

Tarbiyar Bahaushe, Mutumin Kirki and Hausa Prose Fiction: Towards an Analytical Framework

Abdalla Uba Adamu
Department of Mass Communication
Bayero University, Kano, NIGERIA

Department of English and European Languages, Bayero University Kano,
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Introduction

This paper is a foray into critical theory, with particular emphasis on literary criticism. The objective of the paper is to generate debate that will lead to the development, application and acceptance (for the meantime!) of an instrument that can be used as an analytical framework for Hausa prose fiction.

The first bone of contention is: why create yet another framework, when the literary critical field is replete with a series of tried and tested frameworks? In other words, we could use the existing benchmarks for valuing literature, in particular prose fiction, and apply them to Hausa literature. For instance, carefully articulated methods of literary criticism have laid by notable 20th Century European literary critics: the macabre American Edgar Allan Poe, the biographical approach of the French Charles Augustine Sainte-Beuve; the French positivist, Hippolyte Adolphe Taine; the radical Russian university drop-out, Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky; the British culture snob, Matthew Arnold; the British Victorian economists (a one time editor of *The Economist*), Walter Bagehot; the British Humanist, Walter Peter (advocate of “art for art’s sake”); the Cambridge Psychologist Ivor Armstrong Richards^{1 2}(founder of New Criticism); and British George Saintsbury. Can’t we simply study their critical styles and apply them to Hausa prose fiction?

I am not sure this approach will yield the desired results simply because of the lack of interface connectivity between the existing literary critical methods and Hausa prose fiction. The current and conventional methods were developed for a body of literature with a different mindset from that of Hausa, and as such while the prose fiction may share generalized format (e.g. style, character, plot, setting, narrative method, and scope) in varying degrees, the intended audience for Anglo-American fiction differs from that of the Hausa writer. It is principally for this reason that I feel we need to evolve a literary critical framework rooted in the mindset of the audience of the Hausa prose fiction writer.

The ideal of objective research — itself derived from developments in science — has continued to guide Anglo-American literary scholarship and criticism and has prompted work of unprecedented accuracy. Bibliographic procedures have been revolutionized; historical scholars, biographers, and historians of theory have placed criticism on a sounder basis of factuality. Important contributions to literary

¹ *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923; with C.K. Ogden), a pioneer work on semantics; and *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929), companion volumes developing his critical method.

understanding have meanwhile been drawn from *anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, and psychoanalysis*.

The totality of Western criticism in the 20th century defies summary except in terms of its restless multiplicity and factionalism. Schools of literary practice, such as Imagism, Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism, have found no want of defenders and explicators. Ideological groupings, psychological dogmas, and philosophical trends have generated polemics and analysis, and literary materials have been taken as primary data by sociologists and historians. Literary creators themselves have continued to write illuminating commentary on their own principles and aims. In poetry, Paul Valéry, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens; in the theatre, George Bernard Shaw, Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht; and in fiction, Marcel Proust, D.H. Lawrence, and Thomas Mann have contributed to criticism in the act of justifying their art.

Hausa Prose Fiction in the 21st Century: The Millennium Generation

Since 1997, there had been “titanic” critical battles in the field of indigenous imaginative literature in Northern Nigeria. Since the emergence of a new crop of Hausa language novelists from 1980, the trickle had turned into a flood. As of last count in June 2000, there were over 600 novels written in Hausa language. This, without any doubt, must rank surely as one of the largest concentration of indigenous fiction in Nigeria.

This has led to the development of reading culture among Hausa youth, and also spawned off subsidiary and related areas of youth concern: the prayer genre, for instance, is also one of the fastest developing literature genres in the North, a process which sees the writing, printing, distribution and sale of hundreds of books and pamphlets on all aspects of Islam. A second genre that has been spawned by the stimulus of literary activities is among the Hausa youth is the screenplay, leading to the home video production.

All these activities were not without criticism from both government agencies and the religious establishment in Northern Nigeria. Many private individuals have also expressed concern and often scorn about the emergence of the contemporary Hausa prose fiction genre. By the far the most consistent argument has been the moral arguments that these books corrupt the minds of their readers. This is a view strongly proposed by, for instance, Muhammad Mujtaba Abubakar³ in the privately published *Litattafan Soyayya a Ma'aunin Hankali Da Na Shari'a (The Rational and Islamic Legal Status of Soyayya Novels; School of Business and Publish Administration, The Polytechnic, Kebbi, 1999)*. Claiming to have read 23 contemporary Hausa novels, yet the author could only cite one scene (two letters written by lovers to each other) as evidence of inducement to illicit sex (in *Idan Da So Da Kauna* by Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino). The context of the letters was never revealed by the critic.

Thus it is not clear what “corrupt” means. It is also not made clear by the critics the share of corruption these novels should acquire among the other possible corrupting influences in the society. For instance, irresponsible parenting, peer influence, lack of personal control, abuse of trust by adults to youth, joblessness, malaise, and others are

³ Abubakar, Muhammad Mujtaba (1999) *Litattafan Soyayya a Ma'aunin Hankali Da Na Shari'a (The Rational and Islamic Legal Status of Soyayya Novels; School of Business and Publish Administration, The Polytechnic, Kebbi,)*.

all contributory factors to corrupting the youth, if by corruption we mean creating deviant behavior from standard social norms.

The Analytical Framework

To generate my analytical framework, I first ask: what constitutes “tarbiyya” (good upbringing) in Hausa social universe? The answer is fairly obvious. I did not use variables from religion (Hadith and the Holy Qur’an) for obvious reasons. The entire religion of Islam is a blueprint for *Tarbiyya*, and is simply too concentrated as an application to Hausa prose fiction. And as will be revealed later, any source of *Tarbiyyar Bahause* will have direct link to Islam, which is the matrix of life and behavior for the Muslim Hausa.

Thus by linking the analytical framework to individual behavior traits (i.e. *Tarbiyya*), I am seeking to embed my proposed analytical framework within the *sociology matrix of literary criticism*. I therefore argue that within the mindset of the Hausa Fulani (if such variable can eventually be refined), the sociological function of imaginative literature evokes more critical reaction than other possible variables of literary critical inquiry (e.g. psychoanalysis, anthropology, stylistics, etc).

Thus in the Hausa universe, *Tarbiyya* is coded *moral education* and *good manners*, and the expected target of alleged corruption of the Hausa contemporary novels, especially those written by youth from 1980. To further refine the analytical framework, we need to identify the elements of *tarbiyya*, and see what exactly we are corrupting when writing imaginative literature in Hausa.

In this regard, a good starting point for the analytical framework is provided by Anthony H.M. Kirk-Greene, in the Third Annual Hans Wolff Memorial Lecture delivered on April 11, 1973 at the University of Indiana, in the lecture which he titled *Mutumin Kirki: The Concept of the Good Man in Hausa*. In Kirk-Greene’s classification, there are at least ten attributes of a classical *Mutumin Kirki* in Hausa. These are:

1. *Gaskiya* (truth)
2. *Amana* (strictly friendliness, but used to refer to trust)
3. *Karamci* (open-handed generosity)
4. *Hakuri* (patience/perseverance)
5. *Hankali* (good sense)
6. *Kunya* (bashfulness)
7. *Ladabi* (courtesy)
8. *Mutumci* (self-esteem)
9. *Hikima* (wisdom)
10. *Adalci* (scrupulous behavior)⁴

⁴ Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. *Mutumin Kirki: The Concept of the Good Man in Hausa*. The Third Annual Hans Wolff Memorial Lecture, prepared by the African Studies Program, Indian university, Bloomington, Indiana, 1974. The lecture itself was delivered on April 11 1973. I acknowledge, with gratitude, the later Late Mal. Abdullahi Umar Kafin-Hausa of the Center for Study of Nigerian Language, BUK Kano for pointing out this reference to me.

This, surely cannot be all there is to *Tarbiyyar Bahause*. so I set about looking for more variables to add to my moral shopping basket.

A second source of analytical framework is provided by Habib Alhassan, Usman Ibrahim Musa and Rabi’u Muhammad Zarruk, in their *Zaman Hausawa* (privately published, 1982, Zaria as Alhassan et al 1983) who also provided further refinements of *Tarbiyar Bahause* where they identified about twelve behavioral characteristics of *Tarbiyar Hausawa* including:

1. *Mua’amala* (sociability: relaxed, interacts with people, friendly)
2. *Ladabi da biyayya* (respect self and respects others; also considerate of others, both older and younger)
3. *Kunya da kara* (modesty, self-deprecation, humble, acknowledges others’ opinion over his own)
4. *Zumunta* (community spirit)
5. *Rikon addini* (adhering to religious tenets and being guided by them with attributes such as truth)
6. *Gaskiya* (fairness)
7. *Dattako* (gentlemanliness)
8. *Adalci* (scrupulous behavior)
9. *Kawaici* (tactfulness)
10. *Rashin tsegumi* (no idle talk)
11. *Kama sana’a* (engaging one in gainful employment)
12. *Juriya da jarumta* (fortitude, courage and bravery).⁵

Alhassan et al’s classification, of course, is more comprehensive than that of Kirk-Greene. Yet the variations in the codes are merely academic for there are so many conceptual overlaps. *Rikon Addini*, as given by Alhassan et al, for instance, encapsulates all the over 17 categories, yet this code was not acknowledged by Kirk-Greene. A summary of the two codes is given in Table 1:

Table 1: *Tarbiyar Bahause Mutumin Kirki: Code 1*

Kirk-Greene	Alhassan et al
1. Gaskiya	1. Mua’amala
2. Amana	2. Ladabi da biyayya
3. Karamci	3. Kunya da kara
4. Hafuri	4. Zumunta
5. Hankali	5. Rikon addini
6. Kunya	6. Gaskiya
7. Ladabi	7. Dattako
8. Mutumci	8. Kawaici
9. Hikima	9. Adalci
10. Adalci	10. Rashin tsegumi
	11. Kama sana’a
	12. Juriya da jarumta

⁵ Habib Alhassan et al, *Zaman Hausawa*. Privately published in 1982, Zaria. The book was a primer written for post-primary schools.

If we can combine the two frameworks, we can perhaps come up with a unified scale of measuring *Tarbiyar Bahause* from these two secondary (their primary antecedents being Islam) sources, as in Table 2:

Table 2: *Tarbiyar Bahause Mutumin Kirki: Summary*

Tarbiyar Bahause Codes		
<i>Kirk-Greene</i>	<i>Alhassan et al</i>	<i>Common</i>
1. Amana	7. Mua'amala	15. Gaskiya
2. Karamci	8. Zumunta	16. Kunya
3. Hakuri	9. Rifon addini	17. Adalci
4. Hankali	10. Dattako	18. Ladabi
5. Mutumci	11. Kawaici	
6. Hikima	12. Rashin tsegumi	
	13. Kama sana'a	
	14. Juriya da jarumta	

It is interesting that at least 18 categories of behavior emerged from this loose classification. In the two categories, only Gaskiya, Kunya, Adalci and Ladabi were repeated, as indicated in the table.

I will not go into the structural, field or sociological validity of these codes, for as I said, this is meant as a *rough-and-ready guide*, rather than an exact instrument. So far, to the best of my knowledge, this seems to be the first instrument aimed at measuring the themes and contents of contemporary Hausa novels, and is therefore very much a first draft. As we use it repeatedly we may need to refine it to include other behaviors as may, although inconceivably, evolve in the Hausa social universe in the future. Indeed, it is my hope that other researchers will find faults with this scale and come up with a different one — either way, we move away from being arm-chair critics to field researchers, linking possible effects of literature on social outcomes.

Even before field-testing these codes, there are unresolved questions. For instance, although they could be argued as reflecting the “gentlemanly” Hausa behavior, nevertheless they were rooted in times and periods of Hausa social development which differs significantly from the current clime. Kirk-Greene’s codes, for instance, would seem to reflect a colonial image of Northern Nigeria of the 1930s and 1940s. Similarly, Alhassan et al’s codes would also seem to be derived from Northern Nigeria of 1950s and 1960s. With increasing social mobility and cross-cultural influences, it could be argued that there is a subtle change of behavior in Hausa youth in 1980s and 1990s, much as youth all over the world radically changed their societies. Indeed the mere fact that Hausa literature after 1980s seemed to have a singular focus on inter-personal relationships would indicate a transformation of the Hausa youth mindset towards the end of the last century.

However, as I pointed out, I was basically interested in creating a rough-and-ready code of behavior of a typical of Hausa *mutumin kirki* with a good *tarbiyya*. And I want to use such code of behavior as a measuring scale to value the general themes of Hausa prose fiction, and at a latter stage, use the scale against specific texts in order to determine the extent of the deviance or adherence to, these codes of behavior.

By successively reading as many as possible and extracting as much of these behavioral attitudes as possible, we can be in a better position to pass judgments about Hausa prose literature.

Methodology

Having determined a map, my next target is a destination. As of last count, I have about 453 contemporary Hausa novels in my database. The methodology involves categorizing the books according to their central theme, although acknowledging the multiple themes of many of novels. This is the first stage of the analysis covered in this draft instrument. I must emphasize that at this stage I am not in a position to actually field-test the instrument in the form of structural or stylistic analysis of the novels.

Results

General Trend

The results of the survey are summarized in Tables 3 which lists the number of the *most common themes* for the novels in the database.

Table 3: Contemporary Hausa Prose Fiction Themes

Theme	Number
Soyayya	160
Various	79 ⁶
Zaman Duniya	77
Unclassified	56
Jarumtaka	17
Fadakarwa	15
Nishadi	8
Yaudara	7
Rikici	6
Kishi	5
Kaddara	4
Bin Iyaye	4
Hakuri	4
Tsagoron Batsa	4 ⁷
Siyasa	3
Matsalar Aure	4

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. Since there are two categories of “unclassified” and “various”, it is of

⁶ The various themes are given in Appendix I.

⁷ The four are: *Matsayin Lover* (Alkhamees Bature Makwarari), *Wane Kare Ne Ba Bare Ba?* (Balaraba Ramat Yakubu), *Kyan Dan Maciji* (Bilkisu Ahmad Funtuwa), and *Dufana* (Ashab Gamji). *Matsayin Lover* and *Kyan Dan Maciji* were re-written to remove the sexual bits, while *Dufana* was banned by the Hausa section of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Kano Branch in 1999 when the book first appeared. *Wane Kare Ne Ba Bare Ba?* is completely out of print, although not specifically banned.

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 than 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.

Of the over 400 novels in the database, I could only detect four that have clearly sexual overtones in them. Of the four, *Matsayin Lover* is the most controversial because it deals with lesbian relationships – the first Hausa-language novel to dwell on such theme. The furor created by the novel was so loud that the author, Alkamees Bature Makwarari (now a Hausa home video actor and a singer as well) was persuaded to retrieve the book and re-print it censoring the offending pages.

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*, or lack of *kawaici*, and therefore outside the scope of *Tarbiyar Bahause*. In the archetypal Hausa society, girls forced to marry a man they do not love, are expected to show *hakuri* 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).

Conclusion

It would be admitted, first of all, that works of literature can teach valuable moral lessons through explicit presentation: the genre that has this as its aim is didactic literature, as exemplified by *Gandoki* (1933, M. Bello Kagara), *Shehu Umar* (1933, A.A. Tafawa Balewa).

But most works of literature do not exist to teach a moral lesson: the moral lessons, as it were, in *Jiki Magayi* and *Kitsen Rogo* are so completely transparent that they don't exist. J. Tafida and R. East's *Jiki Magayi* (1933) preaches intolerance and encourages the bloodthirsty appetite for revenge. Abdulkadir Dangambo's *Kitsen Rogo* (1979) wants its readers to believe that anyone who leaves his environment (in this case, a village) for another, is doomed to become a murderous villain. It evokes powerful comparison with *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

Literature does teach but in a far more important way than by explicit preaching: it teaches by being, not by express intent. It achieves this moral effect by presenting characters and situations (usually situations of difficult moral decision) through which the reader can deepen his own moral perspectives by reflecting on other people's problems and conflicts, which usually have a complexity that his own daily situations do not possess. He can learn from them without himself having to undergo in his personal life the same moral conflicts or make the same moral decisions. The reader can view such situations with a detachment that he can seldom achieve in daily life when he is immersed in the stream of action. By viewing these situations objectively and reflecting on them, he is enabled to make his own moral decisions more wisely when life calls on him in turn to make them. Literature can be a stimulus to moral

reflection unequalled perhaps by any other, for it presents the moral choice in its total context with nothing of relevance omitted.

Perhaps the chief moral potency of literature lies in its unique power to stimulate and develop the faculty of the imagination. Through literature the reader is carried beyond the confines of the narrow world that most persons inhabit into a world of thought and feeling more profound and more varied than his own, a world in which he can share the experiences of human beings (real or fictitious) who are far removed from him in space and time and in attitude and way of life. Literature enables him to enter directly into the affective processes of other human beings, and, having done this, no perceptive reader can any longer condemn or dismiss en masse a large segment of humanity as “foreigners” or “wastrels,” for a successful work of literature brings them to life as individuals, animated by the same passions as he is, facing the same conflicts, and tried in the same crucible of bitter experience. Through such an exercise of the sympathetic imagination, literature tends to draw all men together instead of setting them apart from one another in groups or types with convenient labels for each. Far more than preaching or moralizing, more even than the descriptive and scientific discourses of psychology or sociology, literature tends to unite mankind and reveal the common human nature that exists in everyone behind the facade of divisive doctrines, political ideologies, and religious beliefs.

Appendix I: ‘Other’ Themes of Contemporary Hausa Prose Fiction Writers

1.	Kabilanci	43.	Jarumtaka
2.	Karya	44.	Karatun Zamani
3.	Karyar Samari	45.	Kuskure
4.	Kin Gaskiya	46.	Laifi
5.	Kissar mata	47.	Lalacewa
6.	Kiyayya	48.	Makirci
7.	Kwadayi	49.	Makircin Mata
8.	Abokantaka	50.	Matsalar aure
9.	Aikata Laifi	51.	Miyagun Halaye
10.	Aiki da hankali	52.	Mu’amula
11.	Aikin ‘yan sanda	53.	Mugunta
12.	Alkawari	54.	Muhimmancin Ilimi
13.	Aljanu	55.	Munafunci
14.	Almara	56.	Rashin Alkawari
15.	Amfanin Ilmi	57.	Rashin Gaskiya
16.	Auratayya	58.	Rashin Sani
17.	Auren zamani	59.	Rashin Tunani
18.	Bandariya	60.	Rayuwa
19.	Butulci	61.	Rayuwar ‘Yanmata
20.	Cin Amana	62.	Rayuwar aure
21.	Dangin miji	63.	Rayuwar aure
22.	Fansa	64.	Rayuwar Bahause
23.	Gargadi	65.	Ruwan ido
24.	Gaskiya	66.	Sarauta
25.	Gulma	67.	Satar yara
26.	Halin mutane	68.	Son Duniya
27.	Hankalta	69.	Son Kudi
28.	Hannunka mai sanda	70.	Tarbiya
29.	Hassada	71.	Tarbiyya
30.	Hatsari	72.	Tarihin Kano
31.	Iya Zance	73.	Tauhidi
32.	Jan girma		
33.	Wa’azi		
34.	Wariyar Launin Fata		
35.	Wasa Da Aure		
36.	Wulakanci		
37.	Yaƙin Zamani		
38.	Zaluncin Sarakuna		
39.	Tsibbu		
40.	Tsoratarwa		
41.	Waƙoƙi		

Note: All the themes here deal with the consequences of the themed behavior. A careful survey of the themes will therefore reveal virtually most of the coded elements of *Tarbiyar Bahause* as the manifestation of *Mutumin Kirki*.