A critical Evaluation of Zakariyau Oseni’s (play in Arabic) Al-‘Amid Al-Mubajjal

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ABSTRACT:
This research paper presents the main theme of the revenge of conscience in John Grisham’s A Time to Kill (1989). The emergence of Arabic play in Nigeria cannot be easily traced. However, the first published one is the Oseni’s al ’Amid al-Mubajjal (The Honorable Dean) in 1994. Thereafter, more than forty of the Nigerian Arabic plays have emerged. The aim of this study is to give a summarized translation of the play and critically examine its literary elements such as the themes, setting, characterization and plots as portrayed in the Arabic play. The research is also significant as it exposes the moral value of the play. The researcher used the descriptive method of research. The play is a reflection of what goes on in some Nigerian Universities where some students and staff are being oppressed by some wicked staff. Having examined the literary styles, it is found that literary elements are used by the author to a large extent to pilot the organic unity of the play. It is recommended, therefore, that the play should be staged on international television stations for the benefit of humanity.

Keyword: critical, evaluation, play

Introduction
Play implies a piece of literature, which is written in single or multiple acts, consisting of different scenes in each act. Drama is often juxtaposed with a play. In fact, the common alternative name for drama composition is a play. Drama is a form of composition designed for performance in the theatre in which actors take the role of the character, perform the indicated action and utter the written dialogue. Drama is a genre of literature, which is basically the script, and the actors play role of different characters to tell the story to the viewers and facilitate the interpretation (Abram 2016). It is often designed and developed for theoretical portrayal. In fact, it is the most concrete of all genres of literature and it has been referred to as imitation of life. Play can be understood as the dramatic work characterized by direct interaction between characters. It is designed for theoretical performance, which is arranged into dialogue, acts and scene. It is meant for a particular audience, i.e. it can be a stage play, screen play, radio play in which the feelings, emotions and
ideas of the writer are presented by characterization. In order to increase the understanding of the viewers the playwright makes use various dramatic elements, which include the plot, characters, dialogue, setting, conflict and resolution (Okodo 1992)

Much work has been written in various area of Arabic drama but few have been translated and examined. The extent to which people have research in Arabic theatre cannot be over-emphasized.

According to Z. I. Oseni (2002) in spite of the booming theater in Nigeria, scholars of Arabic have not taken advantage of the situation. The reason for that is probably because of some aspects of the theatre which Islam frown at e.g. indiscriminate mixture of men and women and polytheistic content of the plays (which makes them attractive to the west but unattractive to Arabic and Islamic audience.

The only area where drama was developed had been in private and government Arabic schools. Short Arabic plays were staged by these schools during festival like laylaful Qadr and Maolud an – Nabiy. Prominent among (The pioneers of such drama in Arabic were shaykh Muhammed kamaludeen’s Zumrat Al-adabiyyah school where plays like islamu ‘Umar and al-Dahri were staged

In his book “Madhabun ‘Islamayun fil adab wan-naqd’, Ab-Rahman, a Saudi literary scholar (1985) said that the Muslim literary scholars who are blessed with the ability to write play should know that they have a query to answer before Allah and so they should use the theatre and other literary activities as a weapon to assist and spread their Islamic faith.

He also laments that if person argues that theatre and play were not used in the time of prophet (S.A.W), the era of the companions that followed them and followers of those that followed them. How can we tackle the argument? There are two obvious reasons for this.

First, drama or play was not known to the Arabs in the Jahiliyah period. If they had known it, perhaps Islam would have taken a good portion of it as it occurs in other matter.

Islam might have accepted it, rejected it or even modified it appropriately.

Second, the mass media device which are available today and which have been used against the Muslim today throughout the world were not present in the past. If they had been available Muslims would have used them partially or completely.

In Nigeria, Arabic plays have been written and very few have been translated into English and studied (Oseni 2017) .Some lists of the plays and playwrights according to Abdulgaiyy(2015)include : Al-Amid Al-Mubajjil by professor Zakariyau I. Oseni, 1994, Ustadhun Raghma anfihi by Ustadh Moshood Abdul-Ganiy Adebayo 200i1,Baa’q’un Muqaddar by Abdul Bari Adetunji in 2005,At tajir wa sahib al-mat’am by Z.I Oseni in 2005,Al-'ajib wan Najib by Ahmad Rufai Sa’eeed in 2005,At-Tabaqat Al-Ulya by Z.I Oseni in 2006, Tahta Az-zillil Mamdud by Ibraheem Sa’eeed Al Gambari in 2008,At-Talib Al-mugtarr by Lere Ibrahim in 2009,,Al-‘abqariyat An-Nadirah by Musa Muhammad Jami’ in 2009,Rihlat al Ba’th
an Al-Insan Kamaldin Balogunin 2009, Zari’ ash-shakwa by Abdur Rafi’ Abdur Rahim Asalejo in 2010, Jalalat al-Qadi by Ibrahim Saeed al-Gambari in 2011, Farhat at Tawbah by Yahya Umar at-Tankewi in 2012, Masrahiyatayn Qasiratayn by Abdul Ganiyy Adebayo Alabi, Mata asiru Kabiran by Abdul Quadir Qasim Imam, etc.

However, in Arab countries more plays have been written and some have been translated. In his article titled “Translation and the oral aspect of teaching Arabic” (Olagunju 1995) says that the Arab has recognized the importance of translation long ago, more especially, during the period of Abbasid dynasty, Al-Mansur, the second Abbasid Caliph encouraged the act of translation. Harun Rashild was another Abbasid Caliph who contributed immensely to the development of translation. He established “Khizanat el Hikmah (House of wisdom) where many works of Greek, Indian and Persian origin were translated and the earlier translated works were revised.

There is no gain saying that this was how Greek knowledge was transmitted to the Arabs from where it was sent back to Europe. Such knowledge includes Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, and Medicine etc.

The Arabs did not care about drama in the classical Era even though they knew of its existence in Greece. During the Abbasid period (750-1258 CE) substantial academic materials were translated from Greek, Persian and Indian language into Arabic. Drama was deliberately ignored for theological reasons. The Greek theatre was taught with polytheistic ideas which Islam abhors. This is why the development of theatre had to wait till middle of the 19th century, a consequence of the vigorous renewal of contact between the Arabs and the West.

The first man to set the stage and develop theatre in Arab countries was the Lebanese Maroon Naqqash (1817-55), hence he is known as the father of the Arabic theatre. In 1848, he put on stage Al Bakhil (The miser). Two years later he staged Abul Hasan Al Mughafal (Abu Al-Hassan the gullible).

After the experience of Naqqash, other playwrights followed. They include Najib haddab (1867-99) and Adib Ishaq. They all followed the pattern of European drama and did their best to imitate Western Writers. Then arose a crop of new playwrights who had competence. These include yaqub Sanni, Najib Al-Rayhani ‘Abdal Rahman al-Sharqawi and others.

It is glaring fact that Nigerian Arabic Literary writers are neglectful of Arabic drama or play. Their efforts in this regards are minimal. On the other hand, the achievement of the Arabic in this field can not be over emphasized. However very few of these play have been translated.

Methodology
In this research, the stylistics studies and criticism of Al-Amid Al-Mubajjal” the researcher has been conservative. His conservatism has enabled him maintained the original style of the writer. The researcher adhere strictly to items conventional used in the play.
In addition, the word for word translation was avoided. This is because it gives inaccurate information. Instead, the method of translation adopted is the literary one whereby the form and contents of the original had been strictly rendered in clear English.

Aims and Objectives of the Research

The purpose of this research is to assess the stylistic features of an important play in Arabic with ample lessons.

Also, this research was undertaken to show the world the extent to which Arabic play has developed in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the research is designed to encourage students of Arabic to put across to other people who do not understand Arabic what they have learnt in fields of Arabic studies.

Justification of the choice of the topic

The justification for the choice of topic can be explained as follows:

Al-Amid Al-Mubajjaj is hero of the play and he is a round character. His character is the most unique in the play.

Considering the fact that Al-Amid Al-Mubajjaj is the single and the most important character of the play as he initiates actions through his schemes and moves the story forward until a climax is reached. He is then qualified to represent the title of the play.

Background and Birth of the Author

Professor Zakariyau I. Oseni, one of the Arabic literary giants of Nigeria was born in Auchi, Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State of Nigeria on Wednesday, 20\textsuperscript{th} December, 1950 (10\textsuperscript{th} Rabiul Awwal, 1370 AH) into family known for simplicity, devotion to Allah and service to the society.

His father, late Alhaji Idrees Oboh Oseni (born 1920) was one of the eminent Islamic scholars of Auchi who contributed greatly to the spread of Islam and Islamic Education in Edo State. His grandfather late Mallam Oseni Salihu was popular being the earliest Maudhin in Auchi. His mother Alhaja Amina Oseni, a native of Lubiaribi, Agnebode, Etsako East Local Government of Edo State born in 1962 was (and is still a woman known for religious devotion, piety and uprightness. She is crowned ‘Mother’ of all Weppa Wano women resident in Auchi. (Abdul karim, 2016)

Education

At the age of seven, the little Zakariyau Oseni enrolled at the Muslim School Auchi for his primary education and came out with Grade A pass in 1963. In interview, Professor Oseni said his father taught him Quran.

In 1964, he entered Ansarudeen Secondary Modern School where he obtained his Secondary School Certificate in 1966. He was then sent to El-Adabiya School for Arabic studies, Owo in 1967, a standard Arabic and Islamic College founded and headed by Sheikh K. S. Apaokagi in 1955. He completed his training in December 1969 and awarded al-I’dadi (intermediate) certificate in Arabic and Islamic studies in 1969. He also taught in the college for nearly one year in 1970.

Professor Oseni’s academic excellent began to show more when he was admitted into university of Ibadan in 1970 and awarded Teacher’s
Certificate in Arabic and Islamic studies with Distinction in 1971. In 1973, he wrote the G.C.E (Ordinary Level) University of London and G.C.E (advance level of W.A.E.C and passed the two examinations at a sitting each. In 1974, he was offered admission into the university of Ibadan to study Arabic language and Literature and he graduated in 1977 with B.A degree (First Class Honours).

Because of his thirst for knowledge, Prof Oseni went back to the University of Ibadan in 1979) and came out with Master’s Degree in Arabic and Islamic studies in 1980. In the following year he was admitted by the same University to pursue his doctor of philosophy Degree in Arabic language and Literature. As God Wanted ir, Professor Oseni added a golden title to his name when he bagged his Ph. D on July 24, 1984.

During the past two and a half decades of his academic struggle, Professor Oseni was awarded prizes and scholarship for his meritorious, praise-worthy and wonderful academic performance.(Jawondo 2002)

As A Teacher
Not to beat about the bush, the experience of Professor Oseni as a teacher cannot be over emphasized.

In 1970, he took up as a tutor in El-Adabiya school for Arabic studies, Owo. He later taught in Igebo primary school, Ibienafe, near Auchi between June 1971 and September 1974.(Kakawi 2000)

Having completed his first degree program in 1977 he was posted to Bayero University Kano as a Graduate Assistance in Arabic Department for one year national youth service. That was his first experience as a university lecturer. He was given an appointment by the University of Ilorin as an assistance lecturer teach Arabic Department of Religions.

It should be noted that, the teaching experience of Prof. Oseni is not limited to University Ilorin. He was once a part-time lecturer in Ibadan and he has taught in the University of Ado Ekiti. He served as a visiting Professor of Arabic during 1999/2000 session in Lagos University in the Department of foreign languages. He taught a number of courses at different levels during these years.

As a Writer
Prof. Oseni a prolific writer. He is a gifted personality endowed with writing. He writes purposefully to benefit human race not really because of promotion. He has contributed to the Nigerian library with more that fifty invaluable books (in Arabic and English). These are some of his book(Abdul Karim 2016)

BOOKS IN ARABIC
2. Al-Amid Al-Mubajjaj (A three act play in Arabic), 1994
3. Qisas Khattal-Istiwa’ 1999 (A collection of short stories)

SOME OF HIS WORK IN ENGLISH ARE:
2. Supplication in Allah’s Excellent Names (1993)
5. Sparks in the Dark (A collection of poems) 2001
7. Supplication in Allah’s Excellent Names (1993)
10. A Digest on Islamic law and Jurisprudence in Nigeria (Ed. 2003).
   And many others.

In conclusion, Prof. Oseni has more than sixty (60) internationally recognized articles and has attended many conferences. Professor Oseni also hold a traditional/religious title as the Waziri of Auchi. (Abdul Karim 2016)

About the Play

Al-Amid Al-Mubajjaj (The honourable dean) is a three—act play in Arabic. The hero is the honourable dean, professor Akhuli. He was the dean of faculty of Humanities, Kakado University, Kakado. (Oseni 1994).The play centers on the prevalent decadence in the Nigerian academic environment where some lecturers compel students to purchase lecture manuals and the students who refuse to buy are made to fail the course. Similarly, the play focuses on how some male lecturers sexually exploits some female students (Abdul Ganiyy 2016.)

Akhuli, the hero of the play was a wicked, heard-hearted and a fraudulent scholar. He indulged in all the atrocities earlier mentioned. Despite the villagers were responsible for sponsoring his education, he was very ungrateful to them.

The end-result of Akhuli’s misbehavior and ill-treatment to the lecture, is a reflection of hadith narrated be Abu-Musa (May Allah be pleased with him) who says: the prophet said: “Allah gives to an oppressor and who grabs him he would not be able to escape.

This play reveals how students react to wicked lecturers.

It concludes by demonstrating the effects of lecturer’s indulgent in immoral attitude. This is by the arrest of Akhuli, and that abruptly ended his carrier.

In conclusion, the play was written in 1990, and published for the first time in 1994. A second edition was published in 2000. It had acted in Shaha Arabic Teachers’ College, Kano city 1996 and at kwara state college of Arts and Legal Studies Ilorin, in 1997.
The play is being studied in some Nigerian University and the University of Ghana, Legon.
Moreover, the play had been reviewed in al-Mashriq Journal in Beirut commented on in journal in the U.S.A.

The Characters of the play
1. Hasan: A student in the Faculty of Humanities in University of Kakadu
2. Hafsah: A student in the same faculty
3. The Dean (Professor): Akhuli, the dean of the faculty
4. Zubair: A student in the same faculty
5. Ahmad: A student in the faculty
6. Shakir: A student in the faculty
7. Shakirah: A student in the faculty
8. Dada: An inhabitant of the village of Abalolo (The place of birth of the dean)
10. Momodu: An inhabitant of the village Abalolo
11. Mundi: Dean’s elder brother
12. Nosa: An Inhabitant of Abalolo
13. Marriyah: One of the dean’s wives
14. Buba: One of the senior lecturers in the faculty of arts
15. Dudu: one of the senior lecturer in the faculty of arts
16. Bako: one of the senior lecturers in the faculty of arts
17. Nana Fatimoh: One of the senior lecturers in the faculty of arts
18. Kola: Treasurer if the association of senior lecturers in the faculty of arts
19. Functionary: one of the police officers at the headquarters in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria.

Excerpts from the play;

ACT ONE: SCENE ONE
(In the classroom: students are expecting the arrival of Professor Akhuli, the Dean of the faculty, to the class)
Hasan (Standing in the front of the class, Mimicking professor Akhuli and demonstrating in the front of other students)
Won’t you greet me?”

BRIEF CRITICISM OF THE PLAY
Drama criticism is concerned with the analysis and evaluation of all aspects of a play. It may be said to have begun with Aristotle (Encyclopedia Americana P. 221.)

Olashehinde (1997) remarks: that for effective literary criticism, it is mandatory to know the essential features of different genres of literature”. This book Al-Amid Al-Mubajjaj is critically examined under the essential features of literatures listed below:
1. The Title
2. The plot
3. The setting
4. Style
5. Theme
6. Characterization

The title

The title of the play is Al-Amid Al-Mubajjaj, The Honorable Dean. This title dictates the characterization, setting and diction of the play. Professor Akhuli is hero of the play. He is multifaceted and seen engaging in different activities. He is seen growing in age and developing in intellect. In fact, reader can observe him easily as he develops in different aspects character wise.

The Plot

The plot of this play is very easy to outline because all the events point toward the fact that “Al-Amid Al-Mubajjaj” (the Honorable Dean) is an oppressor and as such been very wicked to the staff, the student of faculty of Humanities and likewise ungrateful to the villagers in Abalolo who sent him to school. The action of the said Dean (professor Akhuli) and the reactions of other characters to him are so well designed that they just point to the oppressive nature of the hero of the play. The play reaches its climax when he was arrested in the classroom by Officer Ahmed Akorede, a security officer from Abuja, Nigeria.

Setting in Place

The overall setting of a narrative or dramatic work or the general locale of a single episode or scene within the work is the particular physical location in which it takes place (Abrams 2016). The setting of this play in terms of place is imaginary. This is because places mentioned in the play are not real. Abalolo, Kakadu, University of Kakadu and other places mentioned in the play do not exist. Abuja is the only real setting mentioned in the play. However, the use of words and proverbs in the play suggest that it is of a Nigerian setting. However, the opening episode of the play is set in the lecture hall, where the students are expecting the arrival of Akhuli for lectures.

Setting in Terms of time

In terms of time the setting can be identified easily. No doubt the setting is discussed with reference to the present. This is because the writer refers to contemporary issues happening within the Nigerian society. This is oppression of staff.

The Style

The writer’s style can be determined by noticing his or her word choice. (Arthur2006) The language of the playwright is very rich in parables and proverbs of Nigerian origin. In fact, the language used is so simple that one does need to use the dictionary when reading the play. The reverse is the case to some writers who unnecessarily use difficult and archive words. Examples of Nigerian parables used the author include:

فكان العضو المسمى رأسا لا يبسط به

Translation

Indeed, the organ called the head is not to be trampled upon (Act 3, scene1)

The proverb above is used among the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria to justify that honour should be given to whom it is due. The proverb was used
by Dr Dudu to caution Dr Kako when he lashed at the dean during Faculty board meeting and criticised him openly for his oppression. Another example is seen act one of the play as follows;

Translation:
Allah is the one that assists the cow without a tail in chasing flies (Act one)

This proverb is used among the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria to sympathise with the oppressed that are helpless in the society. The students have used it to sympathise with one another in the play because they have been oppressed by the Dean of the Faculty. Another example is

Translation:
Verily, the lizard that protects the ants will definitely feed on them (Act 2 scene2)

Similarly the author’s style is influenced by the religion and most he used quotes from the Quran and Hadith. Consider these examples;

The Quranic clause ظهر الفساد is repeated three times by Shakir(Act one). The phrase means the Evil has appeared. The verse is extracted from chapter 30 verse 41 of the Quran

The Theme
Al-Amid Al-Mubajjaj is a play full of themes. The main theme is:

1. Our action have consequences: We should always think of the bad consequences of our actions because everything we do is being recorded and shall be rewarded. If Akhuli had known that his bad actions have bad consequences he would have changed for the better. At last he met his Waterloo and was arrested right in the lecturer room.

Other Sub-themes are:

2. God gives respite to the oppressors
Allah has given Akhuli a long rope but refused to be righteous until he met his Waterloo. The end result of Akhuli’s misdeeds are reflection of the hadith of the prophet which says:
“Indeed Allah gives respite to an oppressor until He grabs him and he would never be able to escape”.

3. Nobody is above the law: this is another sub-theme of the play. This is clearly seen when Akhuli was arrested right way from the lecture room and taken to Abuja.

Characterization
Characterization is a process by which a writer reveals a character’s trait or qualities, and explain a character’s motives or what makes the character act the way he or she does. There are four main methods a writer uses or what other say or think about the character. A writer may describe how a character looks, how a character thinks, speaks and acts. The author may also comments directly on the character’s behavior or personality. (Arthur 2006) Characterization is very significant in this play especially as an element of the plot. Taking the following characters as examples, one
would appreciate the extent to which the characters have been used to move the play forward until a climax is reach.

**Akhuli**

He is hero and the most important character of the play. He is a man best described in Shakirat’s word:

“The ignorant dean
That loves desolation
The wealth dean
Ignorantly wealthy
The worthy dean
Worthy to be fought
The excellent dean
That is harsh
The great dean
Miserably great
The foolish dean
Lover of enmity”

These attributes contributes a lot in facilitating the outcome of the play. Coming late to class, skipping of lecturers, bribery and corruption as well adultery and fornication are some of the undesirably characters exhibited by Akhuli. He is a round character hence multifaceted and seen everywhere in the play. The efforts to get himself re-elected as the next dean was futile. Rather he was arrested and taken straight away to Abuja for investigation.

**Hasan**

Hasan was nothing but a chameleon. This is because he changes his behavior to suit the situation. He mimicked Akhuli in his absence and behaved well in his presence.

**Zubair**

He was a tough fellow. He was the first student to react negatively to Akhuli. He told Akhuli he had asked an irrelevant question when he requested him to mention the ethnic group he belongs. Also he challenged Akhuli when he blasphemed in his description of the adherent of Islam and Christianity.

**Hafsah**

His role was very conspicuous. She was the class-representative and hand-out seller. She kept the record of those who purchase the hand-out and those who failed to buy. She was the middle-man between Akhuli and her colleagues in relation to sales of lecture manual **Shakir and Shakirah**

They are two students close to each other. Akhuli suspected that they must be prospective husband and wife. They had both refused to buy the handout even when Akhuli threatened them to do so. They sat close to each in the classroom and did virtually everything together. Shakirah was so audacious that she reversed negatively the poem used to eulogize Akhuli. From the way the fellows behaved, they were close to state security operatives.
Mundi

He is elder brother of the dean. He delivered the message of the villagers to the dean. The villages consulted him on the movement of the dean to verify the time of his arrival. He advised Akhuli on money he collected for admission as well as on other issues. He advised Akhuli to return early, when he wanted to visit his lover in a neighboring village or to sleep there if he could.

kako

He was a straightforward, audacious and open-minded lecturer. He lashed at the dean, and pointed an accusing finger to him. He even exposed his immoral attitudes on the campus. He felt disappointed why the school authority had left him alone al the while. He even went to the extent of changing his nickname from “The Honorable Dean to ‘Demented Dean’”.

Nana Fatimah Tudu

Nana Fatimah, the only female lecturer in the Faculty of Arts, she tried to pacify the Dean and Kako with her soft words and did her best to settle the disputes in a diplomatic way. She appears to be a peace-maker.

Dudu

No doubt that Dudu was sympathetic in his approach to issues and beat about the bush during the faculty staff meeting. He was level-headed and did not want to offend the Dean.

Summary of Characterization

No doubt that the activities of these characters contributed to the development of the play without any exception.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the literary elements or the elements of literature aided the understanding of the play. The plot is a simple one in which Akhuli, the dean, faculty of humanities, was the hero of the play. He was tyrannical and cruel to junior lecturers and students in the University of Kakadu, likewise ungrateful to the villages in Abalolo. He has his way for a long time and was obvious of the fact he was being trailed until he met his waterloo. The reader captures this storyline easily. The major theme is derived and grabbed, which our actions whether good or bad will be rewarded. The characters are well selected and are used to move the plot steadily until the climax is reached. The author’s style is simple and bereft of solecism. His writings is rich in proverbs and parables of the Nigerian origin. Similarly the influence of religion is quite easily observed as there are phrases of the Quran and Hadith cited to buttress some facts.

Findings

About forty plays have been written on Arabic in Nigeria and the researcher has critically examined one of them in this research.

Contribution to Knowledge

The contribution made in this study is the stylistic study of this play and a summarized English translation for the benefit of English readers.
Recommendations
Having written this work and undergone this research, I hereby recommend as follows:
1. This play should be staged on the international Television station
2. The English translation should stage in the performing Arts Department in international Universities for maximum benefits.

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