

Contemporary Arabic Novelists and Social Responsibility: a Peep into Al-Hijri's *Al-Sayyid Al-Raees*

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Abstract

Novel writing in Arabic language is a contemporary effort in Arabic literature of Nigerian authorship. This, however, is not strange because of the fact that the genre in global Arabic literature is equally not very old. It is however note worthy how writers use Arabic in purely literary ways to convey social messages. Novel writing, most especially, is being explored to champion the discharge of the responsibility thrust on writers as shapers of the society. One of such writers is an upcoming novelist, Hamid al-Hijri. This paper aims at analyzing the positive roles modern writers in Arabic play to socialize their readers and bring them to the realm of wider awareness devoid of religious jingoism, using *Al-Sayyid Al-Raees* as a case study.

Introduction

Describing the responsibility of a writer in post-independence Nigeria, Achebe is of the opinion that "*the writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration. In fact he should march right in front*" (4). Going by this precept the writer should use literature as "*a forum of education, a means of opening the eyes of the audience not only to the world as it is, but also as it is capable of being*" (Osundare 35). Arabic writing and by extension Arabic literature preceded written literature in other languages not only in Nigeria but in the whole of West Africa.

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It is an established fact that literacy in Arabic language had been in existence in this part of Africa many centuries before the emergence of Western education of any form in any language (Fafunwa 73-7). Stressing the importance of Arabic in navigating West African history, Fafunwa admitted that earlier Arab travelers provided insight into history of West African people through volumes of their travelogues. (51) Also, according to Bivar, A. D. H. and M. Hisket, literacy in Arabic and the custom of authorship had been firmly introduced into West African region since 1078 (105). In addition to travelogue, themes of Arabic authorship had mostly been teaching religious tenets. This didactic nature of the ancient writings is widespread not only in Nigeria but the entire region. Another fact about Arabic writing is that poetry is the most common feature since even the religious teachings were versified. However, all these, changed some decades back in terms of theme, genre and style as writers started embarking on prosaic creative endeavors covering several literary fields most especially novels and plays.

The population of citizens who are literate in Arabic is very significant and the content of any literature written in it could positively impact immensely. The population of Muslims is very large in Nigeria (Olatunde) and their attachment to Arabic language is so strong that a writer in the language wields considerable influence that necessitates the study of its literature vis-à-vis national outlook therein. This paper is therefore inspired by the need to present the effort of one of the authors at discharging his responsibility to his society.

This paper approaches the study from theoretical framework of literature as *essentially 'social'-has social causes, contents and effects.* (Childs, Peters. Roger, Fowler. 221) Embarking on a presentation of this nature is necessary in order to appreciate the contemporary functions Arabic literature is being used for even in non-Arabic speaking countries like Nigeria. This paper has the following sub-headings: introduction, the author, synopsis of the novel, thematic analysis, narrative techniques and conclusion. The translation to English of the excerpts from the novel under discussion is done by the writer of this paper.

The Author

Literature often presents authorial experience, personal or collective. The ideology of the writer is equally significant. This is true of Hamid Mahmud Ibraheem Al Hijri who was born on 9th May, 1976 in Aigoro village in Ilorin East Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The village is about fifty kilometer away from Ilorin, the State capital.

He started his elementary education under the guidance of his father from whom he learnt the Qur'an and some elementary *'ilmi* training. He later proceeded to Ilorin and joined the renowned *Darul-'uloom* School of Arabic Studies. His stay in the school was, however, very short as fate took him to a Kano based scholar of Fulani descent, Adam Yahya 'Abdur Rahman the founder of *Darul Hijrah* for Arabic and Islamic Studies. Al Hijri obtained both junior and senior secondary certificates from the school between 1993 and 1998. He proceeded to the Republic of Chad in 1999 where he joined College of Arabic and Islamic Studies, an affiliate of the famous Jam'iyyah ad-da'awah al-Islamiyyah al-'Arabiyyah in the Republic of Libya. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts Degree from the college in 2003 with distinction, and his higher diploma in the mother university in Libya in 2004 also with distinction. He enrolled for Master Degree in the same university and completed the course with distinction in 2007. On his return to Nigeria in 2007, he did his mandatory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in Gombe State. He presently lectures at Adamu Augi College of Education, Argungu, Kebbi State, Nigeria.

Al Hijri has authored many books of creative writing and literary research some of which are: *Khadimul watan* (Youth Service Corps Member), *Al Sayyid ar Raees* (Mr. President), *Ma'asaatul Hubb* (The Tragedy of Love) et cetera.

Synopsis of the Novel

Ismaila, a brilliant and highly talented youth, is a student at the Department of Engineering in one of Nigerian universities. Buki is also a student of the same institution but at the Department of Economics. Providence brings the two together which later blossoms into an intense relationship which makes them very famous in the entire university environment.

They both agree to settle down as a couple after their education, but this is never to be as the romance goes sour after Ismaila graduates ahead of Buki and is posted to Kano for the mandatory national youth service.

He is posted to a construction company for his primary assignment. That prompts him to rent an apartment in Sabon-Gari, an area close to his place of work. Interest in politics manifests in him during the period and he demonstrates that by forming a union of workers in the company. The adventure brings him a lot of ill-feelings from those who are peeved by his success and rising profile. A neighbor's housewife is used to smear him with accusation of rape. He is arrested, detained in police custody for days, and is to be charged to court but he regains freedom. He is exonerated after it is discovered that the whole thing is a set-up. This incident forces him to leave Sabon-Gari and get himself another apartment in the rustic area of the city although not very far away from his place of work.

Ismaila relocates to Jakara area of the old city. The house he moves to is a one-storey building. The ground floor is rented to tenants while the storey floor is occupied by the widow of the landlord and her children. His relocation to this house is a watershed both in his romantic life and his growth as a detribalized citizen. He gets attracted to Ruqayyah, the eldest daughter in his landlord's family. The cultural and ethnic differences do not constitute a barrier to their coming together as the good manner he is imbued with coupled with his being a devout religious person endear him to almost everyone in the area. His proposal of marriage to Ruqayyah is accepted after thorough consideration of his person and religion. He, as well, did not have any problem convincing his parents on his marrying a Hausa lady since his maternal grandfather lived in Kano for a very long time, and his mother only left the city when it is time for her to marry.

However, a day to the wedding his mobile phone rings and it is Buki that was on the other end. Trying to justify his abandoning of her, he falsely accuses her of flirting with the Head of the Department in the university. She cannot bear this because it is a blatant lie. The wedding takes place and is the talk of the town for a very long time. The marriage is blessed with three kids, the eldest of whom is Mansur. Shortly before his marriage Ismaila gets close to a Muslim cleric who plays a far reaching role in the life of his family.

He gets accelerated promotion in his place of work as a result of his hard work, honesty, loyalty, dedication and quality. Mr. Clark, the owner of the company, one day summons his senior staff to a meeting where he tells them of his intention to return to Britain his home country and that he has appointed Ismaila the head of his Nigerian business outfit.

Mansur starts his education very early and completes his primary and junior secondary education programmes in Kano. His father then sends him down Southwestern Nigeria for his senior secondary school education for him to have first hand interaction with the culture and language of the Yoruba. He makes good 'O level result on completion which earns him admission into a university in London. He spends four years studying political science and graduates with good degree class. Throughout his stay abroad, he lives with Mr. Clark, his father's benefactor.

While in London, he comes in contact with Grace, an Ibo lady from Nigeria who is also there for study in the same university. They become very close and agree to get married on returning home. Grace is the only child of Chinedu, an Enugu based politician; her mother is, however, a Yoruba woman. Mansur graduates ahead of his fiancée which necessitates his going back to Nigeria earlier. It is, however, arranged that he choose Enugu State for his mandatory one-year national youth service. While serving, he learns much about Nigerian politics under the tutelage of his father-in-law in whose establishment he serves. Grace has related to her parents the relationship between her and Mansur and has also told them of how he rescued her from death by donating his blood when she had accident in London. He is very well loved not only by Chinedu and his wife but also by all around him.

Grace immediately returns to Nigeria after her course and a date is fixed for the marriage introduction. Ismaila, Mansur's father, has to come to Enugu from Abuja, his new abode. To the surprise of everyone present, the mother-in-law faints on sighting the would-be father-in-law of her only child is also speechless and immediately starts shivering because Grace's mother is Buki, his jilted university girl friend. When Buki is revived after which she vehemently objects to Ismaila's son marrying her only child fearing her daughter may be treated the same way she is treated by Ismaila. Chinedu appeals to his wife to forget the past and allow the young partners live their lives.

He also convinces her that he knows of many Muslims treating their wife very well especially the educated ones and that Mansur should be accepted on his merit. Mansur's father begs profusely for forgiveness and is eventually pardoned. The two lovers are blessed as husband and wife.

After some years, Mansur contests, on the permission of his father-in-law, for the local government chairmanship in his state of origin, Kwara. He wins the election and his performance earns him the gubernatorial slot of his party which he also wins. His eye-catching performance and ingenuity as state governor do not go unnoticed by his party, as he is chosen as the presidential candidate. His detribalized personality tremendously assists in his becoming the president. As a President of Hausa and Yoruba parentage with a wife that has Ibo father from the South-Eastern part of the country, Mansur is truly a balanced Nigerian. Mr. President performs so well that almost every Nigerian applauds his governance except the very few greedy and selfish godfathers. Though very few, the godfathers are very powerful; they trouble him so much that attempts are made on his life. His sin, according to them, is that he makes the masses the fulcrum of his governance. On completing his tenure, he refuses to contest for another term despite the masses' yearning for that because his spiritual father, Muhyiddeen, tells him a single term should suffice for him.

Analysis

A writer, to a large extent, is a teacher passing lessons to his readers or a righter correcting his audience through his writings. This is because *the artist lives in society and draws his material from it... Hence his imagination is just as socially determined, and his fiction is fact, only refracted through the lenses of the imagination.* (Osofisan, Femi 33) This status and role, however, could not be ascribed to Nigerian writers in Arabic until very recently; this is because the language was more identified with the religion of Islam through which it became widespread. The functions to which it is hitherto subjected, according to Hunwinck, J. O., are religious teaching, official record keeping, diplomatic correspondences, personal letters etcetera (37-41). With the turn of another millennium, the language gains enhanced status as it is being used for literary arts and other social engagements. Al-Hijri is one of the leading figures in Arabic creative writing in Nigeria making national issues thematic concerns of their works.

The novel being studied is a fulfillment of national responsibility on the writer in the ways he handles the instrumentalities of novel writing to canvass love and unity as major ingredient of nation building.

Characterization

The writer characters of the novel have a national outlook with their choice from the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria. The main characters are: Ismaila, Buki (Shakirat), Ruqayyat, Chinedu, Grace, Iyabo, Kayode and Shaykh Muhyiddeen. They are from the major Nigerian ethnic groups and they also cut across at least four of the six national geo-political zones of South-West, South-East, North-West and North-Central. North-East is, in terms of culture, not very different from North-Central and North-West; while South-South is not too dissimilar to South-East. This makes it very clear that the writer targets audience in the entire country as a united entity.

Theme

The thematic concern of the novel is national unity hence the highlighting and discussing of issues that are national in nature. Given the diverse nature of the Nigerian cultures, it is only a detribalized person who possesses crisscross understanding and mutual respect for all that is suitable to lead modern Nigeria. Mansur is this ideal person; he is a Muslim born in Kano to a Yoruba father and a Hausa mother. He is educated both in the Northern and Western Nigeria as well as in London; he is married to a Christian Igbo lady whose parents are Igbo (father) and Yoruba (mother).

Having chosen a balanced national leader, he goes on to raise one of the common issues in Nigeria which is bad condition of roads, he says:

The journey was difficult and tiring, the roads were not as smooth as Ismaila expected but instead rough and with a lot of potholes. The vehicle, on a sloppy road, was moving up and down in a way that could abort an early pregnancy as it is commonly said. Deep gulfs littered the road, dangerous curves threw vehicles into confusion and despair, and deadly bends and frightening corners constituted a lot of burden on vehicles while passengers complained of hard collision with seats and glasses. (17)

The above description is true about many Nigerian roads irrespective of their location. The writer therefore breaks new grounds for Arabic literary writing by addressing national issues. His work is eye-catching not only because he is the first or the only one using Arabic language for literary expression but because, unlike others whose writings are more of autobiographies, Alhijri's concern in this novel is presenting national affairs to his readers. A look into the following paragraph further justifies the national outlook of the theme when Ismaila says:

Where is our destination in Nigeria? Before independence, we complained about the Whites and their enslaving us; we apportioned bitter blames and vicious vituperation against them; we freely rained curses of perish on them every moment; we flared and revolted against them demanding freedom, longing for independence. Life is worthless except with honour and pride! Here we are now, since five decades of our independence and we have not brought upon ourselves except toil and hardship. We have reaped nothing from our advancement except shame and degradation; we want civilization but instead came ridicule! The wealthy ones increase in wealth while the poor keep wallowing in wretchedness and deprivation. Our schools remain backward and inferior... (18)

The thought going through Ismaila's mind is the very true lamentation of every Nigerian except those benefiting from the rot and perpetuating the misery the citizens are going through. The very elderly who fought for the freedom and the younger generation who are denied access to the minimum standard of living are all piqued by the insensitivity of the rulers of this nation. Commitment to national issue of the above intensity is common to writers using English language, especially the first generation of writers. A bold expression highlighting leadership failure bedeviling the country is very uncommon in Nigerian literature of Arabic expression. With this type of courage the writer has successfully put himself in the league of those who answered Achebe's call to use literature for *re-education* and *regeneration*.

Portraying a typical affluent Nigerian Al Hijri writes:

The courtyard of his house amazes you as it is filled with luxury cars consisting high numbers of new models of Honda and Jeep brands. Furniture and other installations of the house, majority of which are expensive importations, cozy relaxing chairs in which a sitter is almost sunk, are all over the places.

Paintings decorated with picture of domestic animals on the wall drawn on a very elegant plank welcomes guests from the entrance; a very large and spacious sitting room, a fitting large shining dining table... (64)

A visit to an abode of any wealthy Nigerian will confirm the above depiction. This apt description is true of Nigerian elites irrespective of where they reside in the country. The embarrassing treatment Nigerian travellers are routinely subjected to in foreign lands does not escape the attention of this writer when he says:

He found Mr. Clark waiting for him at the gate after they alighted from the plane to ease his passage through customs. He was sure, from a very long time, of problems foreigners encounter from the customs; particularly Nigerian travelers among them. Hardly does a Nigerian pass by them in peace: the moment they see a Nigerian passport they become livid; all the security operatives unveil weapons; frightening and embarrassing checks; stupid and unwholesome questioning; he is meted with the worst disgrace and the most unpleasant treatment. If nothing legally incriminating is found on him, he will never be excused and neither will he be attended to, all because he is carrying a Nigerian travelling passport... (78)

The kind of treatment Mr. Clark is out to prevent Mansur from is a commonly occurring ill-treatment of Nigerians in many foreign airports. It is so common that many law abiding Nigerians are not comfortable travelling out of this country for the fear of unjustified dehumanising treatment. The host country's law enforcement agents are not totally at fault as many Nigerians are truly the architect of this battered image, but there is need to ensure that it is only the offending ones that are made to encounter such ridiculous treatments.

Patriotism and the need for unity among all Nigerians, irrespective of difference in culture, religion or tribe, are reflected in the novel when Mansur volunteered to be his fellow Nigerian rescuer by donating his blood. This happened when Grace was involved in a fatal accident in London and became unconscious as a result of having lost a lot of blood. This gesture is presented in the following words:

...She did not regain her consciousness until she was brought to one of the city's central hospitals, and by her side is Mansur who voluntarily donated some of his blood to rescue the life of a lady whom he knew nothing about other than that she is of Nigerian nationality... (80)

This coincidence blossoms into deep relationship. It is, however, important to note that the major binding factor between the two is nationality and probably being students of the same university. Mansur is a Muslim while Grace is a Christian: a scenario that usually constitutes serious misunderstandings in Nigeria. Since they are away from home, religion does not at all come to their minds. The writer, through this medium preaches deemphasizing things that disunite the citizens, religion being the most dangerous of the threats. Humanitarian gestures should be paramount in our thinking, then the nationality that we all belong to should follow. Mansur rescues a human life not minding the faith the person professes and gets attached to Grace because, like him, she is a Nigerian. Addressing the importance of resolving the issues of religious dichotomy that does more harm than good, the writer succinctly says:

Although the mother was very reluctant in approving this relationship for the singular reason of difference in religion between the two, the father assured her that Muslims, most especially the educated ones among them, take good care of their women with respect almost close to worship many a time, and that they give utmost respect to in-laws. (85)

The issue of marriage between people of different cultures in Nigeria is a very difficult task, but as difficult as it is, it is by far easier than intermarriage between a Muslim and a Christian. The more cherished unity will remain an illusion until all come to term with the reality that there is the need for mutual understanding and respect for the diverse culture of the citizens. Acceptability and accommodation of culture breed love which in turn solidifies unity. Canvassing for understanding of our diversities to achieve unity, Al Hijri writes:

...whereby the elders of the clan put forward a cup filled with drinks. They, on this occasion, preferred orange drinks because of the fact that the groom is a Muslim. The bride goes round with the cup seeking hands of the guys to collect it; whoever drinks from it is the lucky groom.

This is how every guy involves in inviting the bride teasing her with a huge sum of money that perhaps she will give them a look and present them with the cup. She moves close to them and quickly moves away playfully until she gets to the seat of the real groom. Getting to him, she falls on her knees raising the cup to him with utmost respect. He collects it and drinks the whole content at once then he in turn fills the cup with highest denomination of currency notes. (88)

Presenting comprehensive awareness of challenges honest and caring Nigerian leaders have to cope with to his readers, he says:

It is truly a humane concern for him who has heart and listens to his conscience and is honest to provide good governance. This made Mansur keep planning and looking for a way out of the logjam bedeviling ruling in Nigeria. Major among his unfortunate concerns, however, is the godfathers, the wealthy individuals who financed him to this position. They only lent that huge sum of money to him and left it with him as a loan that has to be undoubtedly repaid. He surely must repay by allocating to them huge illegitimate sums and awarding to them contracts of projects that will never be executed. Closely following them in second category are the representatives at the legislative Assembly who pass whatever laws that suit their interests and needs. They represent their individual interests rather than that of the electorate in their different constituencies... (95)

Nation building is gradual and should be with a lot of optimism which will facilitate shouldering whatever challenges that may come during the course of striving to build a dynamic nation. The responsibility of enlightening Nigerian readers of Arabic literature to this fact is boldly and clearly taken by the writer of this novel. An instance of this is when some citizens are jubilating over the victory of Mansur as President-elect before his inauguration; they are expressing a lot of hope and positive expectations. Some people, at this juncture, express the hopelessness of the situation as there is hardly a difference in term of positive performance within Nigerian leaders who only make lofty and laudable campaign promises they never fulfill. An elderly man listening to the conversation now says:

This is pessimism my children! Situation shall get better, but surely God does not change a people's situation to good until they themselves change their evil attitudes.

Therefore, change the ways you conduct yourselves and God will send to you leaders who will rescue you from destruction, guide you from straying and deliver you from temptation. (103)

Readers come face-to-face, in this short Arabic novel, with a thorough depiction of contemporary happenings that make the country one of the slowest developing nations. The situation the newly sworn-in president will grapple with is quite intimidating. This is subtly presented thus:

The word "strike" is very famous in our dictionary as a nation: citizens are used to it; medical practitioners go on strike, public commercial transporters go on strike, electricity workers go on strike, every government employee embarks on strike anytime they wish and in the form they like. When you go to hospitals you are confronted with several strange shocks: drugs are not available, qualified and competent medical doctors are not found, electricity goes off freely to the extent that even an emergency case or surgery are not guaranteed! Children of the poor keep dying and the government is never worried about them! (111)

With the above graphic description of social services that are in a situation of almost total neglect and the care-free attitude of government in respect of citizens' welfare, the task before the new president is very daunting. Mr. President, though sincerely committed to making life more comfortable for the citizens, does not seek re-election after his positive achievement- laden- tenure. Refusal to seek re-election is on the one hand as a result of his spiritual father advising him not to seek a second term and on the other hand because of the danger the godfathers will pose to his life if he returns as president having only luckily survived an assassination attempt which is clearly an ominous sign of the extent his enemies could go.

Narrative Techniques

A literary piece of any genre tells a lot about its writer; and this, perhaps, accounts for the techniques Al Hijri adopts in this work, some of them shall be discussed as follows:

Qur'anic Borrowings

The writer heavily spices his work with a lot of Qur'anic style of narration. Instances of this abound among which what Iyabo says onto the lawyer interrogating her on the incident between her and Ismaila:

He surely aimed at me as I was not the one who aimed at him! (26-7)

This is a clear borrowing of a situation in the Qur'an where Allah reports an incident about Prophet Yusuf and the woman who aimed to tempt him. Another one is when Ismaila narrates his experience in detention; he says:

Suffering is more terrible than death (24)

He also says regarding his innocence from Iyabo's allegation against him:

I swear by Allah! I am as innocent from this accusation as the wolf is from the blood of Ya'qub's son. (24)

Here he alludes to a story in the Qur'an where the senior siblings of Prophet Yusuf are telling their father that his son was eaten by a wolf. It is reported that a wolf was brought to Ya'qub and miraculously dissociates himself from killing Yusuf in plain language understood by all that were present.

As said above, instances like this are numerous in the book. But does this negatively affect its quality as a creative art piece? I am of the opinion, that it does not in any way reduce the quality of the work. Arabic literary piece of Nigerian authorship must be appreciated as coming largely from writers whose background is overwhelmingly Islamic. As a matter of fact the majority of them reluctantly adopt writing literary pieces after obtaining tertiary education. The garb in which their writings are most known is religion. Therefore, since the basic background that shapes the writer is that of Islam, it can never be a minus that his work is influenced by Islam as long as the literary responsibility is not sacrificed.

Romance

Another characteristic feature of this novel is demonstration of romantic nature of the youths, ways of their dressing, thinking, and reaction et cetera. Telling us about a lady assessing herself preparing to meet her boyfriend, he writes:

Oh, what is he likely to say now about my appearance? Will my dressing please him? How do I meet him? Is it with ordinary smile and handshake, or do I stand up and hug him? (12)

Above is the state of mind of a university lady awaiting her boyfriend in one of the many love gardens in a university environment. A description like this adds flavor to the entire work making its reading very interesting. Let us hear him again describing love:

Surely love is taken from seed! Can't you see the similarity even in derivation? Because it (love) grows the same way seed grows, and bears fruits as it (seed) bears, but only when it finds fertile land! (37)

Local Proverbs

To add local colour and further bring his readers close to their environment and make them feel that what they come across in the story is not from an alien but their own real milieu, he inserts local proverbs into his narration of the events. Some instances of this are:

Lie can never be hidden to two people at the same time: if someone being fed with lies does not know, the liar surely knows he is telling lies. (47)

The above adage is a very common saying in Nigeria irrespective of tribe or region, meaning that it is only the victim of deceit that does not quickly recognize the evil intention of the cheats, therefore coming across it makes the whole thing real. Another example of such is:

It is the owner of calabash who first calls it broken before it is eventually used by people to clear refuse. (77)

The above techniques are adopted in narrating the events in this creative work in order to make it a true reflection of the Nigerian environment. This effort, to a very large extent, instills in the readers things they should know about their country. It also educates them on some intricacies of Nigerian politics and politicians.

Much as Al Hijri's effort interprets Nigeria and some social events therein, it could be said that he gives too much prominence to a group of people who are mostly parasitic contributing nothing significant to the growth of the economy. It is the spiritualists people personified by Shaykh Muhyiddeen. So prominent he is, that he has the ears of Mr. President always; he determines what the president should do and what he should not do. If this is viewed as a minus for this novel, it could be defended that it is a true reflection of Nigerians' attitude to religion. Religion is not a private affair in Nigeria as it is even constitutionally recognized. It does not matter which religion a leader practices, the spiritual personalities enjoy huge official patronage.

Another thing that can be said against the novel is its size which may make it better classified as *qissah (story)* rather than *riwaayah (novel)*. It is interesting that even the writer himself calls it *qissah* and not *riwaayah*. Classifying it as *riwaayah* is, however, only because of the contemporary status of modern Arabic literature in Nigeria.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has attempted to remind us of the pioneer status Arabic language enjoyed as the first means of literacy in Nigeria. It remained so for many centuries until the coming of the colonialists who relegated Arabic to the background replacing it with English. Undaunted by this reverse in status, people keep learning and practicing writing in Arabic language but the content of the writings are largely religious. Prose writing in Arabic language has been mainly didactic explaining religious rituals and, the literary genre it is mostly put into is correspondence among literate individuals.

In recent years, however the situation started changing as interaction with the wider world becomes the order of the day. Constant contacts with the Arab world in pursuit of knowledge and even the national institutions where Arabic language is taught are in tune with globalization of knowledge. This greatly refines the perception of Arabic as a purely religious language not only among the non-Muslims but even among the Muslims themselves. The development leads to using the language for serious literary expression covering many fields of literary endeavors. The globalization of literature, irrespective of its language, has led to the emergence of a new generation of writers.

This new generation of literati demonstrates a unique zeal in making themselves agents of social change and cultural awareness. The writers are transcending literary creativity motivated only by religion. Of the budding Arabic literary writers, Hamid Al Hijri is very unique because, unlike many others, he is able to make national issues major themes of his writing. This does not take anything away from those whose works are mostly autobiographic or romantic; it is only that Al Hijri's works, most especially the one focused on in this paper, are more national.

This submission is not in any way suggesting that the author attains perfection in his work under review, but his efforts are a huge success towards arousing the interest of other talented writers to follow suit. His is a source of hope and encouragement to the learners of Arabic language and literature that the lost glory of the language may soon be regained if only they could grab the opportunity. Also, as said by Jeyifo, Biodun, quoting Amilcar Cabral no matter how devastated a society is by foreign or internal oppression, the generative principle is indestructible and sooner or later blooms and flowers again. (18)

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