

## **Matricentric Feminism and Mythology in Umaru Landan and Dexter Lyndersay's *Shaihu Umar***

**Chinyere Lilian Okam, Ph.D.**

Department of Theatre, Film and Carnival Studies,  
Faculty of Arts, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria  
Email: clookam@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

This article examines the portrayal of matricentric feminism as well as expounds the issues of mythology and how both informed each other in Umaru Landan and Dexter Lyndersay's *Shaihu Umar*. It argues that Fatima's sojourn in search of her son, Shaihu, is propelled by a will borne out of motherhood and given strength by supernatural forces. The methodological base of the study is qualitative in nature appropriating the concepts of matricentric feminism and mythology as structural scaffoldings while Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction will be used as analytical framework. This concept attempts to challenge the interpretation of a text based on conventional notions of stability of human self, the external world, and of language and meaning. The philosophy of existence of the eponymous character is revealed in the play. The article tries to probe if the matricentric elements exuded by Fatima (Shaihu's mother) are just a will tied to motherhood or if it is given strength by the metaphysics of presence and the messianic.

**Keywords:** Deconstruction, Matricentrism, Metaphysics of presence, Messianic, Mythology

### **Introduction: Drama and the African Society**

For millennia, dramatic works have been used to portray motherhood and mythologies across cultures. In the 5th century B.C., the Greek poet, Homer, documented a myth entitled *The Iliad and the Odyssey*. This piece is a sojourn on series of wars fought by the Greek hero – Odysseus, and the challenges he passes through in his quest to return home. It reveals the era when men/women and gods related freely. Gods such as Poseidon, Hera, Hades and demi-gods like Dionysus and Perseus have not been rare in the literary

and performance arts. Euripides presents a mythological narrative with his play, *Andromache*; the place of motherhood remained prominent in this play. As an eponymous heroine in the play, Andromache's wellbeing aligns with motherhood and mothering, two prominent features of the matricentric feminist approach. Thus, it is not rare for the concepts of motherhood and mythology to intermix especially in an African art.

In Africa, the drama form has been a veritable tool for the conveyance of societal issues. It informs about happenings in the society as well as provides solution to such in some cases. This corroborates Mbachaga's assertion that "every committed writer is an interventionist in the events and happenings in society and he or she does this on behalf of the people" (2014, p. 45)". Mbachaga (2014) claims further that "African arts are socially committed arts (p. 44). In traditional African societies, there are supernatural forces that are believed to inform the existential essence of humans. These forces often control the happenings in the lives of their adherents. Thus, events in their lives are tied to destiny attributed to forces. Numerous definitions of mysticism abound. Ralph Abraham (2015) asserts that,

Mysticism is a religious practice based on the belief that knowledge of spiritual truth can be gained by praying or thinking deeply. It is a religious truth that one can know only by revelation and cannot fully understand. Also, it is the experience of mystical union or direct communion with ultimate reality reported by mystics. A religious practice based on the belief that knowledge of spiritual truth can be gained by praying or thinking deeply. (p. 1)

*Shaihu Umar* is an adaptation of a biographic novel by the same name written by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The narrative focuses on the birth and growth through adulthood of a young man, Shaihu Umar. The eponymous character is born a day after his father's death. The lightning and thunder occurrence preceding his birth is significant as this takes place before, during and after his birth. He is taken care of by his grandmother until her death when he is just two years old. Shaihu's mother, Fatima marries Makau, a warrior who is later banished from Kagara by the Chief. Fatima hands Shaihu to her childhood friend, Amina and her husband, Buhari to cater for him while she (Fatima) visits her father who was arrested. Sarkin Zegi kidnaps Shaihu and takes him to an alcove. A

hyena devours Sarkin Zegi but Shaihu is being protected by his guardian angel, Rauhani. The boy is sold to Abdulkarim in BerKufa, Egypt, where his buyer adopts him as a son. He joins Imam MASUD's Islamic classes.

During Fatima's celebration of the release of her father, Amina and Buhari come to Fatima to tell her about the kidnap of Shaihu. The mother swears to go in search of the boy. In the course of engaging in the search, she is kidnapped and sold to Tripoli. Shaihu takes over from Imam MASUD as Imam and Sheik. He leaves with Abdulkarim to Hausa land in search of his mother. Shaihu finds his mother in Tripoli. The enthusiastic mother tells Shaihu that she will not be able to go with him to Hausa land. She dies in Umar, her son's arms. Umar continues his journey to Kagara. Abdulkarim dies on the way. Back at Kagara, the Chief was dead and Kwuatu imposes himself as king. There is a revolt in Kagara against Kwuatu. At this moment, Shaihu enters. With the protection of the unseen Guardian Angel, he disrupts the attempt of the people to kill Kwuatu. Shaihu advocates for peace, love and forgiveness among Muslims and Pagans.

It is not rare for concepts to intermix in drama. One Nigerian play that could be situated in this spectrum is Umaru Landan and Dexter Lyndersay's play adaptation of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's *Shaihu Umar* of the same title. Although this play engages in the display of the matricentric, by exploring the matrifocal love and care often portrayed by a mother for her child, there seems to abound mythological elements in the narrative. To this end, this study examines politics of matricentrism and expounds the concept of mythology in Umaru Landan and Dexter Lyndersay's *Shaihu Umar*. It argues that Fatima's sojourn in search of her son, Shaihu, is propelled by a supernatural will borne out of a force meaningfully relative to the metaphysics of presence. The questions this study seeks to answer are: what are the characteristics of mythology and matricentrism in *Shaihu Umar*? How does mysticism transcend the matricentric in the play?

### **Theoretical Grounding**

This paper is anchored on Jacques Derrida's theory of Deconstruction. As a poststructuralist theorist, "Derrida challenges the logo-centric Western tradition of the metaphysics of presence"

(Akhter, 2015, p. 42). The term does not have a generic definition. However, Habib(2005) states that “it is a way of reading, a mode of writing, and above all a way of challenging interpretations of the texts based upon conventional notions of stability of human self, the external world, and of language and meaning (as cited in Akhter, 2015, p. 46). It counters existing conventions from the inside. “Deconstruction is destructive and de-sedimentation of all the significations that have their source in that of the logos” (as cited in Akhter, 2015, p. 46). According to Alqudah(2019), “deconstruction concentrates on the rhetorical rather than the grammatical aspect of the text” (p. 500). The end of deconstruction is not dismantling. There must be a reconstruction of the dismantled culture, performance or text. In the context of the study, the research sets out to deconstruct matricentric feminism and mythology in *Shaihu Umar*. Two thematics of deconstruction explored in the play are the metaphysics of presence and the messianic.

### **Mythology and Drama**

Myths are narratives with which the world is explained. It unravels “the original meaning of the world” (Losada, 2015, p. 931). Mythologies are tales that reveal transcendental issues of gods and of men. According to Losada (2015),

Mythology is an ordinary story, symbolic, dynamic and apparently simple, of an extraordinary event with a transcendent and personal referents are composed of a series of constant or invariable cultural semantic elements, reducible to themes, and of a nature that is conflictive (requiring a test) functional (transmitting common values and beliefs, providing factual schemas, rites and actions), and etiological (expressing in some fashion a cosmogony or eschatology, either particular or universal). (p. 930)

Mythologies transcend the physical. They dovetail into the supernatural. Myths are a medium through which that which surpasses human comprehension could be explained. They are philosophical medium through which mysteries are deconstructed. Philosophy and mythology are intertwined. The latter could be used to understand the former. Questions such as the reason of the existence of man, why the world exists, why animals are inferior to man and so on are the subject of discourse of mythology. “Mythology began as a way to answer questions about life, explain tradition,

establish culture, and educate people” (Mark, 2018, p. 1). Paradigms of myths include the narratives of Odysseus, Xena and Perseus through the stories of Obatala and Moremi in Western Nigeria. Myths are extraordinary stories embellished with imagery and the mystical. “They are anonymous stories with supernatural episodes as a means of interpreting natural events” (Harmon and Hugh, 2003, p. 326). Also, myths are not rare in Africa. While the hero myth of Sundiata, the king of the Malian empire abound, the myth of creation of the Yoruba people in Western Nigeria has garnered a large attention. In ethnic groups such as Igbo, Isoko, Ijaw, Igala, Urhobo Igbo and so on, myths constitute an array of the corpus of stories told by groits.

A major feature of myth is the display of the supernatural or the transcendental. There abounds tales of gods who descend from heaven to make love to human creatures and beget demigods. Recall the Greek myth in which Zeus descends from Mount Olympus to earth to indulge in sexual engagement with the mortal, Semele. This union leads to the pregnancy and birth of Dionysus, the god of wine and vegetation. Precursory to Dionysus’s birth, Semele dies with the pregnancy, enraged, Zeus rips Semele’s foetus off her womb and keeps him inside of his Zeua’s lap until Dionysus gets mature to be born. The foregoing reveals that extraordinary exploits are a salient feature of mythology. The element of the supernatural comes to bear in Yoruba mythology. This comes to play in the creation narrative. The Yoruba people believe that Olodumare sent Obatala, the god of creation to create man. Hence, his stance on the division of labour. Other myths are that of Sango, the god of thunder, Ogun, the Iron god, Orunmila or Ifa, the deity of divinity among others. African novelists have used myth to assert their creative oeuvre. The South African novelist, Credo Mutwa, in his novel, *My People* (1969) exposes the mythology of creation espoused by his people, the Bantus in South Africa. In Nigeria, novelists and dramatists have been able to utilize myths as raw materials for their creative works. Plays such as Femi Osofisan’s *Many Colours Make the Thunder King* (2015), Ahmed Yerima’s *Yemoja* (2002), Bode Sowande’s *MammyWater’s Wedding* (2014), Duro Ladipo’s *Oba Moro* (1964), *Oba Koso* (1964), *Oba Waja* (1964) are all expressions of mythology with the medium of the performance art.

### **Understanding Matricentric Feminism**

The term matricentric feminism is a theory within the larger space of feminist discourse. To have a clear understanding of the term, it is imperative one considers the terms *Motherhood* and *Mothering*. “Motherhood refers to the patriarchal institution of motherhood which is male defined and controlled and is deeply oppressive to women, whereas, the term mothering refers to women’s experiences of mothering and is female defined and potentially empowering to women” (O’Reilly, 2016, p. 28). The former (motherhood) which is located in the cultural space differs from one locality to another. It is defined by the tradition of the people. Motherhood focuses on the role of the mother in her family and in her society. On the other hand, “mothers are individuals who engage in mother works or as Sara Ruddick theorised, Maternal practice” (O’Reilly, 2016, p. 15). In most indigenous African and Asian cultures, the mother is expected to wake up before everyone in the house and engage in the house chore such as washing, cleaning and cooking. She is to wake the children up at the appropriate time to make them have their bath, feed them, before preparing for the business of the day. The woman must return from her business-either fishing, trading or farming, on time to prepare the evening meal and lull the children to sleep at night. The above is obviously a patriarchal construct. It is not sympathetic towards the mother whose role is relegated to culinary activities, the bedroom, and gives the baby suck.

The aforementioned “is naturally not a natural or biological function. Rather, it is specifically and fundamentally a cultural practice that is continuously redesigned in response to changing economic and societal factors” (O Reilly, 2016, p. 28). In other words, the role of the indigenous African woman and the contemporary African woman differs. On the other hand, Mothering is a biological construct as “the word mothering refers to women’s experiences of mothering and is female defined and potentially empowering of women” (O’Reilly, 2019, p. 22). Mothering is a major responsibility of every mother. “Matricentric feminism seeks to make motherhood the business of feminism by positioning mothers’ needs and concerns as the starting point for a theory and politics for and on women’s empowerment” (O’Reilly, 2019, p. 13). Here, “mothers do not live simply as women, but as mother women. African mothers do not live as women, but as racialised women” (O’Reilly, 2019, p. 20).

Domesticating this within the mythologized ideals as Okam (2015) “if any feminine term albeit encapsulates nature the earth due to productivity and to nations due to multiplicity to things that yield fruits. Does this symbolize weakness?”. Motherhood should not be disconnected from the same values it creates (p. 50).

Matricentrism has its root in the larger framework of gender discourse. According to O’Reilly (2016), “matricentric feminism is aimed at engendering the empowerment of mothers. This theory is a departure from the numerous feminist approaches such as Radical Feminism and Stiwanism. Matricentric feminism duly contrasts already existing feminist approaches. In the book *A Lesser Life: The Myth of Women’s Liberation in America*, Sylvia Hewlett had earlier stated copiously that “many contemporary feminists have reviled both mothers and babies. Some feminists rage at babies, others trivialize them and very few have attempted to integrate them into the fabric of a full and equal life” (Hewlett, 1986, pp.184-185). Matricentric theory is a maternal theory, one that focuses on how to become a mother and what to do as a mother. Matricentric feminism focuses on the valourization of the mother in culture and cultural productions. O’Reilly (2020) provides the tenets of the theory of matricentric feminism as:

- the topic of mothers, mothering, and motherhood is deserving of serious and sustained scholarly inquiry;
- regards mothering as work that is important and valuable to society but emphasizes that the essential task of mothering is not, and should not be, the sole responsibility and duty of mothers;
- contests, challenges, and counters the patriarchal oppressive institution of motherhood and seeks to imagine and implement a maternal identity and practice that is empowering to mothers;
- seeks to correct the child centredness that defines much of the scholarship and activism on motherhood and seeks to develop research and activism from the experience and the perspective of mothers;
- commits to social change and social justice, and regards mothering as a socially engaged enterprise and a site of power, wherein mothers can and do create social change through childrearing and activism;

- understands mothering and motherhood to be culturally determined and variable, and is committed to exploring the diversity of maternal experience across race, class, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age, and geographical location; and
- endeavours to establish maternal theory and motherhood studies as an autonomous, independent, and legitimate scholarly discipline (p. 18).

Matricentric feminism focuses on the mother. Unlike the larger space of the female gender discourse, matricentric feminism is one sided since it relates to basically mothers. It is a feminism for mother-one a mother can identify with. Andrea O' Reilly, a major voice in the scholarship on matricentrism posits that there is no single definition of the term as it could be multidisciplinary. In her words, "as a new and emergent feminism, it is difficult to define matricentric feminism other than to say that it is explicitly matrifocal in its perspective and emphasis. It is multi-theoretical in perspective" (O' Reilly, 2020, p. 18). The above position portends that the focus of this shade of feminism is *the mother* and the process of *mothering*. The proponent (O' Reilly) and advocates of the matricentric discourse have decried why this theoretical approach has not been placed into the centre of discourse by feminist theorists. In her statement, "matricentric feminism however, has yet to be incorporated into the field of academic feminism. In fact, it remains peripheral to academic feminism" (O' Reilly, 2020, p. 19). But the question that arises at this point is do mothers really require a feminist approach? While the above question could pose further problem for the feminist discourse, we argue that a mother-centred feminist methodology is required since all through the decades, radical feminists have often disapproved motherhood and mothering. Pregnancy and child birth had been an anathema to the mainstream feminism. According to Firestone (1970),

No matter how much educational, legal, and political equality women achieve and no matter how many women enter public industry, nothing fundamental will change for women as long as natural reproduction remains the rule or artificial or assisted reproduction the exception. Natural reproduction is neither in women's best interest nor in those of the children so reproduced. The joy of giving birth-invoked so frequently in this society is a



patriarchal myth. In fact pregnancy is barbaric and natural childbirth is at best necessary and tolerable and as worst like shirting a pumpkin. (p. 92)

Tong (2014) advances Firestone position with that statement that “the material basis for the sexual/political ideology of female submission and domination was rooted in the reproductive roles of men and women. Pregnancy is barbaric” (Tong, 2014, p. 52). This could be one of the reasons the mother has invariably been marginalised in the field of feminist study. Also, mothers are not just women, but they are mother-women. Since they are, they therefore need a model on which they could situate their cultural and sociological base.

### **Matricentric Feminism and Mythology in Landan and Lyndersay’s *Shaihu Umar***

Metaphysics of presence a tenet of Jacques Derrida’s Deconstruction theory is present in this play. Here, “The thunder praises his glory and so do the angels, out of the reverence for him. He sends the lightning bolts which is in accordance with his will. Yet, they argue about God, though his power is awesome (Quran 13:13). Lightning portrays extraordinary things to come in African belief system. After lightning, comes thunder, then comes rain which makes the earth fertile. Shaihu mythically, is the rain that comes after the lightning and thunder. The above is fully captured in the statement below:

Amina: Fatu! How are you, Fatu? Really, I am so happy I...

Fatima: Oh my God! For Allah’s sake, stop! Your joy is misplaced. There is this child, born a day after his father’s death. Since yesterday the sky has been spitting thunder and light. What can we say to this death and birth with the heavens shaking as if it will fall? These signs must have some meaning. (p. 6)

The above is the presence of the mystical precursory to his birth. Fatima is aware that the circumstances behind the death of her husband and the birth of her son the following day is beyond human comprehension. She is poised from the moment of his birth to protect Shaihu Umar from harm. Her choice of another husband two years after the death of Shaihu’s father is predicated on how well the man would cater for her son. Fatima opts for Makau, a warrior. Getting married to a warrior would boost her protection of her son. Also,

matricentrism comes to play in the narrative. Mother-in-law influences Fatima's choice of a husband as well. The former implores the latter to choose Makau over all the other suitors for a husband.

Mother-In-Law: Touching on this Makau, I swear to Allah, if I were so many years younger, nothing would stop me from...

Fatima: All right, as he is the one I have always been thinking of night day, the marriage can now take place (p. 8)

Going by the tenets of matricentrism, mothering is culturally determined. African mothers decide the suitors of their daughters out of care so that they ensure the safety of their children in their matrimonial home. This is for Fatima to take solace in marrying Makau, a caring man, over Isuh, the troublesome man, Habu the potash seller and world traveler, and Kwuatu the Chief's younger brother. Makau is later banished from Kagara and Fatima resolves to see her parents at Fatika. She hands Shaihu over to Amina and her husband, Buhari

Fatima: To Allah, we are troubled by one who has evil intentions towards us. I have to go now to see my parents at Fatika, alone and I am leaving my son with my friend Amina and her husband who I am sure will look after him, but only if our enemies are kept away (p. 22)

The above statement goes by the matricentric ideals. The resolve of Fatima and the involvement of Amina and her husband conveys a sense of the ideals of commitment to social change and social justice justifies mothering as a socially engaged enterprise. In Africa in which the play is set, a mother is not the biological, but orientational or preferably social. Even though Amina and her husband are not the biological parents of Shaihu, culturally determined motherhood style has given the role of mothering to them. Shaihu is eventually kidnapped by Sarkin Zegiwho connives with Kwuatuto ensure that the boy is sold into slavery.

Sarkin Zegi: You want a lot of meat eh! Let me sell you, you can have all the meat and cakes you want! (he laughs again). Umar, step-son of Makau, Chief Warrior of the Chief of Kagara. Do you know what will happen to you now?... Wait and I will tell you everything. Now, there is a caravan of slave merchants who will be delighted

to have a small boy to do their bidding. This will surely earn me a lot of money... (Umar opens his mouth to gather strength and Sarkin Zegi closes it. Rauhani begins to pray, Sarkin Zegi draws a long knife which he places on the boy's neck..... Sarkin Zegi falls off to sleep. A Hyena appears, sniffs the air and pads slowly towards Umar. The Rauhani points sharply away. The Hyena tumbles. It senses the presence of the supernatural and is powerless to move in any other direction. The Hyena pounces as Sarkin Zegi up and screams. The Hyena feeds...). (p. 24)

The above event provides a sense of the Metaphysics of Presence and the Messianic. The hyena is a symbol of destruction and death while the Rauhani is the messiah that is sent to protect Umar. The role of the messiah is to make Shaihu fulfil his destiny. In Islam, destiny is one of the wills of the Almighty for men. This destiny no matter the circumstances must be fulfilled. This holds sway in Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, and Ola Rotimi's *The gods are Not to Blame*, where the protagonists' attempt to foil their ill-fated destiny fail. This is also captured in the life of the Biblical Joseph in which his brothers' attempt to truncate his destiny brings his destiny to fruition. Metaphysics of presence is symbolic of the Hyena. Furthermore, Fatima who is happy that her father who was arrested had been released, is greeted with the news of the kidnap of her son, Umar. She does not relent from searching for him to the extent that she dedicates her life in the rough search.

Fatima: I will spend a night in Makarfi before I go to Kano. Maybe Makau can come with me. If my son is in Kano and will soon be taken to another world, then I must reach him quickly before they leave. I know that my husband will tell me that Allah knows best, and that nothing moves but according to His will. I know this very well. If Makau cannot come with me, Allah will see that I reach my son safely (p. 28). The search takes Fatima from Fatika to Kagara, from where she goes to Makarfi to see husband, Makau. Her husband advises her to wait for a week before the two of them embark on the journey. Fatima refuses and embarks on her journey. At Kano, she realizes that her son has been sold to BerKurfa.

Ado: Allah willing, in a few days' time, I shall be in BerKurfa.

Gumuzu: That is very fine. You can go with him then

Fatima: O, thank you. I am very grateful (p. 38)

Fatima's journey to BerKurfa turns out to be Murzuk. Unknowingly, she had been sold to Ado by Gumuzu. She refuses to be Ado's slave. This disagreement culminates into the duo's meeting the Cadi for resolution. Cadi tell Ahmad to see her off to BerKurfa. Fatima thanks Cadi and they embark on the journey. However they get to Tripoli and Ahmad stops.

Fatima: Is this BerKurfa?

Ahmad: Shut your mouth! What is this about BerKurfa? We are now in Tripoli... I bought you from the Cadi at Murzuk for five Maria.

The above is what is call in theatre, *qui pro quo* mistakingher lords as good Samaritans who wanted to help her get to BerKurfa to see her Umar. She is surprised that even the Islamic brotherhood does not apply once it comes to slave trade business that they only call Allah but they do different thing entirely. This is not particular with Islam but with all religions. Laying aside her suffering and humiliation, she endured all just to meet her Umar. The gravity of the pains she passes through is fully captured in the stage direction below:

(In a short time, Fatima is pushed out by the maid. She is in chains which Ahmad quickly removes and throws back at the maid. Fatima's hair is grey and her cheeks are sunken. Her eyes are dull and hollow. She sits in tattered clothes where she has fallen) (p. 43)

Abdulkarim who sees Fatima is awe at the damage that has been done to her by the slave owner, Ahmad.

Fatima: I have been looking for my son and I have fallen in the hands of evil men who value money than human life. I want nothing more from this life than to succeed in finding my son. This is what keeps me from going mad

Situating this investigation with the horizon of the matricentric feminist ideology articulates the tenet that understands mothering and motherhood to be culturally determined and variable and is committed to exploring culture...sexuality, ability, age and geographical location. Fatima's motherhood mind in a referential dimension to the tenets fundamentally fits into the tenets of matricentrism. According to Okam (2015) "one of the causes of

this is that women have been left alone to suffer for their children and yet their contributions are left unrecognised, undervalued, and primitively rationalised” (p. 52). Traditional patriarchy deepens this dimension of impunity.

Towards the end of the play, the reader understands that knowing oneself is central to fulfilling one's destiny. According to Asouzu (2007), “this is the central issue of existential pragmatic understood as being-in-control (*ima-onwe-onye*)” (p. 214). To recognise one's purpose in life is the first step towards having control over one's destiny. The *Man Know Thyself* maxim appropriated by the Greek Philosopher, Socrates, comes to play in *Shaihu Umar*. Fatima is aware that his son has a purpose to fulfil on earth. This strengthens her perseverance in search of her son. Fatima eventually sees her long sought after son.

Within the context of mythology and going by the values of the setting of the play, Shaihu Umar's experience in his dream is a transcendent case which progresses to the end that destiny has for him. According to Stace (1961), “it is important as well as possible to make a distinction between mythical experience in self and the conceptual interpretation which may be put upon it (p. 31). In Shaihu's dream, he is the cub while the mother is the Lioness. Forces beyond the hero's comprehension speak to him about Fatima's search for him via the medium of dream. In the dream, although the Lioness encounters a lot of difficulties, it gets close to finding its lost cub. Shaihu tells the Scholars that:

Shaihu: Each night, for several months, as I lay an hour or so asleep, I would dream of an old lioness. And her cub...at first, in a cave (p. 35)

In reality, Fatima is not with him, but her presence in his dream gives him hope of reunion with her mother. The lioness has to fend for the cub since the lion is dead. In her search for food for the cub, it (the cub) is stolen. The lioness put aside every other activity to look for the cub. The dreamer (Shaihu) is aware that the lioness is his mother in search of him. Metaphysics transcends reality from different perspectives, and also “opts for a more comprehensive understanding of reality” (Asouzu, 2007, p. 9). Although Shaihu's dream may be seen as a phenomenon of an unconscious belief of the presence of a supernatural being. The dream is in the fundamental and existential understanding of metaphysics of

presence and messianic. It's potency common to the drive in him to go in search of the mother beyond hypothetical conditions which is not out of place. What could a cub be and a lioness mean for a child whose father is dead and knows how the mother cared for him? More still, is the fact that he has an experiential knowledge of a presence that has always guided him. These dreams and their understanding from the angle of the dreamer has a metaphysical foundation to the spur of events that necessitates Fatima's drive to sojourn into the oblivious in search of her son. This goes beyond motherhood. This is because motherhood is nature and nature is bound to change, but spiritually, while we have categorically stated as mythological cannot be determined by the human nature. Thus, it will not be inappropriate to state that Shaihu's drive and Fatima's is non-humanistic (by this, I mean self-will) but a transcendence of nature into the spiritual. In an emotional reunion, Fatima is fulfilled since seeing the son was all she had always wanted in life. Shaihu requires he takes her back home to care for her, but she refuses.

Fatima: I am your mother who for many years has been seeking you.  
And at last Allah has brought us together.

Fatima: Ah, my son! Do you not see what I am...? I know I shall never return home...seeing you is enough...As for you, may Allah take you home safely....to see the rest of your kinsmen...go to Markafi and Fatika...ask my husband and my family to forgive me... (p. 44)

Fatima dies in Shaihu's arms, but she had fulfilled her purpose in life. Shaihu is left alone with the Rauhani. He does not know the where about of Makau, and her mother has joined his father. Before his search for his mother, Shaihu had become a well-known Sheik in Ber Kufa, Egypt. He is cared for like a son by the famous Arab-Slave trader, Abdulkarim. His tutelage under Sheik MAS'UD prepares him for the task ahead.

Shaihu: On a Wednesday evening, in the power of the All-Knowing,  
The ninth day of the month of Muharram, I completed the long, joyous task set before. (p. 34)

The above statement captures the fulfilment of the hero's destiny. He succeeds Mas'ud after the latter's death. He becomes a Muslim cleric who is poised to advance the message of the Holy Prophet. He is destined to change the narrative of wickedness of man. As a cleric,

Shaihu is poised towards propagating Islam with his deeds. He meets Kwatau, one of the villains who connived to kidnap and sell him into slavery. The mob is set to kill the villain. This is Shaihu's opportunity to revenge the wickedness meted on him by Kwatau. However, "Shaihu imposes himself between the raider and Kwatau as the Rauhani moves to the centre in prayer. The farmer drops his arm in surprise. He raises it again to deal the intruder but suddenly begins to scratch at the air with his hoe and move aimlessly away...Shaihu lifts Kwatau and helps him into the alcove" (p. 45). Sheik Shaihu refutes the crowd's suggestion that he should had let Kwatau be killed. Shaihu's supernatural wellbeing continuously makes him to overcome every hurdle he faces. His attackers are surprised at the unseen force that prevents them from being able to strike at Shaihu.

Shaihu: People and brothers in Islam. I beg you, consider the lessons taught you by your Imam of Allah's infinite wisdom and forgiveness...Forgive each other because forgiveness is sweeter than honey and full of blessings for giver and receiver... And now to your constant raids on pagan farmers, you know full well: As God created you so he created them. Your raiding is for earthly possessions not for the sake of God and the Prophet. You all know that we will all leave this world as we came into it-indeed we are true brothers.  
(pp. 49-50)

Shaihu presents the sermon of peace and forgiveness. His, is a presentation of common values and beliefs that need to be upheld in the society. His aim is to create better people of the Muslim community and unbelievers as well. The philosophy of existence of the eponymous character is revealed in the play. Shaihu sees love and forgiveness as paramount in human existence. He is a messenger of peace who initiates love and peaceful co-existence between his Muslim brothers and the pagans. At the end of the play, the Rauhani, Shaihu's guardian angel remains with him to continue to play his role in Shaihu's life. The play is an interesting dramaturgy of mythology. Also, while there is no denial of the fact that elements of matricentrism holds sway in the narrative, Fatima's quest for the search of her son is as a result of the supernatural compulsion to engage in the journey. She also understands that the destiny of Shaihu Umar her son, must be fulfilled.

### **Conclusion**

Beyond matricentrism and metaphysics of presence, the authors mythologize important issues. The authors foresaw the Boko Haram and Matasine uprisings coming around the corner. That is why they address the discrepancies against women and children. The play mirrors the fact that religious ideology and perception is the major problem that Nigeria would face after independence, if they do not refute the mercantile Arabs' culture of enslavement. It also portrays a cry for Nigeria and Africa on a wider consideration to be alert and guard against external influences which encourage killing of their brothers and sisters. However, the play is presented in the postcolonial as an allegory to the Northern and Southern Nigeria. Whereas Kagara which is located at the South of Kano, in allegorical view, trickles down to the Southern Atlantic ocean presumed as pagan villages by some ideologies.

### **References**

- Alqudah, M.K.I. (2019). Deconstruction: A cornucopia of esoteric meanings. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 4(2), 16-27. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.4.2.462>.
- Abraham, R. (2015). *Mathematics and mysticism*. Retrieved 28 August 2020, from <http://www.ralph-abraham.org/articles/MS%23144.Visions/ms144.pdf>.
- Asouzu, I. (2007). *Ikwa Ogwe: Essential reading readings in complementary reflection. A systematic methodological approach*. Calabar: Salesprint Publishers.
- Eagleton, T. (1996). *Literary theory: An introduction*. London: Blackwell.
- Firestone, S. (1970). *The dialectic of sex*. London: Bantam Books.
- Hewlett, S. (1986). *A Lesser life: The myth of women's liberation in America*. New York: Warner.
- Harmon, W. & Hugh, H. (2003). *A handbook of literature*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Lattimore, R. (2011). *The Iliad of Homer*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ladipo, Duro. (1964). *Three Yoruba plays: Oba Koso, Oba Moro and Oba Waja*. Osogbo: Mbari Publications.
- Losada, J. (2015). Myth and origins: Men want to know. *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, 5(10), 930-945. DOI: 10.17265/2159-5836/2015.10.013
- Mark, J. (2018). Mythology. *Ancient history encyclopedia*. Retrieved 14 September 2020, from <https://www.ancient.eu/mythology/>



- Mbachaga, J.D.(2014) The creative writer as a social critic: James Alachi's Enekole approached. In S. E. Ododo & J. D. Mbachaga (Eds.), *Theatre and socio criticism: The dramaturgy of James Alachi* (1st ed., pp. 43-52).Abuja: SONTA.
- Mutwa, C. (1969). *My people*. SA: Penguin Books.
- Okam, C.L. (2015). Women and the patriarchal structure: Theatre for development in the case of violence. *Voices: Journal of English and Drama*, 1(3), 34-42.
- O' Reilly, A. (2016). *Matricentric feminism theory, activism, and practice*. Bradford: Demeter Press.
- O' Reilly, A. (2019). *From motherhood to mothering: The legacy of Adrienne's Rich*. New York: SUNY Press.
- O' Reilly, A. (2020). *The Encyclopedia of motherhood*. London: Sage.
- Osofisan, Femi. (2015). *Many colours make the thunder king*. Lagos: Concept Publications.
- Stace, W. (1961). *Mysticism and philosophy*. Ottawa: McMillan and Co.Limited
- Sowande, Bode. (2014). *Mammy water's wedding*. Ibadan: Bookbuilders.
- Tong, R. (2014). *Feminist thought: A more comprehensive Introduction*. New York: Westview Press.
- Umaru, L., & Lyndersay, D. (1975). *Shaihu Umar*. London: Longman.
- Yerima, A. (2002). *Yemoja*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd.