" mature, and to her parent's choice. In the *Rabin Raina* series of novels, although the girls' were educated, yet they are religious, obedient, respectful, and cheerfully carry out the household chores such as washing, sweeping, kitchen duties, both in their parents' as well as husbands' houses. Thus, the idea that western education "spoils" girls and makes them anti-authority and rebellious as well as immoral, was explored and debunked, by an educated Muslim Hausa woman, in the *Rabin Raina* series of novels. It is the closest manifesto to proto-type feminism in Hausa literature.

The *Rabin Raina* series, as obscure as they were, nevertheless caught the attention of the more urban Kano novelists. In particular, Ms Balaraba Ramat Yakubu, a young adult learner at the Kano State Agency for Mass Education school picked up the womanist baton in 1986 with her first novel *Budurwar Zuciya* (*Young at Heart*) which expanded the theme set in *So Aljannar Duniya* and *Rabin Raina* for Muslim Hausa women empowerment by making the potential tragedies of *auren dole* (forced marriage) and its intrinsic injustice explicit. The text confirms the existence of *auren dole,* painting it as a marital tradition in which parents offer their daughter as a sacrificial lamb, as insurance of financial gain. The denial by the parents of the girl of her decision making abilities poses the greatest injustice.

Thus remarkable among the early starters were women writers, with Balaraba Ramat Yakubu of Kano leading the pack. Her prose, written in anger at the perceived injustice done to women in Hausa society, expanded on the womanist female empowerment anthem in contemporary Hausa literature.

Ms. Yakubu's anthem against *auren dole* and pro-women empowerment through education is elaborately explored through Zainab, the protagonist of *Wa Zai Auri Jahila?* A 12-year old village girl, she was married against her wish to a man older than her father. She ran away from him, escaped to an aunt in the city and continued her education, qualifying as a nurse.

While Ms. Talatu Wada Ahmad and Ms. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu presented the vanguard of the new Muslim Hausa woman's voice in prose fiction, another, this time, male, writer of the period was on the verge of planting a time-bomb in his portrayal of *auren dole*. When Ahmed Mahmood Zaharadden Yakasai's *Kogin Soyayya* appeared in 1988, it also became a revolutionary pacesetter in voicing out Muslim Hausa rebellion against the tradition of forced marriage, this time, through the eyes of a male protagonist.

In *Kogin Soyayya*, the protagonists were denied permission by the boy's parents to marry each other. This is a surprising twist since in such situations, it is usually the girls who get the short end of the stick - being forced to give up the boy she loves for one her parents chose for her. *Kogin Soyayya* bucked the trend by arguing that boys are also victims of the *auren dole* phenomena. Denied marriage, the protagonists decided to elope (on a motor bike!), after first contemplating and discarding suicide. They hid in a village of considerable distance from Kano, and only revealed themselves when negotiators persuaded their parents to allow them to marry. Throughout their period of elopement, they remained chaste, obedient and subservient to traditional authority. Thus the author wished to convey the message of moral uprightness even in a tempting situation. Indeed, to confer dignified morality on the scene, the two lovers were actually given refuge in the house of the village chief initially when they informed him they were related. Later, when they had to reveal that they were actually lovers on the run, the village chief took it in his stride and offered to become a negotiator to resolve the situation. Thus, traditional authority will seem to submit to the logic of giving youth the choice of marriage partners in *Kogin Soyayya*.

A literary polemic ensured when Yusuf Adamu, of K*ungiyar Matasa Marubuta*, another writers' club, published *Idan So Cuta ne* in 1989. The title is a truncated Hausa proverb, whose completion is '*hakuri magani ne*' (patience is the cure), projecting the view that patience is the cure to all injustice. Adamu's novel took up the theme of forced marriage, but in which although the protagonists fell in love, the opposition from their parents was enough to prevent them getting married. They neither eloped (as in *Kogin Soyayya*), or rebelled against their parents (*Rabin Raina III*). Thus, they married other partners; however, their *children* married each other. Patience and trust in providence, as well as total obedience to parental tradition are thus encouraged in the novel.

To compliment *Kogin Soyayya*, Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino, like Balaraba Ramat Yakubu, an adult learner at the Agency for Mass Education School, published *In Da So Da Kauna*, the most phenomenally successful novel of the genre, in 1990. The novel caught the teenage population in full blast with its recounting of a familiar tale, but in unfamiliar plot environments. In the novel, a girl from an extremely rich family falls in love with a poor boy; meets resistance from parents who wanted her to marry a boy from similar social status. She rebelled and decided to kill herself than suffer a fate worse than death — forced marriage to someone she detests. Her method of dispatching herself (drowning in a well) was an ancient and entrenched folkloric solution to dilemmas faced by Hausa girls in situations of forced marriages. The success of the novel was enhanced by the

sheer wall of criticism that heralded its arrival. In the first instance, it was seen as an irreligious tract aimed at making girls rebellious. Secondly, it was accused of encouraging copycat suicides among girls. Following the wide-spread success of *In Da So Da Kauna*, a local newspaper, *Sunday New Nigerian* of November 24, 1991 carried out a front-page story of a 16-year old girl who drowned herself by jumping into a well to face a fate apparently worse than death in the hands of a suitor she does not love, and whom her parents were insistent on marrying her. The father of the girl, full of remorse, was quoted as appealing to "other parents not to force their children to marry the person they do not love."

Subsequent development of the forced marriage institution in Northern Nigeria reveals a more drastic method adopted by some of the brides forced into a marriage without their consent. In 2014 in Kano, a 14-year-old bride killed her 35 year old husband with rat poison because she was forced by her parents into marrying him. About two years later, Temitope (2016) reported that according to UNICEF 2016 report Nigeria had the highest absolute number of child marriage in the world. The report stated that Nigeria has a total of 23 million victims with figures as high as 76 per cent in the North West region and 10 per cent low in the South East. 43 per cent of these girls get married before the age of 18. Gill *et. al.* (2012) had also discussed this issue from a more academic and human rights perspectives as it affects Asian countries.

Forced marriage, as a literary theme was not peculiar to the new Hausa writers. It was found in other, more established literature. An example was in some of the writings of John Ford, a 17th century major English dramatist of the Caroline period, whose revenge tragedies are characterized by certain scenes of austere beauty, insight into human passions, and poetic diction of a high order. *The Broken Heart* is characteristic of Ford's work in its depiction of a noble and virtuous heroine who is torn between her true love and an unhappy forced marriage, with tragic consequences for all concerned. Aeschylus, the first of classical Athens' three great writers of tragedy, also explored the issue of forced marriages in *Suppliants,* the first and only surviving play of a trilogy put on in 463 AD. Born in Egypt, though of Greek descent, the daughters of Danaus, the Danaïds, had fled with their father to Argos in Greece in order to avoid forced marriage with their cousins, the sons of Aegyptus.

On the other hand, the Hausa society, undergoing seismic sociological changes was increasingly being forced to reconcile some of its most cherished norms: arranged marriages, or more precisely, parental power and authority over their children — giving them a sense of losing control. Contemporary development, urban culturalism and other factors had combined to create a resistance force to the institution. The new Hausa writers merely sought to share the perspectives with a larger audience.

Writing the Rites Writers

Thus, when it became clear that it was easier to write and publish a book than to assemble a drama group and put out a play, many of the new writers then turned their attention to

forming writing collectives, especially in Kano. One of the earliest was *Kungiyar Matasa Marubuta*, formed in 1986 by Yusuf Adamu with the grand objective of transforming the society through writing (thus his polemical reply to Zahraddeen's *Kogin Soyayya* in his *Idan So Cuta Ne*). The predominant philosophy of the club was the triumph of good over evil in all cases, and enthronement of family values. Their activities were carried out by focusing on prose, plays, children's literature, translation of religious documents (which later encouraged other authors to focus attention on the creation of the prayer genre) and poetry. The club was active for only four years from 1986, folding up in 1990 essentially because they seemed to have spent more time on literary criticism than on actual book printing or publishing. Lack of capital further led to the decline of the club. Yusuf Adamu's *Idan So Cuta Ne* remained the only book published by the club. Later in the 1990s, the club also published Binta Bello Ɗanbatta's *Duniya Mai Yayi* in 1995. Incidentally, Zaharadden also founded *Kukan Kurciya*, another writers' and drama club in 1986, and this has survived till 1999, producing a series of novels under its banner (for example *Ragayar Lawashi*).

The *Writer's Forum* was another writers' club established by young university graduates led by Ibrahim Aminu Ɗan Iya and Sunusi Shehu Daneji in 1989, also with a fierce intellectual focus. They had more capital and wherewithal than *Kungiyar Matasa Marubuta* because they were able to publish four books: *Ban Kwana Da Masoyi*, *Rabo Da Masoyi*, *Zaman Lafiya*, and *Rabon Kwaɗo* — the last written by a female writer.

The *Writer's Forum*, *Kungiyar Matasa Marubuta* remained the two clubs with exclusive focus on writing, rather than drama and writing. The predominant youth clusters in Kano, however, were more interested in developing scripts for drama sketches. In this regard, a drama club, which spawned off Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino, one of the more visible members of the new Hausa prose fiction, was the *Kano State English Request Writers and Drama Club*, formed in 1985. Funding for full-scale production of film sets and all the necessary equipment needed for film production in the depressed economy of the late 1980s was not forthcoming. Writing therefore became a more easily accomplished task than film directing.

From 1985 to about 1990, there was not much focus on the new Hausa fiction. Indeed, the novels that appeared in this period differ remarkably from those that came later - and due to their lyrical elegance are often considered the "classics" of genre - because of their focused and often ideological battle stands: modernity versus conservatism; parental authority versus children's right to choice.

In 1990, Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino - writer, and later, film producer, and actor - became the unlikely hero who provided the catalytic force in the full emergence of the new Hausa writers in the early 1990s. Neither the first, nor the best, he nevertheless had the foresight of sending the series of short stories he wrote from around 1985 to 1989 to a German Hausa literary Radio program, *Taɓa Ka Lashe*, for which he was paid a token honorarium. Each reading lasted about 15 minutes, but it was enough to make his name household amongst Hausa listeners of the programme. During this time, he was undergoing an Adult

literacy program conducted by the Agency for Mass Education, Kano. His mainstay was sewing, as well as marketing embroided caps. Eventually his 'fans' started suggesting to him, during informal sessions, that he should put out a collection of his stories into a book, or alternatively, expand on the theme of some of them and make them into a book.

It was in this period that Ado Ahmad decided to expand one of his short stories into a first novel, *Hattara Dai Masoya* (1988), while still a student at the Adult Education classes, then aged 23 — almost the same age of Abubakar Imam when the latter wrote *Ruwan Bagaja* in 1933. Being also a member of the *Kano State English Request Writes and Drama Club*, they started giving thoughts to the need for establishment of a mechanism through which their books can be published. Obviously the other authors whose books were already in the market had found means of getting printed.

Ado Ahmad then decided to form an investment company, *Raina Kama Ventures*, which will be used as a sort of *adashi* (banking system sustained through members' financial contribution) which will hopefully generate enough to get a book published. The company had seven members: Muhammad Lawan Isa, Nasiru Mudi Giginyu (both typists and civil servants), Lawan Muhammad, Yusuf Lawan Gwazaye, Shehu Iliyasu Chiranci, Auwalun Gabas and Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino. With the exception of the two civil servants, all were small scale businessmen; for instance, Auwalun Gabas was a tailor, while Ado Ahmad sewed and sold embroidered caps. These became the first writer's collective in the new Hausa prose fiction. Incidentally, the civil servants were also fiction writers, and enjoyed the patronage of a well-established writer, late Bashari Farouk Roukbah (*Hantsi Leka Gidan Kowa*) who offered his orthographic services to them.

Eventually, however, it became difficult to get *Raina Kama Ventures* to sponsor the printing of any book, so Ado, who had by then developed another manuscript, *In Da So Da Ƙauna* decided to ask his mother for sponsorship in 1990 to print the book. He got a loan of N5,000 (five thousand naira) from her, and used the money to print *In Da So Da Ƙauna*. He deferred publishing his first book *Hattara Dai Masoya* because he judged it would not be accepted by women readers due to its gender bias which did not cast women in good light. He considered *In Da So Da Ƙauna* more balanced, and thus more likely to capture youth emotions. He judged correctly. The book was not published under the auspices of *Raina Kama Ventures*, but as a single effort by a single individual. By the time the book was read out on *Shafa Labari Shuni*, a Radio Nigeria Kaduna literary programme, it had captured the minds and moods of Hausa youth so enchantingly that the first 1,000 print-runs of the book sold out immediately, even at the moderate price of N8.00, making a profit of N3,000 for the author. Demands for reprints eventually pushed the print-runs to over 25,000 copies by 1994 — making it the biggest selling Hausa fiction in such a short period from 1990-1995.

A chance meeting in 1990 by three of the most prominent new Hausa writers, Ms. Balaraba Ramat Yakubu, Ado Ahmad, and Ɗan Azumi Cheɗiyar 'Yangurasa at the premises of the Kano State History and Culture Bureau changed the picture. The encounter revealed a need for a closer study on how book publishing can be sponsored in

Kano. A follow-up meeting was set up by Ms. Yakubu in her house and the three proposed the idea of a printing outfit. The first name suggested for the new outfit was *Ramin Shuka* (hole for planting seeds) a Hausa proverb whose completion is *ba tsaho sai albarka* (although not deep, but blessed with life). This was intended to convey lack of deep education on the part of the members of the association, but with blessed skills and abilities in literary expression.

Ado Ahmad, however, recommended *Raina Kama Writers Association* which was accepted. According to Ado Ahmad (personal communication, Kano, August 10, 1999), since all the three of them do not have advanced training in Western education, it was likely that their novels might be perceived with contempt by many readers. *Raina Kama Ka Ga Gayya* (ignore at your peril) adapted from a Hausa proverb is a battle-cry from the new novelists, challenging all to ignore them at their misfortune (of missing a great literary adventure). The first traditional ruler they wrote to, the Emir of Kano, accepted to be their patron, thus conferring on them royal blessings.

Like bubbles from the depth of a silent brook, other literary concerns continue to spring up in Kano. One of them, *Soyayya Communications*, established in 1990 had the unique approach of putting out a literary magazine with the main story drawn-up in cartoons. The magazine, *Ruwan Zuma*, lasted for only six months before folding up due to insufficient funding. Its main focus was on love themes, thus lending support to the *soyayya* trends.

State Mediation and Creative Writers

The Kano State History and Culture Bureau (HCB) established in 1980 played a small, but catalytic role in midwifing the emergence of the new crop of Hausa prose writers in the early 1990s. The HCB itself was established amidst suspicious feelings from the community of its activities which most people in Kano perceive to be in promoting music and dances — two activities frowned upon in a deeply conservative society. The painstaking manuscript acquisition and documentation were lost on most people. Further, through the establishment of a publications unit in the Bureau, it was also mandated to promote literary activities in the State.

It thus found itself embroiled with Hausa writers when a poet, Hussaini Maiƙarfe, submitted to the printers a collection of his poems, *Matsayi* in 1989. He seemed to have run out of money to retrieve all the printed copies from the printers, and in desperation, he approached the Bureau for financial assistance. After going through the copy of the poems he gave them, the management of the Bureau was so impressed that they not only paid for the rest of the books to be printed, but also promised to launch the book for him.

This seemed to have drawn the attention of other budding authors in Kano to the Bureau, and many took their manuscripts to the Bureau with the hope of also being sponsored. This was clearly more than what the Bureau could handle, and it had to be made clear to the authors that the Bureau could only provide a forum for the *launching* of any book, but not sponsor its production. However, the Bureau also offered to edit any manuscript for any author. In this way, one of the early pioneers of emergent novelists submitted

Ɗantasha which the Bureau edited, and it was later published in 1990. The editing done by the Bureau deals with the extent to which the ideas in the books conform to the cultural, moral and orthographic standards of the Hausa society. It was purely voluntary for the authors.

The editing service provided by the Bureau did not go down well with many of the authors who were not happy with the way their ideas were tampered with. The Bureau was at pains to point out that as a government agency, they must ensure that whatever they endorse conforms to public ideals of morality, decency and behaviour. A deadlock was reached in which it was clear that there would be no effective synergy between the Bureau and the writers who approach it for advice. Many of the writers stopped approaching the Bureau, preferring to become independent, and relying on the public to either accept or rejects their works.

A way out came through a rather innocuous invitation by the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) to the Bureau to attend its annual conference in Niger State in 1991. This marked a turning point in the organized literary activities in Kano because the Bureau, armed with a copy of ANA Constitution, then contacted the numerous writers' clubs in Kano towards forming an umbrella organization which will form ANA Kano State. Eventually two main branches of ANA emerged in Kano. There is the English section which catered for English-language or dual format novelists (for instance Auwalu Hamza with *Love Path* and *Gidan Haya*). This section was eventually sponsored by the British Council which provided meeting rooms. The second section was the Hausa division which catered for the Hausa-language novelists and was certainly livelier since it tended to often focus attention on morality issues and literature, leading to heated debates. This was accepted by most of the writers and an election was held to choose the executives who will run the affairs of the Association.

In the same period, a disabled and wheelchair-bound seventeen-year-old youth, Baba Turado Ɗantata, had written two books — effectively making him the first motion-disabled Hausa to commit his works to modern writing. What made the two books remarkable was that despite added speech disability, Baba Turado was able to dictate his words to a typist. His first book was autobiographical *Cuta Ba Mutuwa Ba*, an anthem of hope and a celebration of the sanctity of life in which the author detailed the genesis of his disability and his desire to hang on to life. His second book was a collection of short stories, and was actually adapted from another book written by another author in Kano and which Baba Turado agreed to complete and extend. It was this book which the HCB wanted to launch to coincide with the formation of Kano ANA. Surajo Ɗantata bravely hanged on to life, but he tragically died in 1992.

However due to the high profile publicity given to book launching in Kano, the nascent ANA executive decided to instead launch a Hausa version of *The Muwatta of Imam Malik* - incidentally written by the newly-elected ANA president. To many observers and authors this was wrong as the ANA executive should not be seen to be promoting their

books at a clearly public forum. This led to a crisis of confidence in the Association and many simply stopped attending meetings. The Association was thus in a danger of dying when in 1995 Yusuf Adamu, a budding writer with *Idan So Cuta Ne* as his first book, came into the scene and initiated the formation of a caretaker committee, which later organized an election during which Yusuf Adamu became the Secretary of the Association. It was under this second casting of the Association that it was decided to hold a book fair to be called *Dandalin Marubuta* during which not only would the various books be sold, but also the public would have a chance to interact with the authors and ask them details of their writings. This fair, the first of its kind in Kano, was held in 1995.

HCB gave ANA an office in Gidan Dan Hausa complex, but its being located away from the city made it difficult for many of the writers to regularly attend the monthly meetings; as such the office was closed down after two years. The secretariat was relocated to the Kano State Library Board in the city where Maigari Ahmad Bichi, a former ANA Chairman, worked. Kano ANA was the only branch in Nigeria to cater for the two language formats in the beginning. Perhaps this was because Kano and Hausa writers generally have produced the largest amount of indigenous prose fiction of any ethnic group in the country.

However, on 25th May 2002, a group of about 90 writers belonging to ANA formed a break-away faction in Kano called *Hausa Writers Association of Nigeria* (HAWAN) under the leadership of Ibrahim Ahmed Daurawa (author of a bestselling novel, *Soyayya a Birnin Sarayebo* — the first Hausa novel to focus attention on the Bosnian ethnic conflict). HAWAN felt that the creative fiction industry was being exploited by booksellers, and that ANA seemed to be too cozy with them. Further, restriction of ANA activities to creative works prevent effective dialogue with other non-fiction Hausa writers, such as *ajami* writers who use Arabic script to write in the Hausa language, and prayer genre writers who write small pamphlets about various aspects of Islam in the Hausa language.

In other states in the north, few writers' clubs exist, and certainly none on the same grand scale as Kano's *Raina Kama* or *Kukan Kurciya*. For instance, the *Sudan Writers Association* (SWAK) was established on 19th December, 2001 in Kontogora, Niger State, which, at the time of its formation none of the members had a single book out in the market (Report on SWAK in *Marubuciya*, June 2002, p. 11. Kano). In Kaduna there was *Mikiya Writers' Association* (which published *Ruwan Dare* and *Da Kyar Na Sha* in 1996). Similarly, Zaria had *Himma Writers Association* under Abdullahi Yahaya Maizare, while Kebbi has *Kebbi Writers Association* under Idris Imam.

Thus Kano, with its huge and well-established commercial networks, coupled with its enhanced urban culture, became the main centre for the production of the new literature. It is indeed for this reason that the new Hausa novels were contemptuously referred by critics as *Adabin Kasuwar Kano*, or Kano Market Literature (for example Malumfashi

1994) — alluding to their market-driven nature, rather than structural flair and intellectual panache. This was also a sly comparison with the defunct *Onitsha Market Literature* which flourished around Onitsha Market in the early 1960s.

For years Kano held sway in the number and organization of new prose fiction writers. Some writers including Yusuf Adamu, Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino, Ali Ali, Dan Azumi Baba Chediyar 'Yan Gurasa established a literary Magazine named *Mujallar Zamani* around 1997,, it did not last however. Later two magazines came on board namley *Marubuciya* in January 2001, and *Wakiliya* in August 2002. Although epileptic, nevertheless they remain the only outlet for news, reviews and interviews on Contemporary Hausa Novel.

State Control and Creativity

By the mid-1990s, large urban centres in the North had become thriving publishing centres. Also the home video revolution, sparked off by Igbo and Yoruba filmmakers have created a creative outlet for the 1980s Hausa drama club members and script writers to seek financial support and realize their dreams of celluloid glory. In a decade of free expression, Hausa writers were entering their halcyon years of Freudian expressionism.

This did not go down well with society, as represented by the State Governments. In Kano, alarmed at the burgeoning availability of allegedly salacious books which will eventually be filmed as home videos, the Kano State Government set up a *Books and Films Production Control Agency* in 1996. The Agency was established principally to monitor the publishing of books and home videos and censor their contents, grade them appropriately for public consumption. This was to be backed by an edict which was drafted and sent to the Ministry of Justice for approval. The proposed *modus operandi* of the Agency, outlined at their first meeting held on December 3, 1996, was a script straight from an old Hollywood perception of a KGB manual, for it states,

> Strategies to be adopted include enlightenment campaigns, covert operations, use of Agency Informants and identification of Bookshops and film houses. Local Government Chairmen will also be intimated on the agency's assignment and will be forwarded a copy each, of the edict for clarification on the agency's work…Other strategies include identifying persons to appear on television to speak on books and films, writing Newspaper articles, making pamphlets and posters.

The Agency apparently made no attempts at systematically studying the phenomenon to determine its source, which should reveal its controls. The strident fire and brimstone sermons issued by various mosques in the 1990s about the corrupting influences of the new writings were accepted as a basis for a wire muzzle. A further insight was shed by the same minutes of the Agency at its first meeting in which the reasons behind the burgeoning publishing and home video phenomena were postulated:

> …One of the staff at KERD[2] Mall. Sanusi, who has been identified as a resource person was invited to the meeting to shed more light on the menace of the types of books and films under consideration. Mall. Sanusi explained that NNPC at Zaria doesn't publish at the moment paving way for less competent hands. Writers, he said, have financial backing from influential people. Also wives of important people in the society purchase these books in bulk thereby encouraging the writers and publishers and in the process are setting bad examples to the youth, because they imbibe what they read and see. He suggests inviting writers, Distributors and publishers to explain the state of things to them and encourage positive creativity by getting notable people like Mudi Spikin, Halilu Getso etc. to donate trophies to be competed for (ibid).

The History and Culture Bureau was co-opted into the Agency, but in an internal memo, the Bureau balked at its inclusion expressing its reservations by stating that

- ✧ The Bureau is already aware that it is charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating but not policing literary works in the State
- ✧ The HCB should suggest that ANA Kano State Chapter be allowed to collect manuscripts, evaluate and then send abstracts of respective works to the HCB for monitoring. All certified abstracts should then be sent to the Agency for final approval. A certificate of clearance should accompany each certified manuscript and it (the certificate) must be published on a page of the book
- ✧ All published books whose abstracts had earlier on been submitted for monitoring would be deposited at HCB by ANA. At this point, the HCB shall go through the books to confirm compliance with the rules of the Agency.
- ✧ In the event of breach of laws, ANA shall be held responsible

The offices allocated to ANA by HCB should be furnished and a staff of HCB be attached to serve as Office Secretary to carry out day-to-day administrative duties of the association (HCB 1996).

The Agency held a second, and last meeting on 17th December, 1996. The decree to control books and home video production was also never released by the Kano State Ministry of Justice. With the benefit of hindsight, it is not easy to see why a censure strategy such as an edict can control the production of books and films. This is because such processes were not state-supported; but efforts of individuals. As such unless the individuals themselves introduce a voluntary form of censure on their works, then state control would be quite ineffective.

Media Technologies and Hausa Visual Literature

Two aspects of media technology accelerated the development of the Contemporary

[2] Kano Educational Resource Department, an agency of the Kano State Ministry of Education.

Hausa Novel. First, was the wide-spread availability of cheap Personal Computer clones, and most importantly, the bundling of Windows 3.1 with its True type fonts in 1992. Second was the availability of cheap VHS cameras.

Prior to the arrival of cheap personal computers, Hausa novels were typeset on manual typewriters, and when electronic typewriters became available through Business centres (print shops that became common in mid-1990s) most of the authors quickly embraced the new technology. Crude, but effective. When the personal computer started making inroads, first via Amstrad PCW word processor in 1989, its crude courier font print out was seen as revolutionary. When "proper" IBM PC clone computers became affordable in about 1991 in Kano, the arrival of WordPerfect for DOS heralded another revolution which, when coupled with courier typeface and set at 10 point size, produced an effect like a book. However, the new novelists became overjoyed when Windows 3.1 became available in April 1992 and WordPad became the default "word processor" for most of the operators with its Arial font. Thus more novels were produced from 1993.

When in the early to mid-1990s the VHS camera became affordable, a whole new visual literature was created by the first crop of contemporary Hausa novelists. As Furniss (2003, p. 12) noted,

> One of the most remarkable cultural transitions in recent years has been this move from books into video film. Many of the stories in the books now known as Kano Market Literature or Hausa Popular Literature are built around dialogue and action, a characteristic that was also present in earlier prose writing of the 1940s and 1950s. Such a writing style made it relatively easy to work from a story to a TV drama, and a number of the Hausa TV drama series (*Magana Jari Ce*, for example) derived their story lines from texts. With the experience of staging comedies and social commentaries that had been accumulating in the TV stations and in the drama department of ABU, for example, it was not difficult conceptually to move into video film.

Yusuf Adamu was able to link a number of the new wave of Hausa novels with their transition to the visual medium. This list was expanded by the present author to incorporate new novels/films after the original study, as shown in Table 4.

When the new wave of Hausa writers started producing, in massive quantities, prose fiction interlaced with love stories and emotional themes, literary and textual critics started comparing their storylines with Hindi films, with accusations that they rip-off such films (Abbas, 1998). Thus the Hindi film *Romance* was claimed to be ripped-off as *Alkawarin Allah* by Aminu Adamu (Assada, 1994). By 1999 there were at least 453 of the novels in my database. By 2004, Furniss *et al* have listed 731 in their *Bibliography of Hausa popular fiction, 1987-2002*, and catalogues on companion website at https://goo.gl/5aVkHP.

Table 4: *Hausa Novels Adapted into Home Videos*

S/N	Author	Novel to Video
1.	Abba Bature	Auren Jari
2.	Abdul Aziz M/Gini	Idaniyar Ruwa
3.	Abubakar Ishaq	Da Kyar Na Sha
4.	Adamu Mohammed	Kwabon Masoyi
5.	Ado Ahmad G/Dabino	In Da So Da Ƙauna
6.	Aminu Aliyu Argungu	Haukar Mutum
7.	Auwalu Yusufu Hamza	Gidan Haya
8.	Bala Anas Babinlata	Tsuntsu Mai Wayo
9.	Balaraba Ramat	Alhaki Kwikwiyo
10.	Balaraba Ramat Yakubu	Ina Sonsa Haka
11.	Bashir Sanda Gusau	Auren Zamani
12.	Bashir Sanda Gusau	Babu Maraya
13.	Bilkisu Funtua	Ki Yarda Da Ni
14.	Bilkisu Funtua	Sa'adatu Sa'ar Mata
15.	Ɗan Azumi Baba	Na San A Rina
16.	Ɗan Azumi Baba	Idan Bera da Sata
17.	Ɗan Azumi Baba	(Bakandamiyar) Rikicin Duniya
18.	Ɗan Azumi Baba	Kyan Alkawari
19.	Halima B.H. Aliyu	Muguwar Kishiya
20.	Ibrahim M. K/Nassarawa	Soyayya Cikon Rayuwa
21.	Ibrahim Mu'azzam Indabawa	Boyayyiyar Gaskiya (Ja'iba)
22.	Kabiru Ibrahim Yakasai	Suda
23.	Kabiru Ibrahim Yakasai	Turmi Sha Daka
24.	Kabiru Kasim	Tudun Mahassada
25.	Kamil Tahir	Rabia
26.	M.B. Zakari	Komai Nisan Dare
27.	Maje El-Hajeej	Sirrinsu
28.	Maje El-Hajeej	Al'ajab (Ruhi)
29.	Muhammad Usman	Zama Lafiya
30.	Nazir Adamu Salihu	Naira da Kwabo
31.	Nura Azara	Karshen Kiyayya
32.	Zuwaira Isa	Kaddara Ta Riga Fata
33.	Zuwaira Isa	Kara Da Kiyashi

After Adamu (2002)

Critical Reaction

When in 1996 the Kano State government gave up any thoughts of censoring the books, at least on an active level, critical reaction and condemnation increased in the newspapers. Earlier in 1992 the first attack on the emerging genre was by Hawwa Ibrahim Sheriff, a writer (*Ba A Nan Take Ba*), in an interview with Ibrahim Sheme, published in *Nasiha*, 6th September 1991. In the interview, the fiery tempered writer attacked the then new crop of Hausa novelists as being one-track minded with a singular focus on *soyayya*. She urged for a new direction in Hausa prose fiction.

This critical theme was taken up by one of the most consistent critics of the genre, Ibrahim Malumfashi, in "*Akalar Rubutun Adabin Hausa Na Bukatar Sauyi*", published in *Nasiha*, Friday 15th November 1991. The article contained one of the most structural and earliest attacks on the new Hausa writings. Coming from a writer (Hausa *Wankan Wuta*; English, *From the Eyes of My Neighbour*), an academician, this particular essay conferred on the polemics of new Hausa writings some form of legitimate authority. Malumfashi accused the writers of being culturally irrelevant and suggests that there were themes for Hausa writers to work on, such as poverty, education, economic depravity, rather than romantic escapism which seemed to be the only focus of the new prose fiction writers.

The public perception of the new literature was not helped with the appearance of about 10 novels between 1998 and 2003 that seemed to fuel conservative apprehensive of the new genre. These were *Wane Kare Ne* (Balaraba Ramat Yakubu), *Kyan Ɗan Miciji* (Bilkisu Ahmed Funtuwa), *Matsayin Lover* (Al-Khamees Bature), *Ɗufana* (Ashabu Mu'azu Gamji), *Zata Iya* (Zuwaira Isa), *Malika* (Lubabah Ya'u), *Gajen Hakuri* (Maryam Kabir Abdullahi), *Auren Zahra* (Rabi Ado Bayero) *Komai Daɗin ki Da Miji* (Larabi) and *Sirrin Loba* (Kamalu Namowa Bichi).

All these novels have one central theme: descriptions of often explicit sexual or suggestive scenes. Two of them, *Matsayin Lover* (Al-Khamees Bature), *Sirrin Loba* (Kamalu Namowa Bichi) were the first Hausa novels to describe lesbian love, often, as in *Matsayin Lover*, rather explicitly, at least for a conservative society.

Ɗufana deals with a bizarre theme of attempting to find out which category of Hausa girls are most sexually deviant between those with Western education, and those without. The protagonists set themselves the task of practically finding out by having as many sexual relations as possible within a certain period, and with randomly picked sample girls from each category. *Matsayin Lover* is a study of how lesbian relationships form among Hausa girls in boarding schools, and how a network of influential women sustain the practice by enticing young girls into the ring.

ANA Hausa branch stepped in when these novels were released in 2000 and banned them. They became instant rarities, exchanging for about 10 times their cover price - and especially among girls! (Magaji Shitu, bookseller, personal communication, Kano, September 24, 2000). *Matsayin Loba* was banned in 2003 by booksellers who felt it had crossed the lines of decency. "An hana sayar da littafin *Sirrin Loba*, *Wakiliya*, No 3, April 2003, p. 15. Earlier novels such as *Wane Kare Ne*, *Kyan Ɗan Miciji*, and *Matsayin Lover* had the offending bits removed by the authors and second "clean" editions were printed. The controversies merely indicate the saber rattling that goes on when writers explore themes rather done than spoken about. Interestingly, about six of the writers of the "soft porn/naughty" novels are women.

Yet these are the only errant - if there is anything like that in creative writing - works in Hausa prose fiction. Even the apparent focus on *soyayya* by the authors was not as deep as would have been expected. Let me illustrate with an analysis of 453 novels from my database collection.

In a period spanning four years (1997 to 1999) a series of research assistants read as many as 453 novels with a guideline that enabled them to determine the central theme of each novel. Reading was made much easier by the average size of the novels which was about 40 to 50 pages. Two years was taken because many of the novels were in multiple volumes, and the readers had to wait for Part II of the novel before making a final decision. While not exactly scientific, nevertheless this gave a rough-and-ready guide to the predominant themes of the novels. The result is shown in Table 5.

The overwhelming tilt of the books towards *soyayya* as the central theme makes many critics and observers label such books *soyayya.* Yet from the database, it is clear that *soyayya* constitutes only 35% of the books. The rest of the 75% deals with other aspects of life. Figure 2 visually represents the data, limited to only the first five variables to simply the effect:

Table 5: *Contemporary Hausa Prose Fiction Themes*

Theme	**Number**
Romance	160
Various	79
Drama	77
Unclassified	56
Sword and Heroics	17
Sermonizing	15
Entertaining	8
Deception	7
Tussle/Disagreements	6
Co-wife jealousy	5
Resignation to Fate	4
Obedience to parents	4
Patience	4
Soft porn*	4
Political	3
Marriage	4
Total	**453**

* at the time of the study; there about 10 now.

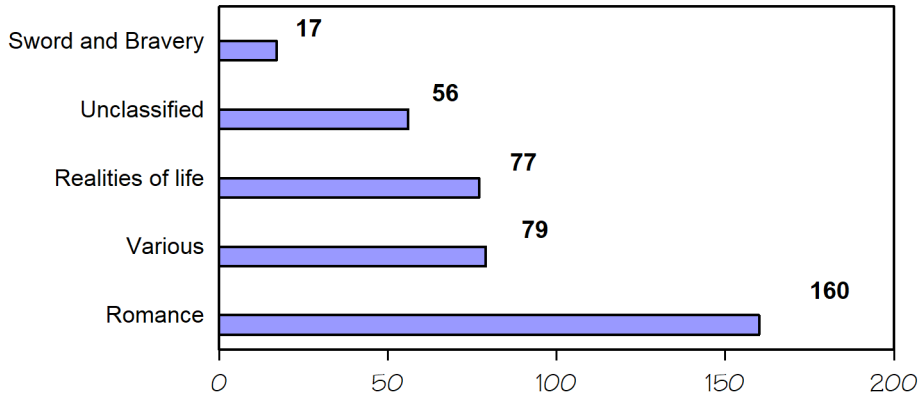

Figure 2: *Major themes of Contemporary Hausa Novels*

Since there are two categories of "unclassified" and "various", it is of course likely that more titles would fit into one or more of the other clearly defined categories. So this classification should be taken as fairly loose.

A further limitation of this categorization is that the determination of the central theme is purely personal; another researcher may place the emergence of more emphasis on one theme that the one given here. For instance, Bala Anas Babinlata's *Da Ko Jika?* is, on the surface, a *soyayya* story. Yet a closer analysis reveals it as a deeply moralizing novel that warns of the consequences of monetary greed.

Perhaps the biggest accusation against the books, and which manifests itself in many of the odd 160 *soyayya* themed novels is that of empowering girls to voice out a personal choice in marriage. This is seen as *rashin kunya* (impertinence) or lack of *kawaici* (reticence) and therefore outside the scope of *Tarbiyar Bahaushe (*pulaaku). In the archetypal Hausa society, girls forced to marry a man they do not love, are expected to show *hakuri* (endurance) until they eventually get used to the man (or the woman, as the case may be, since there are cases of boys being forced to marry girls they do not love).

For example, of the same catalogue of roughly 453 books (as of December 1999), only about 160 (36%) use *soyayya* as the main theme (for example Halima Salisu Sidi's *Kasaitacciyar Soyayya*, 1997). That leaves about 283 (64%) dealing with other issues. Of these, at least 77 deal with day-to-day lives — captured live on a literary camera (for instance Dan'azumi Baba C/Yangurasa's *Idan Bera Da Sata,* 1993).

Other themes covered by the writers included (with one example each): deception (Salisu Yusuf Salihi's *Maza Masu Wuyar Sha'ani*, 1995) sword and bravery (Babangida Abdu's *Gugan Karfe*, 1995), life in marriage (Jamila Ibrahim Nabature's *Ba A Raba Hanta Da Jini*, 1999), perseverance (Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino's *Kaicho!* 1996), fate (Mansur Ibrahim Birnin Kuka's *Haka Allah Ya So*, 1996), crime and punishment (Aminu Umar's

Ban Ji Ba Ban Gani Ba, 1999), greed (Nazir Adam Salihi, *Me Ya Fi Kuki?*, 1998), tribalism (Balaraba Ramat Yakubu's *Badriyya*, 1997) friendship (Bala Anas Babinlata's *Rashin Sani*, 1994), comedy (Kabiru Ibrahim Yakasai's *Suda*, 1994), obedience to parents (Bara'atu Muhammad's *Kowa Ya Ki Ji Ba Zai Ki Gani Ba*, 1995) betrayal of trust (Ahmad Musa Anka's *Zakaran Da Allah Ya Nufa Da Cara*, 1996), moralizing (Balarabe Abdullahi's *Idan Kasan Wata*, 1997), detective (Yusif Gwangwazo's *Yallabai*, 1998), steadfastness (Hafsat Umar Dange's *Hakuri Amintaccen Ciniki*, 1997), allegory (Abubakar Balarabe's *Tsunsu Duka Tsuntsu Ne*, 1999), obedience (Kabiru Ibrahim's *Yabanya* (1999), and many others.

Conclusion

The development of indigenous language literature among the Hausa of northern Nigeria and the support given to the growth of such literature by organized groups and literary societies heralds one of the post significant developments in postcolonial African literature, albeit in a radically different form from the direction postcolonial theorists of African indigenous literature, such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (example 1986) would have expected, even though he stated 'from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name in any African language, one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people' (Ngũgĩ 1986, p. 8).

However, Hausa indigenous language novelists did not set out to prove or disprove postcolonial theory, but have unwittingly contributed to a discourse in African postcolonial literature, if such literature is assumed to be inwards and not catalysed by imposed colonial forces. Devoid of concerns of race, imperialism, politics, independence, hegemony, identity and other tropes of post-coloniality, Hausa indigenous literature looked inwards and created an emotional canvas that enables it to paint its pains, without any allusions of intellectual grandeur or philosophical messaging. Indeed, analysed deeply, it is subversive literature aimed at a subterranean disagreement with established social orders of power and control, and demands gender balancing and choices. In this way, it is as ideological as any postcolonial exposition for it fights an internal colony of conformity.

The comparison to 'Onitsha Market Literature' was a device to demean and deconstruct its significance in contemporary Nigerian literary discourse. The Onitsha Market Literature, as well documented (Obiechina 1973), refers to a literary and commercial process around the city of Onitsha in the present Anambra State of Nigeria. A combination of 'commerce, Christianity, and colonialism created a lucrative climate for the African printing presses which sprang up throughout Onitsha in the 1940s and 1950s for the production of reports, greetings cards, headed stationery, exercise books, invoice books, and pamphlets by local authors' (Newell 2006, p. 104). Their simplicity, the lowly educational background of most of the writers (most not exceeding high school) and over-riding preoccupation with the singular theme of love all combine to earn critical scorn and dismissal as non-literature.

The Onitsha Market Literature books were quite short, and dealt with a variety of subjects from love, crime, manuals on how to write love letters. This started out in 1947 with Cyprian Ekwensi's 'When Love Whispers'. The Onitsha writings have two distinct characteristics: a fascination with westernized urban life and the desire to warn the newly arrived against the corruption and dangers that accompany it. Typical titles are *Rose Only Loved My Money*, *Drunkards Believe Bar as Heaven*, *Why Some Rich Men Have No Trust in Some Girls*, and *How to Get a Lady in Love*. Sentimental novelettes, political tracts, and "how to" guides on writing love letters, handling money, and attaining prosperity all have achieved great commercial success at Onitsha market.

Emmanuel Obiechina, in his ground-breaking treatise on Onitsha Market Literature and focusing on its love theme, suggests, erroneously, that 'the mutual relationship, the state which is recognized as 'being in love', receives much functional emphasis within the Western cultural tradition, and had hardly emphasis at all within the African cultural tradition until contact between Africa and the West altered the situation.' (Obiechina 1973, p. 32). This may be dubiously true of the society the Onitsha Market Literature reflects, but it certainly does not reflect Hausa societies with entrenched tradition of romance long before contact with any outsiders. This alone is enough to differentiate Hausa indigenous literature with Onitsha Market Literature, for the latter was attempting to clone Western ideas of the ideal life; while the former is replying an ethnographic picture of its life.

It is clear therefore that there is a huge difference between Hausa prose fiction writers — of whatever generation — and other Nigerian, and indeed African writers. While Nigerian writers tended to focus on the dynamics of life in terms of politics, society and economy — attributes which crossed-over to the Nigerian home video in the 1990s, — Muslim Hausa youth focus predominantly, though not exclusively, on psychological issues of search for self-identity and reaffirmation in a traditional society.

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