

## **Onitsha Market Literature in Language and Literary Development of Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** *Literature plays a major role in society and the importance of literature in educational and socio-cultural development in Nigeria is noteworthy. Onitsha market literature has been a paradigm of literary development in Nigeria. This paper principally explicates the content, themes, diction, and other literary techniques in Onitsha market literature to enable scholars from other backgrounds to understand the literary works of the era and environment as the cradle of African pre-independence written literature in English. The paper discusses the origin, the general background, as well as factors that aided the growth and spread of this popular literature for the masses. The paper equally examines the remarkable role of the geographical location of Onitsha market and the influence of Onitsha market literature in literary development of Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Language, Literature, Social Responsibility.*

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Date of Submission: 22-05-2020

Date of Acceptance: 09-06-2020

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Onitsha market literature was a phase of literature that emerged and flourished in the Nigerian literary scene by the end of the Second World War. It came as a spate of popular pamphleteering which later became a unique and flourishing phenomenon in the West African literary scene. The literary works came in pamphlets of not more than 20 pages each. Later, some increased in pages. Onitsha Market literature is therefore that of the people, by the people and for the people. It is preoccupied with the new ways of life in society with new culture, values and new desires. It marked a point of transaction from writing in Igbo language to writing in English.

[1] notes that the first pamphlets in the Onitsha Market Literature series were published in 1947. According to Obiechina, Tabansi Bookshop, a local book-selling and publishing company published the first two pamphlets written by Cyprian Ekwensi – Ikolo “The Wrestler and other Igbo Tales” and “When love whispers”. The production of the pamphlets soon involved many people due to the various functions, authors, promoters, publishers, printers and distributors. It became a booming industry and spread from Onitsha to Aba, Enugu, Port-Harcourt, Sapele Lagos, Ibadan and many other places beyond the Eastern part of Nigeria.

[2] describes the source of emergence of Onitsha market Literature as:

... as series of parallel social needs and situations – urbanization increased African female and the new bourgeoisie world with its new value system-part African, part western, in addition, the emergence of this unique literature in Nigeria creature scene was a result of the cultural, socio-political technological, commercial, socio-political technological, commercial, commercial and geographical lures. p.24

The cultural outlook and aptitude of the Igbos who are the pioneers of this literature helped in its rise. The Igbos naturally have egalitarian and achievement-oriented culture. This acumen of theirs facilitated this literary venture. Thus, Onitsha market literature is a product of the exploration of their new experience which was prompted by their psycho-cultural dynamic and adventurous spirit. It is pertinent to mention the activities of Igbo elites like Nwafo Orizu, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Mbonu Ojike who contributed to the upsurge of this pamphlet literature. These American-trained graduates employed their knowledge, skill and expertise to promote education by setting up private commercial schools and newspapers such as Ojike Commercial School, Orland Azikiwe’s “West African Pilot” which became training grounds for some of the pamphlet [3]. In addition to these, Onitsha Market literature emanated due to rechanneling of energy and money formerly devoted to world-war activities to commercial, technological, and industrial developments.

### **II. AUTHORSHIP**

The authors of the Onitsha Market Literature are, like most other creative writers in West Africa, amateurs rather than professionals. They have full-time occupations from which they earn their living. Writing for them was a highly prestigious pastime. To most of the pamphlet writers, the desire to be published far outstrips the consideration of monetary reward. The same attitude to authorship is evident in the editorial opinion of the Nigerian Authors’ magazine which was established by a group of pamphlet authors to oversee and edit the works of their members in order to immoral material, aching, unartistic and flowery manuscripts. A

large member of the authors were school teachers, local printing press owners, book sellers, and a considerable number were journalists, railway men, clerks, traders, artisans, farmers and even grammar school boys. The school boys sometimes write under false names when they have the support and sympathy of their teachers.

The authors are often in need of support and advice from their better educated friends and kinsmen who reinforce such support and advice by supplying more or less commendatory prefaces and forewords to unfinished works. Other valuable sources of advice and encouragement for the young authors are their writers' associations and the publishers themselves. At its peak the pamphlets activity assumed the form of a minor industry.

### III. LANGUAGE AND DICTION

For a piece of artistic literature to have a national audience, it has to be written in English which is the official language and language of instruction of our country, Nigeria. Some of the authors had language problems in their wish and anxiety for the content of their literary works to be for national audience. Some of the authors of this literature who did not have adequate formal education tried to make the English language serve their needs for the content of their works to be for Nigerian audience. This often results in their using the pidgin which depicted realistic setting and characterisation [4].

The authors had no regard for grammatical rules in their quest for simplification as seen in Nathan Njoku's 'Life with His Highness'. King Johnson the Second. He threatens his servant warning him to keep off his family "I told you one day, I will cut off that your thing with a knife". "That" in this quotation is a kind of repetition. You cannot use "that" and "your", in the same sentence. The servant acclaims his innocence of his role in the flirtation by saying: "When I said no, some of your wives started to hate me". This sentence is a translation from Igbo to English.

The authors borrowed heavily from other writers without regard to plagiarism, with their high-sounding prose reminiscent of the eighteenth century English prose. In Udegbunem Anya's *Finally Disappointed* the protagonist on refusing Mr. Abe's affection sparks off the poet in him "oh love! Oh love by which the goddess, Athene soothes the heart of the thundering ...."

The authors also sometimes presented works written with colourful and idiomatic expressions with malapropism. In Ogali's *Veronica Mv Daughter*, we see Bomber Billy regalling veronica's brothers with the story of his accident thus:

"As I was descending from declivity yesterday with an excessive velocity I suddenly lost the centre of my gravity and was precipitated on mecademized thoroughfare"

The main language featuring in the *Onitsha Market Literature* was pidgin English.

In 'Veronica Mv Daughter'. Veronica's father says: "What kind trouble dis be, my daughter get strong ear too much, I flogam fine, no change...." (V.M.D.P. 142). The same linguistic tendency is also found in R. Okonkwo's *The Game of Love* in the scene between Chief Bombay and his daughter, Agnes asking for consent for her marriage, he refuses in the following statement:

"Wetin you de say my pi kin?

Who been that man?

Wetin be love?

You no go maham... make you forget that man... Doctor Hope go marry you..." (p.626)

Some writers who were influenced by American films used America's slangs in their writings. In J. A. Okeke's *Anyiche's Nobody's Business*, the protagonist mimicked the all American man:

"Men, I am telling you what it means to be a guy.

Maybe a good lot of you appreciate what it means to be a real tough, crankyu swell level headed kind of guy... (O.M.L. 39).

The diction used in *Onitsha Market Literature* was generally simple because it was written for the masses, educated and semi-literate class, etc. This was to aid in understanding in the reader. Another factor responsible for this simplicity was the authors' ability to just write anything for publication in order to be famous. The authors however had one aim which was to mirror the problems of the society, write on them and dig up solutions to some problems, advice to some and to teach morals at the end of the day. They also knew that their readers were not literates but traders, clerks, servants, etc.

#### **IV. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Very little literature exists on this subject because very little has been published about people's view of Onitsha market literature. [5] argues that this African popular literature is an integral of unique and startling part of the West African creative scenes. Obiechina goes on to remark that these vices from the book stall of a Nigerian market enhance our understanding of other cultural contexts and provide valuable perspectives on a wide range of themes.

[6] states that:

The success of Onitsha Market Literature and many of the authors lies in their closeness to their subjects and their audience. They know what their audience wants; they, too are part of the audience and they share the same problems and in the mode of expression, they also know how to put things to catch the interest of the audience (Vol. 4, No 19:2).

#### **Content**

The scope of the market pamphlets is very wide. Though a few appear in vernacular, the great majority was written in English. The English ones are much more widely known because they are much more accessible to a large cross-section of the multi-lingual reading public. Though the best known pamphlets are fiction, a large body of the popular writing is not functional at all but it deals with various factual subjects and social philosophy.

Some pamphlets teach the technique of examinations others provide advice for young men and women on how to cope with the problems of modern life, advice which ranges from how to make a success of a man's economic activity to how to launder clothes. Some pamphlets contain local history, collections of folktales, proverbs and anecdotes. The fictional ones comprise novelettes (often wrongly labelled 'novels' by the authors) dramas based on love and marriage incidents, or about important African nationalist and major political events surrounding them. Others carry tales of adventure and wonder. By far the largest group of fictional pamphlets are those which deal with love situation and marriage. Most of them focused on love relationships.

One could not savour a fair cross-section of the market pamphletss without being acutely aware, as many known commentators have since found out that the pamphlet literature is both a product of the contemporary social and cultural situation and a symptom of it. It is profoundly influenced by, among other things, the oral tradition of West Africa, western-oriented education modern information media, and the changing cultural habits and attitudes which have given rise to many points of conflicts between old and new values and have confronted young people with the problem of adjustment. These factors have jointly determined the subject matter of the pamphlets and conditioned the outlook of the authors upon them. The internal evidence of the pamphlets reveals a preoccupation with the problems of a new society in which the introduction of new cultural elements has stimulated new desires, new attitudes and new values. The authors are involved in providing guidance to the masses caught in the crisis of these sweeping changes. It is not hard to see that they wholeheartedly accept the reality of change and the need to make an ally of change. This in turn has tended to colour their perception of the problems of change and their attitude to them in their works. In contrast to the more intellectual novelists and dramatists of West Africa who are deeply sceptical of the contemporary society and its changing values and who use their works to express their scepticism of change, the pamphlet authors identify with change, are enamoured of the possibilities which come with change and use the pamphlet literature for promoting the cause of change. The wide scope of the pamphlet literature can be appreciated when seen through the authors intentions in their different works. These intentions are roughly of three kinds: First, there are those authors who use their pamphlets as a medium for educating the reader so as to help him make the best of the changing situation; then there are others who use their pamphlets as a medium for educating the reader so as to help him make the best of the changing situations; then they are others who use their writing to prepare the reader for exiting new roles; they are yet others who employ the pamphlet literature as an instrument for entertaining the reader.

#### **Titles**

Onitsha market's popular literature had different titles which attracted the audience. They were used as captions on the books. They were educative, funny and some gave advices to different people in different situations. Literary education is the key that opens the door to success and the achievement of most of the desirable objectives of the young men and women in their aspirations to modernity. A number of the pamphlets in response to a keenly felt need are therefore directed towards helping the reader to acquire new knowledge to enable him pass examinations and improve himself generally. There are numerous titles indicative of the good English and compositions: How to Write Better Letters, applications and business letters, How to Succeed in Life, How to Know Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba and English Languages, How to Know Proverbs and Many Things. How to Make Meetings, Pocket Encyclopedia of Etiquette and Common sense. There are also numerous texts for primary schools and popular examination-made-easy booklets for every conceivable subject.

### **Themes**

Among the themes treated, love was a very important and prominent theme, but they also wrote on politics. Some of the pamphlets were also philosophical. Most of the philosophical pamphlets were statements about life in general and how to survive in the new urban environment just like some of the Indian films and Indian novels which these authors had watched and read. For instance in Ogali A. Ogali's *Veronica My Daughter*, A girl is in love with a progressing young man but her father wants her to marry an old man because he is rich. As is usual with the popular Indian films and novels where love prevails after the sufferings of the lovers, Veronica, at last, marries the man she loves and they live happily ever after. Some of the authors wrote for social reformation using as facts the daily experiences. The pamphlets portrayed young misguided girls, the infatuated boy resulting in pregnancy and sometimes in death from attempted abortions.

Having discussed some features of Onitsha Market Literature, little to wonder why more educated people in the society saw the authors' attempt at writing as a challenge for them. They asked themselves if semi-literates could write such pamphlets, why could not they themselves. They were challenged to do more than the semi-literates.

Critics such as Achebe and Chinweizu have emphasized the need for a writer's work to be placed in context and to be germane to the concerns of his society. The themes also dealt with the interest and problems of a changing society in which the growth of new cultural elements have stimulated new desires, attitudes and new values. The pamphleteers being aware of these new trends attempt to provide some counsel and direction to the masses caught in the chaos and violence resulting from these trends.

In addition to the importance of love discussion above, the triumphant and glorious aspects, tragic and comic aspects of love are significant in the themes. Some idyllic ideas of love which are kissing, necking, cuddling and petting are not very peculiar to the matrix of most traditional African society. The pamphleteers depict the sufferings, trust, beauty and the happiness that love entails.

Due to the influence of English literature, most of the pamphleteers associate love with verse which is seen as the proper medium for conveying the feeling of love. [7] aptly puts it that the pamphleteers "like the poets are in love with the idea of being in love". On the other hand, some authors who are sceptical and often realistic about love try to portray that love is not always a triumphant satisfying, happy experience as some writers depict but that it also leads to bitter emotional and material exploitation, loss of security and sometimes death. This aspect of the love theme is seen in such pamphlets as "The Bitterness of Love", "Disaster in the Realms of Love" and "Public Opinion of Lovers" where the exploited lover gives a comic, though bitter cry.

Besides the love and marriage themes, the pamphlets embody political themes which obtain due to the influence of the mass media. Many pamphlets treat political events and personalities in and outside Africa. Pioneers of the nationalist struggles against colonialism are the African heroes in the press and they are not ignored by the pamphleteers. The dead ones are depicted as martyrs. Pamphlets on these African nationalists include "Zik in the Battle of Freedom" and "Dr. Julius Nyerere: A profile".

The theme of music is embodied in the popular record song books. Various musical songs in trend are compiled in these pamphlets with the names of the musical bands that composed and sang them. Irrespective of this theme of music, the economic theme is based on the advice and warnings on city life, pursuit of money and financial dangers of extravagant women and alcohol. On this economic aspect, there is emphasis on hardwork, humility, diligence, sincerity, honesty and obedience. Ogali's "Money Hard to Get But Easy to Spend" champions this. Other themes of the pamphlets include bribery, prostitution, bride price and taking of brain pills by students.

The pamphleteers use characterization to establish their support for the daughters. The fathers are characterized as illiterates, old fashioned, capricious, villains; portrayed as stock comic characters, shouting in pidgin, bordering the young suitors and usually unsuccessful. The mothers and young suitors are depicted as benevolent beings while the heroines are seen as those who can assert their personal decision fearlessly. They speak "in character". The popular authors equally use a kind of cautionary technique. They often state that the characters and the stories are "imaginary" in order to avoid legal actions.

### **Factors that Encourage the Emergence and Growth of Onitsha Market Literature**

Easy access to Onitsha by River Niger which is close to Onitsha made the town a convenient abode for traders and missionaries. This led to the development of the town by virtue of the introduction of schools and churches. People from all walks of life were attracted to the city. The return of world war ex-servicemen, reintroducing themselves to their different trades was another factor that encouraged the emergence of Onitsha Market Literature. With them, came relatives to serve as apprentices. As a form of relaxation, they indulged in watching films at the cinema houses, novel reading which influenced their writing. The more educated veterans had their influences from educative novels like Bertha M. Clay's *Basket of flowers* and works of Shakespeare like *Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet* [8].

Pioneer Igbo politicians also greatly influenced the growth of the literature. The late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Mbonu Ojike, A. C. Nwakpa, inter alia, stirred national consciousness in Nigerians. The most influential of them was Dr Azikiwe, who admonished Africans and Igbos to produce and preserve literary productions. Azikiwe's "West African Pilot" which shared his knowledge to everybody on pages became training grounds for some of the pamphlet writers. Azikiwe also set up "The Eastern Nigerian Guardian" in 1940 and "The spokesmen" in 1943 at Onitsha to serve as a fertile ground for the new writers to plant its views and cultivate its creative writing [9].

The presence of Nigeria-owned printing presses set up around Onitsha facilitated the emergence of Onitsha Market literature by being easily accessible to the authors. The presence of the Onitsha Main Market also enhanced the quick sale of these pamphlets. The location of Onitsha was favourable for the rise and distribution of the literary pamphlets to the buyers.

Onitsha is a large Nigerian city situated on the eastern side of the river Nigeria. The strategic position of the city attracted (and still attracts) people from different parts of Nigeria. Onitsha is a gateway to the densely populated eastern hinterland as well as a point of contact between the hinterland and the rich mid-western and western and western Nigeria [10].

### **Influence of Onitsha Market Literature on Literary Development in Nigeria**

To see the full picture of the influence of Onitsha market literature in the literary development of Nigeria, it is necessary to examine more closely the areas in which this popular literature has influenced literature in Nigeria. Even a most cursory reading of a cross-section of the pamphlets cannot but reveal that certain factors like traditional culture, study of English literature, cinema Newspapers and Christian education helped to influence the development of literature in Nigeria. This work however focuses on the transitional periods as seen in the colonial era, post colonial era and the modern period. These periods show the gradual stages of literary development in Nigeria [11].

#### **Colonial Era**

In 1946, the colonial government of Nigeria sold their used printing presses and shortly after the local market places were flooded with romantic novelettes and chapbooks. Many traders in Onitsha bought those discarded machines cheap production cost also made it possible for large print runs to be produced. The fact that the authors had declared that their aim was not to make money from their writing meant that the publishers had a free hand to fix cheap prices for the pamphlets. Many titles were sold for two shillings which is equivalent to the present lop example, our modern ladies character towards boys by High bred Maxwell [12].

The publication and distributions of the pamphlets coincided with the period when many people were becoming educated in Eastern Nigerian. Even the Onitsha traders who were not educated decided to go to the night school to learn how to read and write. By so doing, they were able to read the stories by themselves. Some illiterate traders who bought the pamphlets but decided not to go to the night schools availed themselves of the services of who had it as their full time job to read and write letters as well as read stories from books to illiterates and charge them free for the service [13].

Also by the time the first set of pamphlets were published in 1949, public libraries did not exist in eastern Nigeria. The market booksellers concentrated their efforts in selling prescribed school textbooks and popular fiction and general trade books. The people had nowhere to go when they wanted to read some light materials. This meant that for many years, Nigerians were suffering from book hunger. Consequently, when the Onitsha market pamphlets were issued, the people were happy and the cheapness of the retail price enabled them to buy the copies in large numbers.

#### **Postcolonial Era**

This period is grouped into the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> wave writers, who continued from where Onitsha market literature stopped. Before the war, some traders were prepared to buy every new pamphlet title published. After the war, the same traders decided not to purchase the publications anymore, partly because they had no money, and partly because the new retail prices were too high for them. Consequently, it can be said that by the year 1975, the people of Eastern Nigeria had to look elsewhere for their reading materials. The disappearance of this literary genre was a loss not only to the Igbos and to Eastern Nigerians but also to the whole of Nigeria and to some West Africans. Perhaps, the end of the civil war marks the end of one era and the beginning of another, the end of a period when youthful optimism gave wings to the type of volatile creative imagination that produced the pamphlets and the beginning of a new period depended with the experience of a terrible crisis and which will therefore rely for utterance and a more sober medium [14].

Between 1950 and 1970, a period of 20 years, some classic novels written by Nigerian authors were published. The same period coincided with the time when the Onitsha Market Literature was in vogue from 1947 to 1975. Some of these novels were "The palm-wine Drunkard" by Amos Tutoba (1952), "People of the

City", by Cyprain Ekwensi (1957), "Things Fall Apart" by Chinua Achebe (1958), and "One man One Wife" by Timothy Aluko (1959). Their works also represent a transitional period from the novelettes and chapbooks of the Onitsha Market Literature to serious fiction written by intellectual authors. One Nigerian novelist who may be said to have spearheaded the transition was C. O. D. Ekwensi. He wrote for the Onitsha Market Literature as well as serious novels for more sophisticated readers. As Obiechina has rightly observed, both the pamphlet writers and the intellectual Nigerian writers used their writing as a media to provide insights into the contemporary Nigerian life. The pamphlet writers concerned themselves with surface appearances, while the intellectual writers tried to dig deep into underlying causes and explanations [5].

We have already seen how serious fiction was published almost side by side with the pamphlets of the Onitsha Market Literature those were written by first wave writers from Nigeria. During the second wave, we had Wole Soyinka's novel "The Interpreters" (1965) and Gabriel Okara's novel "The Voice" (1964). It was during the second wave that Chinua Achebe published his two next novels: "No Longer At Ease" (1960) and "A Man of the People" (1966). Elechi Amadi's book "The Concubine" was published in 1966, Achebe's "A Man of the People" dealt with corruption and ended with violence and a coup. It was during this second wave that some of the novels of the pioneer Igbo women writers were published. The first was "Efuru" by Flora Nwapa (1966). The other female novelist Buchi Emecheta, published her autobiographical novels, in "The Ditch" (1972) and "Second Class Citizen" (1974).

The second wave critical writers helped in the growth and spread of literature in Nigeria, they enhanced the appetite for reading in the masses through their works were sophisticated and they appeared more serious and important. This has shown us how Onitsha Market Literature gave birth to the first and second wave writers and how they took off from there [8].

### **Modern Era**

The modern period refers to a time when literature grew rapidly, the writers of the third wave were young people writing for an African audience and not for the Euro-Americans as was the case with the first wave authors. These new third wave authors sought not only to entertain like their predecessors (Onitsha chapbooks) but also to edify and instruct, as well also forge a common cause with ordinary people. Some of the novels of the third wave are "One is Enough", by Flora Nwapa (1981), Kalu Okpi's "The Smugglers" (1978) and "On the Road" (1980).

If the writing and publishing of novels was a fairly new undertaking by Nigerians, the writing of non-fiction by Nigerians has been going on for nearly hundred years. Keribo's "History of the Yoruba People" was published in Abeokuta in 1906. A classic book, "The History of the Yorubas" by Samuel Johnson, was published by the C.M.S. Bookshop in Lagos in 1921 and recently reprinted in 1997. "The Trial of Awolowo" by Lateef Jakande, was published by John West Publications in 1966. "Health Education for the Community" by Dr. F. Adi which won the Nana Award for publishing in Africa in 1981, was published by Nwamife Publishers of Enugu in 1981.

In the year 1983 and 1984, there was an acute shortage of books, reference books and general trade books in Nigeria. The Federal and State Governments were worried about this state of affairs. As a result of this, Nigerian newspapers started criticizing educated Nigerians accusing them of laziness. University professors and other academics were particularly singled out for vilification. In April, 1984, the daily times of Nigeria published a long reader article under the title of shortage of books amid surfeit of Dons, Onitsha Market Literature was remembered for its numerous books on various subjects pertaining to life [1].

The result of this was that hundreds of Nigerians who took up this matter as a personal and national challenge went into writing literary walks and the book trade in a big way. Both the academics and other educated Nigerians in other works of life started taking the writing of literature works very seriously. Within a relatively short time, there was a diversification into various fields of human endeavour. The present trend today is that hundreds of subject areas such as politics, music, drama, poetry, the economy, use in society literary eroticism, history, biographies, folklore and proverbs, tradition, short stories and culture.

The Biafran war was the source of inspiration which urged many people to write books. It brought about a change from reading more sophisticated literary works. The books were no longer sold within Onitsha. The popularity of the chapbooks had already spread from Onitsha to Enugu, Aba, Owerri, Port Harcourt, Calabar and other cities and towns in Eastern Nigeria. From the East, it spread West, Northern Nigeria and to Lagos to Cameroons, Ghana and other countries in West African [10].

## V. CONCLUSION

The history of any art is a series of innovations. Virtually all major works of arts are in some senses experimental in their day. And experiments break new grounds while the great main stream flows on.

Onitsha pamphlet literature is the first cradle of modern Nigerian fiction. It is a literary and sociological phenomenon. Its simplicity of style and language, direct relevance to the problems of the common man, and cheapness make it a literature for the masses. The work done so far is a fair indication that the Onitsha Market Literature fathered the subsequent literary works, it is a fair indication that the Onitsha pamphlets literature is unique and dynamic. It shows the evaluation, geographical location, and factors that aided growth of literature, certain features of Onitsha Market Literature and the influence which give rise to Onitsha Market Literature as a paradigm for literary development in Nigeria.

The Onitsha Market Literature cannot be isolated when we talk about literary works in Nigeria. The effect of this literature is seen in the transitional eras. In fact these pamphlets have paved a way for and served as model for writers of modern period. Literary authors, artist and critics owe their charm, popularity, vitality to the pamphlets written at that time. Irrespective of its weakness it bore the weight of educating the masses at that time, it is likened to the saying "Rome was not built in a day" Some issues are very obvious in this literature and needs emphasis.

First, the insufficient formal education of its authors and readers is a fair indication that the low class does not suffer exclusion from the world of literary art. Secondly, the instances cited in the areas and growth of literature in Nigeria greatly demonstrate that the pamphlet is experimental, unique and dynamic, thus it has contributed to the development of literature in Nigeria. Writing has undergone some changes in recent works found in the Nigerian society but the fact remains that Onitsha pamphlets some of the variants are still in the Nigerian milieu.

We should have admiration for the courage of these authors, who write in order to "educate, entertain and reform" irrespective of their limited formal education. In spite of their weaknesses, they need to be extolled for this pioneer role, not looked down on. It will also be wrong to imagine that the Onitsha pamphlet literature has in no way influenced the rapid growth of the novel and other sophisticated forms in Nigeria. Its influence is more oblique than direct. The existence of this mass of popular writing is an indication of a general literary awakening of which the novel is the highest achievement. The fact that this mass of home-produced literature is the work of people with relatively meagre formal education must have greatly encouraged the better educated and literarily-inclined Nigerians to go a step further than the popular writers and produce literature of a more elevated kind. In other words, the existence of literature for the masses acted as a spur on intellectually sophisticated Nigerians to produce more sophisticated forms of literature for more sophisticated readers.

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Martin C. Ogayi. "Onitsha Market Literature in Language and Literary Development of Nigeria." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, vol. 09(6), 2020, pp 54-60.