The Unseen, Spirituality and Communications between the Living and the Dead: Reflections on Representations of Dreams in Northern Nigerian Literary Practices

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Abstract

Dream motif has become archetypal in the literary productions of Northern Nigerian writers. However, the phenomenon of dream in these vast works has not been explicitly studied. This paper explores the representations of dream in the literary spaces of Northern Nigeria. It locates the characters' attempts to situate their fears and desires within the dominant Islamic ideologies and their manifestation in their dreams. Dream does not just portray the characters' desires, fears, and expectations. It is a site in which the characters explore the unseen through the prism of the dominant religious ideology – Islam. The representations portray the influence of Islam and Islamic practices that go beyond the conscious world into the world of sleep. Relationships and crises are negotiated and addressed through exchanges in the dream world. Dream often serves as a link that connects the living and the dead – it enables the exchanges of views and engagements of the dominant ideology among the characters. In this form of literary dialogue, the world of the dead and the living are brought together seamlessly. Characters continue to relate with and take guidance from their loved ones who have departed to the world of the dead. This form of relationship evinces a philosophical influence on the concept of dream and its presence in religiosity. The dream casts light on the religious stature of the dreamers – a status that enables a divine guide into their lives through dreams. The paper contributes to the understanding of the people of Northern Nigeria and their philosophy and the ideologies shaping it. It analyses novels that set dream in the characters' lives.

Introduction

The literary landscape of Northern Nigeria is a point of convergence of many traditions. These traditions reflect in different forms across literary genres and other forms of cultural representations in the region. Written culture came to Northern Nigeria through the activities of Arab traders who introduced Islam in the region. Their activities had enabled the writing of existing cultural expressions. A remarkable body of writing of varied genres and disciplines were produced in the region. They range from literature – religious poetry and novelistic pieces – to medicine, astronomy, personal correspondences, family genealogies, record-keeping in commerce and administration in Arabic and Ajami – Hausa language in modified Arabic letters. Tsiga (10) explores the emergence and development of scholarship in Northern Nigeria and recognises the role of Islamic scholars in the endeavour. According to him:

> with the arrival of Islam in the Kanem Bornu Empire in the Seventh Century and its subsequent diffusion into the neighbouring areas, Islamic scholars and Islamic religious leaders had quite early added a significant value to the history and development of Hausa land. Large scale centres of learning had almost immediately been established, graduating advanced students in Islamic scholarship, centuries

before the Sokoto Jihad in 1804, like the ones at Karkarku in Daura, Kurmin Dan Ranko in Malumfashi and 'Yandoto in present day Zamfara State; as well as the famous university at Gobarau in Katsina city.

As a result of the development identified above, the oral experiences in the region came to be transformed into the written form. What is interesting in the transformation is the retention of the indigenous identity and the evidence of external influences in both the form and the content of what is produced. In other words, writing in Northern Nigeria is replete with expressions and forms that were in existing in the region before its contacts with the Arab world. These cultural expressions, however, exhibit certain traits of Arab and Islamic influences in their forms and the message they expressed. Islam came to play important role in the cultural and literary production and reception among writers and readers in the region. In terms of form, the poetry produced in the region, from the Hausa Ajami written poetry to the Hausa Roman scripts, are still produced in the Arab poetry model. In the thematic portrayal, through the influence of Islam, literary writers have projected spirituality in many forms. The transition from Arabic letters to Roman scripts further entrenched the influence of Arabic literature and Islam on the texts that would be subsequently produced in the region. The transition involves several translation and adaptation of Arabic literatures, (Sani 295). One of these influences is the representation of dreams in literary forms. Several writers from the region have centred spirituality in their works. Cosgrave (596) defines spirituality as "one's way of consciously striving to integrate one's life and make it meaningful through pursuing knowledge, freedom and love in light of and governed by the highest and most important ideals, values and principles that one has discerned, chosen and endeavours to live out and realise in one's life." In this context, dreams explored in the texts under discussions are spiritual in the sense that the characters who experience them utilise them as a source of knowledge – the hidden knowledge, as a guidance for their important activities. Some of them dreams are situated within the operations of certain concepts as sanctioned by Islam.

Dream representations in the literary works produced in Northern Nigeria is quite ubiquitous. Famous writers in the region have centred their plots in the dream experience, some typical examples are; Zaynab Alkali *The Stillborn*; *The Initiates*, *The Descendants*, Abubakar Gimba *Sacred Apples*, A'aisha Abdulkareem *'Yar Fari*, E.E Sule *Sterile Sky*, Ibrahim Adam Abubakar *Season of Crimson Blossom*, Elnathan John *Born on a Tuesday*. Most of these dreams exhibit peculiarity of Islamic spirituality because in Islam, "dreams are in a continuum with prophecy and they are the means for the ordinary human to enjoy contact with the divine worlds" (Green 145). In some of these novels, dream is the knot that ties the plot and foregrounds the thematic engagements. The plot makes sense only when the dream is incorporated in the larger discussion of the themes projected in the novels. It could be argued that the influence of Islam is one of the reasons behind such construction. The dream experience is central to the ontological conditions of the characters. In certain situations, dream goes beyond the expressions of the emotional state of the characters – fears, hopes, aspirations – it offers a guide into the future and explains certain experiences prior to their happenings. In fact, the dominant theory that is applied in the critique of dream in literature – psychoanalysis – is not adequate to situate the meanings of these dreams. These dreams cannot be situated within

the concept of magical realism prevalent in some literary productions (Warnes 3). They are embodied in the mode of spiritual experience. Spiritual realm is moulded and manifested in the dream world. It enables the bond and communication that continued between people both the living and the dead worlds. Through the dream experience, the gap between the living and the dead is bridged and communication is established. Spiritual state and experiences are shared, explored and debated by the living and the dead in the dream world. Thus, in some of the text under consideration, dream becomes a space to question certain relationships established by religious hegemony in a society racing into modernity.

Generally, dream is central in the narratological productions of Northern Nigeria. However, despite this absolute obviousness, the dream experience has not been explored in the critical works on Northern Nigerian texts. Dream motif has not been theorised in these works. There is yet to emerge the cultural, spiritual, historical study of dreams as they manifest in the texts produced in the region. The essence and functions of dream experience are yet to be foregrounded in the ontological nature of the characters and their relations in the people's experiences in the region. The specificity of the dream experience in the region is another unexplored area in the texts *vis-à-vis* the different manifestations of dreams in the characters in relations to their spiritual, gender, and class formations. These aspects of dreams can potentially explain the cultural codes in the operations of the society. This paper explores the representation of dream motif in the literary productions of Northern Nigeria in relation to the spirituality of the characters involved. It selects three novels from three literary writers from Northern Nigeria to explore their portrayals of dream and its significance in the overall plot and thematization and their relationships to the spirituality of the characters vis-à-vis the social significance of their dreams. The presence of dream in literary works has been explored by Abrams (248-9) through a psychoanalytic lens:

> Literature and the other arts, like dreams and neurotic symptoms, consist of the imagined, or fantasied, fulfillment of wishes that are either denied by reality or are prohibited by the social standards of morality and propriety. The forbidden, mainly sexual ("libidinal") wishes come into conflict with, and are repressed by, the "censor" (the internalized representative within each individual of the standards of society) into the unconscious realm of the artist's mind, but are permitted by the censor to achieve a fantasied satisfaction in distorted forms which serve to disguise their real motives and objects from the conscious mind.

These psychic activities could also be extended to the author's modes of feelings and repressed desires. However, the concepts offered by Freud are very limited in the interpretation of dream in the literary texts under analysis. In these texts, what manifest are not collection of psychic conscious – desires, fears, lust, etc in the dreams of the characters. Rather, the characters' dreams are tied to their spiritual states. Spirituality guides the dreams of the characters. The dreams appear to be very much influenced by the authors' understanding of dreams from their knowledge of dreams and its interpretation in Islam. In Islam, people can be informed of the future through dreams. They can also be informed of what happened elsewhere. This is part of the influence of Islamic tradition in which prophets are informed of the unknown through the

medium of dreams – Abraham, Joseph, Mohammed and more had transformative experience through dreams. A prophetic tradition says that the dream of prophets are always true and it is possible to see the prophet through dream. This type of dream is prevalent in the texts under study and many others produced in Northern Nigeria. This spiritual influence is not explicitly admitted. It comes from what Bloom calls, "the anxiety of influence," which simply means, "the struggle for identity by each generation of poets under the 'threat' of the greatness of its predecessors, as an enactment of Oedipal Complex" (Barry, 105). This means that the predominant presence of motif in these work shows the great influence of Islamic spirituality that these authors possess effortlessly as they grow into the culture. This could be from their knowledge of dream in Islamic texts and/or the frequent interpretation of dreams by Muslim scholars in the region. The concept, "collective unconscious," introduced later by Jung fits better into the interpretation of dream motif among writers in Northern Nigeria.

This collective unconscious is, "shared by all individuals in all cultures, which he regards as the repository of 'racial memories' and of primordial images and patterns of experience that he calls *archetypes*," (Abrams: 251). From this lens, the projection of dream motif by the writers under study participate in one medium of dream that they collectively tap from their experience in the culture that produces them. The unique similarities one finds across these representations of dreams make them a common pattern of practice or engagement and – the archetypes – a repository in which these writers receive their inspirations. Thus, it could be argued that in their efforts to forge a unique literary identity for themselves, the writers are influenced by the great Islamic tradition that has been pertinent in their construction of the dream motif. Their shared spiritual experience makes it possible to project dream in quite similar way. Dream is a means through which their characters receive an insight into the future and knowledge about other activities happening outside their knowledge. The projection of dream takes a continuum that portrays the essence and valuation for the writers across the written and the spoken cultural tropes in the region.

In addition, the significant nature of the dream as spiritual could be seen in its resonance with the dream usually attributed to the Islamic scholars. The dream of conversing with the Prophet Muhammad and other saints is very often common among these scholars. This common tradition is part of the inherited influence that literary writers take and seamlessly portray in their dream motif. The common order of the dream is subverted. The characters in the dream might not be directly informed of the dangers lurking ahead. They establish a chain of communication with the dead. Dead relatives provide protection, therapy, and advice to their loved ones. The dead are equipped with awareness of the happenings in the living world. The content of the dream does not undergo the processes identified by Freud; displacement, condensation, and representation or symbols. The dreams are not portrayed by images that the dreaming characters need to decode. They come in the forms of conversational exchanges and delineate the subject of discussion in the most critical manner. This ensuing conversation takes the form of spiritual guidance that the Islamic scholars get either from the Prophet or from the saints. The dead is always the more informed and more sophisticated in the discourse.

This paper analyses *Sacred Apples* by Abubakar Gimba, *The Stillborn* by Zaynab Alkali and *Yar'fari* by A'aisha Abdulkareem. The dream motif is explored in these texts in relation Islamic spirituality and their semblance to the dreams that are typical of spiritual guidance. The

commonality in the dream motif portrayed by the texts justifies it as collective unconscious. The dreams follow a peculiar pattern that that did not conform to the dream patterns explicated by psychoanalytic frame of reference. Each of these texts is discussed separately and the conclusion provides the overall implication of the dream motif and the need for more research on it due to its peculiarity, ubiquity, and its frequent presence in Northern Nigerian literary landscapes.

Dream and the Dead in Communion with the Living in *Sacred Apples* by Gimba

Abubakar Gimba is a renowned author in Northern Nigerian writers. He publishes many novels that foregrounds experiences in Northern Nigeria in particular and Nigeria in general. His works focus on the mundane life of people both in the position of power and the marginalised. In *Sacred Apples*, Gimba centres his narrative on the travails on a young divorced and working woman who sails into storms of challenges surrounded by women in a patriarchal setting. The plot is built on the experiences of Zahrah, an orphaned woman and mother of three children. The story opens with Zubaydah, Zahrah's grandmother, anxiously waiting for granddaughter in the late hours of night. When Zahrah finally arrives in the house, it happens that she has just been irrevocably divorced by Yazid. On their way home, Zahrah and her children are attacked by a mob. The marriage to Yazid and the unjust manner in which she is divorced makes Zahrah very reluctant to think of getting married again. When Zubaydah dies, Zahrah concentrates on the upbringing of her children and starts a job to take care of her family needs. At the workplace, her boss Nousah, develops an interest in her. She becomes an object of scorn by her co-workers who envied her steady rise in the career.

Zahrah refuses to give in to Nousah's marriage proposal. After her initial encounter with marriage, she becomes very suspicious of men and the marriage institution itself. What compounds the situation is that Nousah is polygamous. She is to live with two other women married to Nousah. Her brother Shareef wants her to marry but he also holds reservation on the complex competitive nature of a polygamous house. He is married to one wife.

In Islam, people experience *al-Ghayb* or the hidden which often comes through "visions of deceased saints or dreams about the Prophet Muhammad" (1). Zubaydah appears to Zahrah in a dream. The encounter was introduced, "Zahra was awe-struck. She had never before seen her grandmother in such a mood, (*Sacred Apples* 140). This encounter tells at least two things; that Zahrah has been seeing her grandmother in dreams habitually. The world of the dead and the world of the living are conflated here to suggest, "a wider pattern among Muslims in which the dead appeared in dreams to instruct the living. The most famous examples of such dreams were those of the Sufis, who regularly witnessed past mystics and even prophets appearing to them in dreams," (Green 150). Zahrah is not awe-struck with the dream itself since it is commonplace. What is strange is the mood of her grandmother. The grandmother is not happy with her reluctance to accept Nousah's offer. The narrator says, "She scolded Zahrah not only for shunning polygamy, but for doing so with disdain, while yet, she was a product of polygamy, (*Sacred Apples* 140). The narrator continues to point out Zahrah's point defence. She wants to argue that she harbours no disdain for the institution itself but the practice. She wanted to argue that the institution has been bastardised by men who turned polygamous houses into hell for women. She wanted to argue that the limits and conditions sets out by the Book

have been violated. She wanted to argue that the responsibilities attached to the institution are ignored as men turned to it searching for pleasurable passion. She could not say all this because she is tongue-tied in the dream. But the dream motif gives the dead an all-knowing power – to know what happens with the living and to explore the minds of the living with such an accuracy. The narrator confirms this on the part of Zubaydah. She says, "… But her grandmother seemed to be reading her mind. 'So, you are afraid to gamble,' her grandmother told her, 'then you might as well get Nousah to give you a guarantee of a trouble-free marriage," (*Sacred Apples* 141). This power to read the thoughts of the living by the dead continues as Zubaydah explores her granddaughter's fears and dispel them as the third-person narrator continues to provide the encounter to the reader:

> Yes, if only he can give me a guarantee, returned Zahrah in her thoughts, yet still speechless: she was however unaware of the sarcasm in her grandmother's remarks. "I see… as Yazid gave you," said her grandmother. "In marriage," continued the old lady, "like in many other things in life, nothing has a full guarantee… Particularly in human relationships. It's all trial and error…" Tremendous fear had now gripped Zahrah on account of her grandmother's ability to read her thoughts. She wished she could stop thinking but she couldn't… "The errors of a polygamous setting could be hellish…" "Those are fears impressed on you by your imagination…" "No, grandma, they are real…!" "Have you ever been through one?" "No… but I've seen and heard a lot…" "Seeing… hearing… in either case just an observer. You have to be a participant to fully understand and appreciate an event… But I don't blame you… It's your brother I hold responsible… an observer, full of prejudices…" (*Sacred Apples* ibid).

As seen in the exchanges above, the dead grandmother is not just aware of the happenings in real life. She is also able to read her granddaughter's thoughts. This ability has enabled a conversation to take place. Through this conversation, the author establishes a connection between Zahrah and her deceased grandmother. Chidester (29) finds similar connection with the dreamer's ancestors in a tradition that involves, "linking dreaming to action in maintaining ongoing ritual relations of ancestral exchange, and ancestral presence." In this dream encounter, Zubaydah confronts Zahrah on the latter's refusal to accept Nousah's marriage proposal. She explores Zahrah's thoughts to find the fears that delay the acceptance. Zubaydah engages with these fears and reservations and encourages Zahrah to marry Nousah. Zubaydah's state of mind and body language in the dream seem to be commanding Zahrah to marry Nousah. In this dream exchange, the two perspectives about polygamy are foregrounded and discussed. Zubaydah belongs to the old tradition that promotes polygamy, an institution that is becoming unpopular and her granddaughter Zahrah is becoming more critical and suspicious of it. This dream is very significant in the overall plot structure of the novel. It encourages Zahrah to accept Nousah's marriage proposal – an action that triggers other events and allows the novel to reach its denouement. "… even three months after, the dream was as hauntingly fresh as it was the night she had it… she was still perplexed, unable to fathom out the rationale for the anger of the old lady's spirit, (*Sacred Apples* 144-5).

This dream influences the acceptance of the proposal. Zahrah understood the acceptance as an attempt to make her dead grandmother happy, contented, and restful. Thus, the dream as repeatedly reiterated in the paper does not conform the explication processes provided by Freud. It signifies the peculiar spiritual exchange between the disciple and the saint. The intimacy developed in the conversation enables the dead person to advise the living in the course of action necessary at a particular time or situation. In addition, the responsibility to offer guidance – spiritual and marital – continued to manifest in the dream exchanges. Zubaydah assumes her role of a guardian to her granddaughter in the dream as she used to do while she was alive. Writing about the spiritual essence of dreams, Bulkley (197) argues that, "every religious tradition throughout history has looked to dreams for revelations into the divine, for guidance from the gods, and for spiritual insights and values."

Consequently, as the plot develops, Zahrah accepts Nousah's marriage proposal and marries him. She moves into his house together with two other women, Aalimah and Salma. Suddenly she finds herself engulfed by competition of co-wives that is typical of polygamous settings. To avert any possible danger to herself, Zahrah convinces her husband to allow her to go back to her house and live alone. He could be coming to her house for the days he is supposed to be with her. Nousah agrees and she relocates to her house. But that did not avert the impending danger. In an attempt to get rid of Zahrah on the list of Nousah's wives, poisoned apples were sent to her. The apples kill Nousah and Zahrah survives with a miscarriage. After the incident, Zahrah regrets her involvement into Nousah's household. When she fully recovers, she meets her grandmother again in the dream. Again, as it happens in the previous dream, Zubaydah is fully aware of what befell her granddaughter:

> Zahrah found herself unable to speak, as was the case in her first encounter. She wanted to tell her that, upon her insistence, she had allowed herself to be persuaded to marry Nousah… and it brought misery to her. Zuabyadah was not threatening this time. She was calm and seemed full of sympathy for her granddaughter. I know, said Zubaydah, that you will blame it all on me… it's the wrong way to go through life. Never lay the blame of your misfortunes on others at any particular time, (*Sacred Apples* 265).

The dream portrayal above takes similar form from the previous one. Zahra could only reply to her grandmother through her thoughts which the grandmother could read. To allow the conversation to hold, Zahrah does not seem to have the power to stop herself from thinking. This inability has guaranteed knowledge of her situations to her grandmother. Through the dream mode, Zahrah transcends into the world of the dead to connect with her grandmother. This is possible spiritually because, "[I]n dreams, the dreamer's soul might visit the spirit realms and interact with ancestors or supernatural beings," (McNamara 344). Again, as it happens in the previous encounter, Zubaydah continues to provide support and guidance to Zahrah. Despite the brutal experience, Zubaydah does not find it convenient to join Zahrah and condemn polygamy in its totality. She continues to see things from her traditional perspective. The long dream is laced with exchanges between Zahrah and Zubaydah, the latter condemning

polygamy and the former defending it and acknowledging the flaws in it. In the six pages that follow, the exchanges continued.

Both Zubaydah and Zahrah support their positions with quotations from the Qur'an – an encounter that emphasised the spirituality of their conditions. Arguments are placed in the context of Islam. Thus, spirituality takes important place in the lived experiences and their recollections in dreams. In the end, Zahrah confirms to Zubaydah that she will never go near marriage again. She believes that she has had enough. This dream comes after her first husband, Yazid has written her a letter, condoled her for her loss and asked for reconciliation. He also tells her that he wants her back into his life. She agrees for a reconciliation but vehemently told him that she will never go back to him again. Even though Zahrah does not agree with her grandmother in the longest dream about polygamy and the marriage institution in general, she comes to adore the encounter she is having with Zubaydah. She cherishes the experience and looks forward to another one. In the first dream, she confronts her brother Shareef and her friend Miriam, both of them confirm to her that her grandmother wants her to marry. But she decides to keep the second dream to herself. "A couple of weeks after the encounter, she wished the old lady would re-appear again, for more exchanges, more clarification. She didn't. She thought of telling her brother and Miriam about the dream, but held back. This time, she would keep it to herself," (*Sacred Apples* 271).

In general, what is demonstrated in the dreams of Zahrah in *Sacred Apples* by Abubakar Gimba is the connection between the dead and the living. The dead are not gone. They are here with us. They are constantly guarding over the living. They possess full knowledge of the living and that knowledge enables them to guide the living about the path to be taken. The dream is experienced in the realm of the uncanny – it seems so real to be a dream – the subject discussed is known by the two people involved in the dream, the positionality of the dreamers is maintained as it exists in real life and the state of the mind of the two is known among themselves. The dream is discursive. It involves serious engagements of religious and societal practices, their origins, their reflections in the real experiences, their misuses and abuses and so on and so forth. This discursivity also points to Zahrah's search for spirituality since, "[S]piritual seekers may explore a variety of religious traditions to suture together a spiritual lifestyle and world view," (Humphrey 2377). The dream becomes one of the medium through which she comes to terms with practices that are encouraged by Islam but that she disdains. However, there is another nature of the dream that takes the form of an insights into the unknown that is provided to some of the characters in the literary writings of Northern Nigeria. The spirituality of this form lies in the transcendental experience of certain people selected by God to reveal what the future holds. This is explored in the two texts discussed below.

Telling the Future: Dream and Spirituality in *The Stillborn* by Zaynab Alkali

The Stillborn centres around Li, the central character growing up in rural Northern Nigeria and her sister and friend, Awa and Faku respectively. They grow up full of dreams to leave the village and explore the city. The story takes the reader into their realities that shatter those dreams and equipped them better to assume the positions earlier exclusively preserved by men in the patriarchal structure of Northern Nigeria. They grow to assume the abandoned responsibilities of their husbands and brothers to become "men of the house." However, what

is particularly unique about Li and relevant to this paper, is her ability to dream and foresee evil before it happens or before she is told. In other words, her dreams, far from an expression of suppressed desires, anxieties, fears and so on, are insights into what the future holds. This kind of dream has a spiritual undertone in it. Li is equipped with an agency to tell the future that is typically a work normally attributed to male Muslim scholars. This signifies a contestation by women for a space dominated by men. The agency to dream is extended to mean an agency to decide one's fate by the characters, as would be seen in the paper.

Writing about the functions of dream in Syl Cheney-Coker, (Jørgensen 110) argues that, "[T]hrough dreams, characters have visions or receive warnings of what is predestined to occur" What is different from Syl Cheney0Coker's representation of dream is that in Alkali, the dreams are not symbolic, they are not encapsulated into some symbols that represent other things and that require deciphering. They also happen with close exactitude to what was about to happen. Li does not an interpreter for her dreams. She understands them very well and enlighten others on what the future holds. At the age of eleven, Li had a terrifying sleep. She runs to her father the next morning and informs him not to attend the Friday prayer. "… I had a dream last night, a frightening dream… Baba, I have a strange feeling something bad is going to happen. I had this feeling during the dream and I still have it now," (*The Stillborn* 9-11).

Li believes that there is a danger lurking behind that day. She assumes the position of a prophetess who tells the future. Of course, her father dismisses the dream experience. He counsels his daughter that it was just a mere dream. "Stop thinking about things. Your dreams at night are simply what you think about during the day. There is nothing in this dream. Forget it child," (*The Stillborn* 10). Being a very strict father, Baba goes ahead to his prayers and ignores the warning. Li does not believe his explanation. But she could not argue with him, "She knew there wasn't a streak of evil in her and she never thought of bad things during the day." (*The Stillborn* ibid). But that afternoon, three lorries arrived at the Memorial Hospital in the village full of people – the prayer house has collapsed, killing thirty-five people. Baba is among the wounded. From that instant, Baba always remembers the incident and relates with his daughter with some sense of scepticism. The experience makes him realise that his daughter experiences the future through her dreams.

In another dream experience, Li is informed of her father's impending death. This happens five years after she marries and leaves the village to join her husband in the city. She dreams of the home and her father's hut was in ruins. In the hut, she sees a heap of red soil. When she wakes up, she believes that her father was about to die. She begs her husband, habu Adams, to allow her to go home but he refuses, citing her pregnancy as a condition that would not allow her to travel. She decides to provoke Habu Adams to divorce her so that she could go home. She insults him and all his clan. But he refuses to succumb to the trap. Days pass and she simply decides to imagine things are alright with her father. Weeks later, her uncle comes to tell her that her father has sent for her. Her father is sick and has been moved to hospital. "Li still did not believe him. The dream she had a few weeks before now printed itself on her memory with a certain force of reality all its own," (*The Stillborn* 76). Li believes more in her dream than her uncle's account. This experience further confirms her spiritual ability to see things before they actual happen. By the time she reaches the village in the company of her uncle, the mourners were beginning to disperse. Her father dies and her uncle does not tell her

the truth. But if she had arrived the villager earlier, the time when she dreamt, she would have met her father alive.

On the way home to the village, Li and her uncle had to spend a night at Faku's house. Faku is married to Garba who also comes from the same village. But upon their meeting, they break into tears. It dawns on them that the marital lives they experience is nothing closer to their expectations. But Faku is not ready to reveal her condition to her fried. She lies to Li that all is well with her at Garba's compound. That night, Faku's true condition is revealed to Li through dreams. Li "was crossing a desert land and saw from a distance the shape of a woman tilling the land. As she moved closer, the shape became that of Faku. She tilled with all her strength, but the land was dry and remained unyielding. The dust that rose enveloped her until she was one with the earth. Li stopped and watched her for some time. At last she said, 'The land is not good, Faku. It is barren. You are wasting your energy for nothing.' But Faku did not pay attention to her. She continued to till desperately. Li turned and left her friend still tilling," (80).

This dream is very informative. It confirms Li's suspicions that Faku does not find Garba's compound habitable. It happens that Faku lives with Garba's first wife who is the favourite of the house. But she does not want to tell Li. She does not accept the reality confronting her. She still hopes to find peace and prosperity in her marriage. With the dream, Li is convinced that Faku will never be happy in the marriage. The land Faku tills in the dream is her marriage to Garba. Finally, Faku leaves Garba and goes into prostitution before she becomes acquainted with a woman who works for social welfare. Faku learns to become a social welfare worker herself. This dream gives the reader an insight of what Li is capable of dreaming. She knows hidden realities from her dream as it relates to the true condition of Faku. She also knows of what lies in the future. From this dream, Li knows that Faku will never get what she wants from her marriage. The way she walks away from Faku's tilling of the land is the same way she leaves her own marriage. She gives birth to her daughter in the village and refuses to go back to Habu Adams or marry anyone in the village. She remains independent. She later goes back to Advanced Teacher's College to become a professional teacher and earns enough salary to rebuild the family's destroyed compound in the village to house everybody.

Farewell in Dream in *yar'fari* by A'aisha Abdulkareem

yar'fari by A'aisha Abdulkareem also centres on the story of Teni, *yar'fari* or the first daughter. The Fulani tradition requires that the first child in the family should be given to the paternal grandparents who are to be responsible for its upbringing. The baby is taken to the grandparents at the age of two after weening. This is what happens to the protagonist in the text. She grows up under her grandparents who married her off to Abu at the age of thirteen. This is done against the wishes of her father who lives in the city and wanted her to join him and pursue schooling. After few years in marriage, *yar'fari* gives birth to twins and Abu goes back to the University. During a riot by students, Abu was killed by a stray bullet fired by police. Before the information reaches the village, Abu's father and his wife *yar'fari* all dream of Abu waving them goodbye in a white garment.

> …Abu's father woke up feeling very awkward and dull. He tried to recall the dream he had the previous night without success, as he sat under the shed in front of his house. He remembered that the dream was about Abu, but could remember it completely… Done with the feeding, he relaxed in his hut, having taken his breakfast of *koko* and a cup of the fresh milk (*kindirmo*) he just collected. He drifted away into another troubled sleep, this time, very vivid. He saw Abu gorgeously dressed in white clothes, walking away from him. He called out to him and Abu only turned and waved at him but refused to answer his call. He woke up suddenly, sweating profusely.

This dream is very similar to the one *yar'fari* had on the same day, at the same time. Before he drifts into sleep, Abu's father has sent his daughter to *yar'fari* to ask her if she has heard from Abu. It has been days since Abu sent him a message that he was about to start writing his examination. When Abu's sister reaches his house, *yar'fari* has just finished narrating her dream of Abu.

> "Abu! Abu! Come back please…" Teni screamed, as a gorgeously dressed Abu sped away in a white limousine, in the company of strange faces. He only acknowledged to have heard by waving goodbye to her. Teni broke down and screamed, "Abu.u.u…!" as the car disappeared.

In the two dreams, the dreams take the role of prophecy on the impending doom. Two characters have experienced the circumstances that befell Abu. They dream just about the time he is killed by the police. They both see him dress in white – which represents the shrouds that is used to dress a Muslim before interment. He is also waving at them, signifying their ultimate departure. He was being taken away by strange people – mourners, friends, relatives, and other people who buried the dead. He was killed hundreds of miles away, but they are informed of his condition before the message reaches them. This underscores the spiritual nature of dreams. The dreams take the form of those experience by scholars who spiritually experience what happens in other place through dreams with exactitude. The bond that exists in people has made it possible to experience their conditions without being explicitly told. The spatial difference is transcended, and characters can feel the condition of their loved ones.

Conclusion

This paper has delineated the importance of dream in the plot of some literary works produced by Muslim literary writers in Northern Nigeria. It draws attention to the spiritual nature of these dreams and their unique features that could best be understood when situated within the lens of Islam – as a continuation or an influence from the dreams largely known in the Islamic tradition. The authors demonstrated significant influence from Islam in their portrayal of dream and its significance in the overall plot. This has emerged from the previous of existing intellectual tradition that drew inspiration from Islamic texts and other literary writings of the Arabs. Arabic literature has been inscribed in the early written forms of expression in Northern Nigeria. The established canon in the region is heavily influenced by the formal aspects and thematizations

of Arabic literature. The perpetual presence of dream in literary works in the region requires that special attention be given to their implications. Dream motif in these texts require proper theorisation in the literary critical discourse of texts produced in the region. This will enhance understanding of the literature from the region, the people who produce it, and the lives that are projected in it.

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