'I want to write stories that awaken reflection about love'

The author's excellent romantic writing, with its nod to classic romanticism and modern romance fiction, thrives on evoking deep emotion, creating palpable tension, and developing complex characters.

BY PHILIP MATOGO

There is nothing like an overnight success in the literary world, they say. That's because it takes twenty years to become a writer or a poet of the caliber that doesn't only write for the "five square blocks" of people they know. They write for the ages. Those who do so, reduce an overnight success from twenty years to what happens literally overnight.

The March 1812 publication of the first two cantos of poet Lord Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage immediately turned Lord Byron (real name Goerge Gordon Byron) into a literary celebrity and an overnight success in London society.

"I awoke... and found myself famous," Byron said himself, thereby famously describing his sudden rise to fame following the positive reception of the poem, which was based on his travels through Europe.

Classic romanticism

In 1812, the population of London was approximately 1.1 to 1.3 million people. The first edition of 500 copies sold out in just a few days, followed quickly by a second edition of 3,000 copies. In proportion to the population at that time, this book was a bestseller of gargantuan proportions.

The poem introduced the "Byronic hero"—a moody, dark, and disillusioned figure (Childe Harold)—whom the public immediately identified with Byron himself, contributing to his reputation as a "mad, bad, and dangerous to know" figure.

In present-day Uganda, Aidah Babirye (pen name Aidah Charlene) is close to replicating that feat.

Her first book is already making waves at private reading gatherings where her words have a bracing effect on all those who hear them.

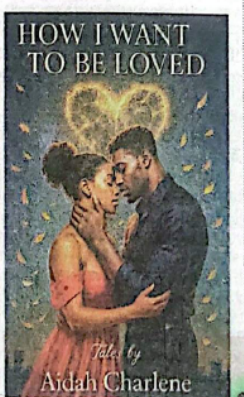
It is an underground classic which captures the essence of romance in crystalline terms.

When it is finally made available to the bookstores, it will shock people.

Her excellent romantic writing, with its nod to classic romanticism and modern romance fiction, thrives on evoking deep emotion, creating palpable tension, and developing complex, relatable characters. It is a breath of fresh air in such unromantic times.

Byron's poem resonated with a generation tired of the Napoleonic Wars, offering a blend of travelogue, melancholy, and romantic reflection on the ruins of past civilisations.

Babirye similarly summons our collective imagination to reinvent itself towards its potential for grand passion. I talked to her about her journey.





When did you start writing?

Aidah Babirye is a strategic communications practitioner and storyteller with over seven years of experience advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) across national, regional, and global platforms. Her journey began long before her career, as a Primary Six girl filling a small Picfare book with vivid stories and discovering early that words could create worlds and shift perspectives.

Today, she serves as communications officer at Reproductive Health Uganda, where she translates complex evidence-based programmes in SRHR, HIV prevention, SGBV, and harmful gender norms into compelling donor ready narratives that influence policy, strengthen institutions, and amplify youth voices.

Aidah believes storytelling is more than communication. It is visibility, accountability, and power.

What inspired you to write this book?

I wrote this book from a deeply personal place, reflecting on romantic love. Love is one of the most spoken about emotions in the world, yet it is defined differently by each of us and experienced in profoundly different ways. What feels like love to one person may not feel like love to another.

This book became my exploration of what romantic love truly means to me. It is my honest definition of how I desire to be loved, how I want love to be expressed, and how it should feel when it is right. Not just the grand gestures, but the quiet consistency, the emotional safety, the intentional presence.

I was inspired by the realisation that many of us chase versions of love we think we want, only to discover they do not fulfil us. Sometimes what we imagine as the epitome of love is shaped by culture, movies, past wounds, or external expectations rather than our true emotional needs.

This book is my reminder that we love differently, and that is okay. It is an invitation to be honest about what kind of romantic love makes you feel seen, chosen, secure, and whole. It is not a rulebook, but a reflection. A vulnerable declaration that love, at its best, should feel intentional, safe, passionate, and deeply mutual.

What are your dreams as a writer?

As a writer, my dream is to tell stories that make people feel seen.

I want my words to sit with someone in their quiet moments and make them whisper, "This is exactly how I feel." I want to write romantic stories that are intense, honest, and emotionally intelligent.

Stories that do not just entertain, but awaken self-reflection about love, power, vulnerability, and identity.

I dream of publishing books that travel beyond borders. I dream of seeing my stories adapted into film, where characters I once imagined alone at night come alive on screen.

I want to build a body of work that blends depth and drama, softness and strength.

More than fame, I want impact. I want to shape conversations about how we love, how we heal, and how we choose ourselves.

And ultimately, I want to remain brave enough to write truthfully. To never dilute emotion. To never shrink my voice. To always remember the girl with the small Picfare book who believed words could create worlds.

Where do you see Uganda's literary world in five years?

In five years, I see Uganda's literary world becoming more visible, and more globally connected.

Young writers are already redefining the space through self-publishing, digital platforms, film, and new storytelling formats.

I believe this momentum will grow, with more Ugandan stories crossing borders, being translated, adapted, and recognised internationally.

I also hope to see stronger support systems such as publishing houses, literary festivals, mentorship, and real investment in storytelling as both art and industry.

Most importantly, I see a literary world that is unapologetically Ugandan, rooted in our languages, culture, and lived experiences, yet universal in emotion. Our stories are ready for the world.