

ANONYMOUS IDENTITY AND BONDING IN EL-NATHAN JOHN'S *BORN ON A TUESDAY*

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Abstract

The activities of the almajirai in Northern Nigeria, especially their infamous association with violent acts, have become a critical subject in contemporary Nigerian literature. Extant studies have focused on terrorism and violence with reference to Niger Delta insurgency, Boko Haram terrorist acts, among others. This research, however, explores the interconnection between terrorism in the North and the activities of the almajirai, using El-Nathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*. The aim is to critically examine how the *almajirai's* structurally imposed anonymity triggers a crisis of **identity disintegration**, which leaves them vulnerable to mislabelling and social alienation. This research adopts a **psychoanalytical and fundamentalist framework** to investigate the internal and external mechanisms driving the almajirai youth toward political violence. With respect to methodology, this study critically explores the selected texts *Born on a Tuesday*, due to the import of psychological factors that strengthens the bond among the almajirai. Finally, the study highlights the fundamentalist and psychosocial factors that propel the almajirai into terrorism. The findings of the study reveal that the anonymous identity usually given to the almajirai makes them prone to mislabelling. It is also discovered that emotional and other psychological vulnerabilities make them easy recruits for religious extremists, terrorists and corrupt government officials. The almajirai ought to be seen, first, as normal human beings; so this study shifts focus away from the presentation of the boys as dangerous and destructive and, instead, reviews their place in the society, exploring their private lives that have hitherto not been adequately accounted for.

Keywords: Terrorism; Anonymity; Almajirai; Fundamentalism, Psychoanalysis.

Introduction

Right from the colonial times, terrorism has become a central motif in modern African literature. In recent times, authors have used literature as credible lens in portraying the problem of terrorism as it affects the immediate environment. Specifically, Nigerian writers, using different genres of literature, be it poetry or prose, exposes the society malaise in their works, while aptly capturing the realities of the Nigerian state. On a general note, poetic works such as Rome Aboh's *A torrent of terror* (2014), Ebi Yeibo's *The Fourth Masquerade* (2014), Idris Amali's *Tears of Desert War* (2020), Charles Akinsete's *Dance of A Savage Kingdom* as well as novels like Adaobi Nwaubani's *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* (2019) and Ademolawa Adedipe's *Bandits of the Sahel* (2021) have examined the themes of terrorism and violence, from different perspectives, particularly the Boko Haram insurgency. This research however explores the notion of terrorism in Northern and the activities of the almajirai, as reflected in El-Nathan John's novel entitled *Born on a Tuesday*.

Imhonopi and Moses (2016) state that Nigerian (authors) have used literature to express their grievances on the nature and consequences of terrorism, as it affects the Nigerian socio-political terrain. In fact, it has been established that terrorist groups plainly use violence to create uproars, while its tentacles extend to other vices such as kidnapping, robbery, destruction of lives and properties, to mention but a few. For instance, the Niger Delta volunteer force is ascribed to be one of the Nigerian terrorist groups (Imhonopi and Moses, 2016), which is made up of people from the Ijaw Ethnic groups who were under the leadership of Isaac Boro. Part of the objectives of the group is that they addressed the marginalisation and subjugation of the Ijaw people albeit through violence. They kidnapped police officers, blew up pipelines and engaged in a brutal gunfight with the police force in 1966. Eventually, the Niger Delta Volunteer Force was suppressed and Boro was jailed for treason (23). It must be stressed that the themes of literature of the Niger Delta also encompasses violence. Akinsete (2022:39) avers that writers have not only been at the forefront of the Niger Delta struggle... they have also become victims of violence.

Another terrorist group in Nigeria is the Ansaru whose actions are based mainly in Kano and Kaduna. This group is also often referred to as “Vanguards for the protection of Muslims in Western Africa”. It has been argued that the group

split from the Boko Haram when Boko Haram started killing Muslims. The Ansaru group is known for actively attacking Christian churches and government officials. But apart from this, terrorism in the Northern part of Nigeria is one of the prominent insurgency cases in the country, which has led to the loss of a lot of lives and displacement of people. This issue was borne out of the constant clashes among religion, education and politics. Therefore, the North is known for the rise of violent movements from the Islamic extremists and the anti-Western education movements.

The most prominent movement in this part of the country is the Boko Haram terrorist group, which stands for the eradication of Western education and the establishment of Islamic laws in all the states. Akinsete (2016:84) reports that several scholars have described the Boko Haram group as “a jihadist and takfiri militant sect based in the northeastern part of Nigeria.” Terrorist groups in Nigeria are known for recruiting homeless and desperate youths and children to activate their destructive plans. The purpose of this research is to examine the drive of these groups and how their luring of children and youths contributes to the insecurity and insurgency in the northern part of the country as portrayed in John's *Born on a Tuesday*. Particularly, this research will focus on the trajectory progression of the life of the average young child who is recruited into the services of terrorist groups. Additionally, this research is based on the effects of terrorism in the Northern part of the country. Terrorism has been a hard concept to define because of its subjective nature of what is considered as terrorism by different groups and organizations. However, the definition of terrorism was attempted by Freedom, as quoted by Shola (2015) to be:

The planned use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts. Such demands might be for a change in terms of religion, politics, ideologies, and so on. (71)

The above definition fits the activities of the terrorist group in Northern Nigeria known as Boko Haram which is known for its extremist ideas against Western

education and Christianity. Boko Haram is a jihadist terrorist organisation that was created in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri. When Boko Haram was formed, their main goal was to purify Islam in Northern Nigeria and also overthrow the government and create an Islamic state. This organisation does not only operate in Nigeria but also in other countries including Cameroon, Niger, Chad and Mali. Imhonopi and Moses (2016) claim that their founder, Mohammed Yusuf, was killed in 2009 by the Nigerian Military and he was succeeded by Abubakar Shekau. In 2014, this group kidnapped secondary school girls in Chibok, Borno State because they were students receiving education (Shola 2015).

Previous research conducted on John's *Born on a Tuesday* have focused on contextualising religious fatalism (Medjabri & Mami, 2020), religious extremism and traumatized childhood (Okolie, 2025; Emmanuel-Olowonubi, 2020; Hassouna, 2018), and looking beyond stereotypes in the perception of the almajirai (Olajubu, 2025). This study however advances on existing research by focusing on the anonymous status of the almajirai, highlighting the bond that exists between them in a bid to humanize their existence and provide reasons for their actions. The aim of this research is to demonstrate how young boys are brought into religious extremism in Northern Nigeria as portrayed in John's *Born on a Tuesday*. Part of the objectives include: to explore the portrayal of anonymity of the almajirai in John's *Born on a Tuesday*, identify and engage the psychological factors that strengthen the bond among the almajirai, despite the ongoing conflict in their society.

Elnathan John and *Born on a Tuesday*

John was born in 1982 in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria. He is a novelist, a satirist and a lawyer by training. He's the author of *Born on a Tuesday*, *Be(com)ing Nigerian*, *Ajayi Crowther Street*, and so on. *Born on a Tuesday* was published in 2016 by Cassava Republic Atlantic and it was also shortlisted for the Nigerian Prize for Literature in 2016. El-Nathan's *Born on a Tuesday* was influenced by his growing up in Kaduna in the northern part of Nigeria. He saw it as a necessity to tell the story of Northern Nigeria and how it has been constantly side-lined. In one of Elnathan's interview with *Luxury Reporter*, he argues that the story of Northern Nigeria has previously been told from a prejudiced point of view as the positive side of culture, food and way of life have not been adequately

represented. In a way, he felt it was up to him to redefine this often-neglected part of the country and this was reflected in his interview with *The Guardian* where he said, "it is important writers are here, or at least stay in touch with Nigeria, and write the stories that need to be written. No one else will write them for us." *Born on a Tuesday* is a novel that explicitly describes Islamic extremism and how it affects the people that live in Northern Nigeria.

The issues of religious extremism, corrupt governance and the clash of both are adequately represented in *Born on a Tuesday* by John. The novel reflects the challenges posed by religious extremism and corrupt government. Through the character of Dantala, the author presents the homeless and hungry almajiri from another perspective different from how the world sees them. Usually, the Almajirai are seen as scrawny, jobless and dirty young boys who work for the politicians and Islamic extremists but John seeks to change this narrative by telling the story from the views of these boys using Dantala. He gives Dantala ambition, zeal and hope for a better future and he also tries to explain why boys like him work for the two sets of people mentioned above.

Conceptual and Theoretical Background: Fundamentalism and Psychoanalysis

In *Clash of civilizations*, Huntington as cited by Yilmaz (2006) describes fundamentalism as a culture rather than an ideology that divides the world while religion fuels the conflict in a special way by inspiring intolerance and irreconcilable images of identity and commitment among competing civilizations. In the opinion of Bauman (1998), fundamentalism is a response to living in post modernity because it provides freedom of choice, uncertainty and a heightened awareness of risk. Also, according to Anthony Giddens (1999);

Fundamentalism growth is a product of and reaction to globalization which undermines traditional social norms concerning the nuclear family, gender and sexuality (homosexuality and sex outside marriage). It is a retreat into faith-based answers and away from the globalizing world that demands rational reasons. Fundamentalist doctrines of salvation and renewal preach authoritarian submission, hatred to outsiders and demands for death.

Furthermore, according to Giddens (1999), fundamentalists believe unquestioningly in the literal and undisputable truth of scripture and that it provides answers to all life's important questions from politics to family life. Another characteristic of fundamentalists is their tendency to avoid contact with others who think differently with the strong belief that theirs is the only true view of the world.

However, these definitions by Bauman (1998) and Giddens (1999) were countered by Haynes (2014) who argued that they focused narrowly on the idea that Islamic fundamentalism is a reaction to globalization. He also argued that Giddens (1999) and Bauman (1998) merged multiple types of fundamentalism and their origins. Haynes (2014) divided fundamentalism into two types, the Western World fundamentalism and the Third World fundamentalism. In the Western World, he describes fundamentalism as a reaction to change taking place within a society, especially the trends towards diversity and choice typical of late modern or postmodern societies. These reactions can be opposition against family diversity, gender equality, abortion rights, secular education, and so on. Also, fundamentalism in the West is usually attributed to the Christians and Jews. But, in the Third World countries like Nigeria (or the Global South), fundamentalism is usually a reaction to changes being thrust upon a society from outside and this could be the Islamic Revolution being triggered by modernism and globalisation. Here, fundamentalism involves resistance to the State's attempts to sideline the movement and confine it to the private spheres.

Features of these two types of fundamentalism identified by Haynes (2014) can be seen in El-Nathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*. One of the instances of fundamentalism being a reaction to trends of diversity and choice is homosexuality and this can explain the disgust that Dantala felt when he caught Bilal and Abdulkareem having sex in one of the new Mosque toilets. Another instance of fundamentalism as a reaction to change triggered by modernism and globalisation is when Malam Abdul-Nur started his own opposition movement, against the Sheikh when he came back from Saudi Arabia, called 'Firqatul Mujahideen Li Ihayu Islam.' Additionally, he believes that going to the university and working for the government is Haram.

Religious Fundamentalism, which will guide the first half of this analysis, (Islamic fundamentalism in this context) became popular in 2001 during the

September 11 attacks that are also referred to as 9/11. According to Bergan (2021), they are a series of airline hijackings and suicide attacks committed by nineteen militants associated with the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda against targets in the United States. These attacks have been regarded as the deadliest terrorist attacks in the United States. (September 11 attacks). Yilmaz said in *Religious Fundamentalism and Conflict* that religious fundamentalism implies terrorism and it often evokes a powerful image of persons who are irrational, immoderate and violent (2). Under religious fundamentalism, Yilmaz (2006) identified two types of intolerance, nonviolent intolerance and violent intolerance.

Nonviolent intolerance is associated with extreme self-identification with a particular religion and this involves doing everything a religion says without objections. The followers of this religion will also offer their unquestioned submission. However, nonviolent intolerance does not usually come with physical violence but it is usually associated with the discrimination of other religions and groups that are not part of their beliefs. Even though this attribute does not contribute to physical violence, it contributes to social tension and the psychological process of dehumanization.

Violent intolerance is described as the most dangerous aspect of religious fundamentalism. Unlike nonviolent intolerance, violent intolerance as defined by Yilmaz (2006) involves direct use of physical violence in pursuing subjectively-defined religious missions, including killing and destroying of resources and properties. In addition to this, violent intolerance can also be connected to terrorism due to the belief of the practitioners that the direct use of violence in the name or religion is compulsory and will be rewarded in heaven. This type of violence could be associated with unresolved past traumas and poor backgrounds.

Finally, another argument which explains the concept of the destitute state of the Almajirai may be traced to some aspects of the Hausa culture which has now been merged with Islam. According to Adeleke (2005), even though, Islam was not an initial part of the Hausa culture, it has become one of the most distinguishable features of this culture (99). Adeleke (2005) further notes that the Hausa culture was one that was devoid of external influence until the 14th century. The political advantage posed by Islam, alongside other advantages,

attracted the Hausa rulers. The religion became a significant part of the culture in the 19th century when the Jihad led by Utman Dan Fodio became successful. Therefore, Islam became a major defining characteristic of the Hausa culture (107).

Psychoanalysis was developed by Sigmund Freud in the 20th century (1901) and it helps in understanding the personality and personality development of the person being treated. According to Hossain (2017), psychoanalysis has been seen as a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements (*Psychoanalytic Theory Used in English Literature: A descriptive Study* 41). Psychoanalysis theory can also mean the theories on the human mind and its various complexities (42). This theory provides a new approach to the analysis and treatment of abnormal adult behaviour (42).

The Freudian theory is divided into three parts namely; pre-oedipal stage, the oedipal complex and the unconscious. Under the pre-oedipal stage, Freud claims that all human beings are born with certain instincts which could be a natural tendency to satisfy their needs for food, shelter and warmth. The satisfaction of these needs can also be a source of pleasure which can be sexual. The oedipal complex is what Freud refers to as the interpretation of dreams. This means a desire for sexual involvement or a closeness with the parent of the opposite sex which produces a sense of competition with the parent of the same sex. The unconscious is the part of the mind that lies outside the boundaries of consciousness.

Furthermore, Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality argues that human behaviour is the result of the interactions among the three component parts of the mind which include; the id, ego and superego. The id is concerned with the instant gratification of basic needs and urges and it operates unconsciously. Superego deals with social rules and morals. It is referred to as the conscience and this part recognizes guilt and shame. While the Ego balances the id and the superego in the practical context of reality. It is rational; it is partly conscious and partly unconscious. However, the id, the superego and the ego are always in a conflict.

Adolescent character formation was also examined by Sigmund Freud. Adolescent character is developed through experience, observations and internalized relationships and this is often played out or seen in the interactions with other people. The principal themes of adolescents' psychological reorganization as identified by McCarthy (1995) are sexuality and identity; these are the two internal conflicts that an average adolescent would experience. The development of the adolescent individualism provides the ability to be independent and to make individualistic decisions (246).

Freud believed that the sexual activeness of an adolescent helps in strong character development. He also believed that the aftereffects of puberty strengthen and restructures the psychological development and character. But this idea was countered by Sullivan (1988) who argued that culture and cognitive maturation play more roles in character development than the sexual activeness of the adolescent. It is important to note that defensive operations are part of the traits of adolescent character development and these operations include displacement of libido, reversal of reaction formation and regression or withdrawal of libido into the self.

Adolescence is not only a period of transitioning to adult sexuality; it is also a case of pursuit of a personal identity. Character can develop through culturally based processes of socialization and assimilation. Also, characters can be destroyed through violence and the surrender of individuality. An average adolescent that is healthy will accept the truth about life and death and ignore the apprehension that comes with it. The sense of individuality advances during adolescence and this also contributes to character development and personality development. Most times, adolescents try really hard to not portray some attributes or behaviors of their parents. In avoiding this, they turn to extreme defenses which can be dangerous and harmful. There cannot be exactly a particular theory of character because of the inherent uniqueness of people. For the purpose of this study, more attention will be paid to adolescence bonding in the analysis as it helps to capture the nature of the relationships between the boys in John's *Born on a Tuesday*.

Methodology

Using the qualitative approach to research, this study will make use of both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source of data is John's

Born on a Tuesday while the secondary sources will include relevant books, articles and academic papers. Also, historical sources will be used to analyze and trace the beginning of terrorism in this part of the country. Fundamentalism and Psychoanalysis theories will be used in the analysis of the text.

Anonymous Motif Among the Almajirai and Collective Emotions in *Born on a Tuesday*

This section explores the concept of the almajiri system in a new light, paying attention to the effects of fundamentalism in the displacement of the Almajirai and to the collective friendship bonds among the boys involved. The anonymous state of the almajirai makes them easy preys and tools in the hands of terrorists, politicians and fundamentalist religious leaders who are seeking to promote their extreme religious propaganda through violence. These boys are usually subjected to inhumane treatments by their Mallam and they become part of an informal child labor system in which they are forced to earn a living by begging and also helping the Mallam with the domestic needs of his household. In addition, in some cases, the Mallam is allowed to keep some of the items the boys get from begging. In addition, the boys are only popular when they make the news headlines as terrorists, murderers and thieves or when they excel in their Quranic studies and become teachers or clerics themselves. But it is rarely understood that when they do this, it is for their survival as they do not have anyone to depend on. *Born on a Tuesday* is a book, apart from terrorism and fundamentalism that is also based on the concept of anonymity and this research will help in advancing this discussion. Elements of this anonymity are extremely profound in this text and can even be found in the dedication.

For the boys who will never be known
And the girls who become numbers-
Stars without a name

John is a writer that is keen on the representation of the untold stories of the almajirai from the North and in order to achieve this, he creates backstories that have immense support for them. Even the title of the book is suggestive of anonymity and namelessness. *Born on a Tuesday* (or Dantala) is not the real name of the protagonist, instead it is Ahmad but Dantala was a name that stuck with him almost throughout his life. This can be said to have extensive meaning in the sense that, through the course of his life, he would have met people he introduced himself to as Dantala – which translates to being born on a Tuesday” – with the implication that no one really knew who he was.

He was just another almajiri who was perceived as hopeless, hungry and desperate. But John sought to deconstruct this by giving Dantala and the other boys stories that validate them and, to an extent, explain their actions.

But Dantala... Dantala is not a name. To say someone was born on a Tuesday, is that a name? A name should have meaning. Like Ahmad, the name of the prophet, Sallallahu alaihi wasallam. You should stop using that Dantala. (*Born on a Tuesday* 33)

The above excerpt emphasizes the importance of name and the lack of name at the same time. The anonymity of the Almajirai can be arguably viewed from the aspect of the immense intelligence displayed by Dantala. The portrayal of this can be linked with the backstories created by John in the representation of the Almajirai. Dantala is presented as a young boy with zeal and passion for knowledge. He is equally curious, intelligent, inquisitive and willing to learn. This is different from the usual stories narrated about these boys because they are often viewed as bandits and terrorist accomplices.

According to Aghedo and Surulola (2013), the almajiri is an adulterated spelling of the Arabic word 'almuhajir' which refers to a person who travels for the purpose of learning the Quran or impacting the Islamic knowledge (103). Since the 11th century, Quranic teaching has been a medium of Islamic education in Nigeria and before it degenerated into a practice characterized by unwholesome and inhumane activities, it produced more renowned Quranic teachers that also decided to teach other Muslim children (103-104). Almajiri boys are often recognized by their tattered clothes, unkempt bodies and small plastic bowls used in begging alms. This situation is as a result of negligence of the negligence on the part of the parents and the State. Thus, they become vulnerable and easy targets by the politicians and terrorists. The almajiri system, according to Aghedo and Eke, is a breeding ground for criminality and insecurity (106).

According to Mohammed (2015) the almajiri educational system in the Nigerian context can be viewed through two prisms which are Islam and the Hausa and Fulani traditions. Islam on one hand and the Hausa and Fulani traditions on the other hand have been merged and the lines between them have become blurred, therefore making it difficult to separate how they both affect the Almajiri system. It was equally stated by Isa Mohammed that the almajiri system over the years has been justified with the use of some Hadiths from the

Quran saying that it is compulsory for all Muslims to seek Islamic knowledge. These Hadiths include:

Proclaim! (Or read!) in the name of the Lord and Cherisher, who created- created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, He who taught (the use of) the pen, Taught man which he knew not. (Quran 96: 1-5)
 ...they could devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them, - that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil) (Quran 9: 122)

The above contains some of the verses or Hadiths that mention the importance of knowledge and how Islamic knowledge can help protect the followers of Islam from the evil and ignorance in the world. In relation to the almajiri system, Isa Mohammed argues that the system is influenced more by societal orientations than the Islamic laws and the Sharia in Northern Nigeria. (1-2). This is because when the system was introduced after the conversion of the Hausa rulers in the Kanem Borno Empire, the reading and writing in Hausa language by using Arabic alphabets was introduced (6). Eventually, with the interwoven relationship between Islam and Hausa, the lines blurred and the almajiri system seems more of a Hausa system than an Islamic establishment. Even the Sultan of Sokoto declares that almajiri is not Islamic (10).

It is important to note that the almajiri system is not entirely a system mentioned explicitly in the Quran but it is established on the fact that the Quran advocates for knowledge seeking. Seeking for knowledge is supported by the Quran but the wretchedness that comes with it was not stated. This is a feature of fundamentalism as its purpose is to strip children of their identities and deny them basic survival needs including access to food, proper education, and clothing. According to Giddens (1999) fundamentalists belief unquestioningly in the literal and undisputable truth of scripture and that it provides answers to all life's important questions from politics to family life and thus gets passed down to the children sent to Koranic school as they believe that God is responsible for everything that happens and he should not be questioned. This contributes to their identity stripping because it promotes a dehumanizing approach which implies that they are incapable of independently critiquing social systems on their own without involving the concept of a divine deity. This

is evident in Dantala's approach to living and addressing issues.

I wonder why Umma didn't send anyone to look for me when my father died or if my brothers knew. Allah knows. Allah knows what is best. (*Born on a Tuesday* 40)

I wonder what I can do to help my mother, to make her see me, remember me, talk to me. Allah knows best. Allah knows best. (*Born on a Tuesday* 47)

I miss my Umma. Especially in the morning when I have nothing to do...when I want to scream and cry I hear Sheikh Jamal's voice in my head: Allah knows why. Allah knows why. (*Born on a Tuesday* 61)

The excerpts above are taken from different parts of the book that address the same issue of avoidance. Dantala is a boy that was raised in Islam, he is familiar with the Quran and it has been instilled in him as a young child that Allah knows and is responsible for everything which means that human actions are never intentional because they have been mapped out by God. This provides Dantala a way to find meaning in his pain and suffering. Although, later in the book, he begins to question these ideals he has been conditioned to believe in and hold dearly. This questioning is an important aspect of the book due to it being a transition from childhood to adolescence and then to early adulthood. Arguably, John creates this shift in thought and approach to show that not all boys that are products of an extremist educational system continue blindly in that belief. An example of this is seen below:

But sometimes, astaghfirullah, I wish I could change some of the things that Allah has destined for us to do. I wonder if he also destines it when we engage in acts that are Haram. Some things come back to you and you wish your life was like a book and you could find that page in your life and tear it out. (*Born on a Tuesday* 155-156)

John presents different Islamic sectors including the Shiites, the Izalas, the Sunnis, the Mujahideen advocated for by Abdul-Nur and so on. He offers the readers a chance to observe the sectors' perceptions of each other. He highlights their differences, for example, in the ways the Shiites pray differently and how their views are opposed by other Muslims.

No one likes Shiites in Sokoto. Everyone believes they are dangerous, especially those of them who go to Iran to study and the Shiites Mallam who take money from Hezbollah to fight Dariqas and Izalas. Even Sheikh preaches against the way they pray only three times instead of five and how they act so uncivilized during the festival of Ashura...It shouldn't have been like this. I should have been happy to see my brothers, not exhausted or suspicious or confused. (*Born on a Tuesday* 107 and 108)

The above, on the part of Dantala is what Yilmaz (2006) referred to as nonviolent intolerance. Nonviolent intolerance deals with discrimination of religions and groups that are not part of the believed beliefs by another group. This hatred runs through the course of the text and led to the eventual death of Sheikh. However, there are instances in the text that the hatred is neutralized and the sectors had to compromise and cohabit.

Three hours later, Sheikh and the Shiite Malam emerge from the office. They are both smiling and laughing and patting each other on the shoulder like they are friends just coming from watching a football game in a viewing centre. (*Born on a Tuesday* 143)

There are characters in the text that are against formal learning and are in support of koranic learning which in turn harms the children and makes them lose self-awareness. At the same time, John creates a counter argument that supports the encouragement of formal education through the character of Sheikh. This shows that some of these people do not actively support the extremism and the insensitiveness that comes with it.

This is why the West pushes our leaders to make laws that force us to go to Western schools at an early age, so that they can teach our children that this system of the Jews is the best and by the time they learn otherwise it is too late. (*Born on a Tuesday* 30)

It is worthy of note that not all Muslims share extremistshare the extremist sentiments. This argument is stated and proven by John through the character of Sheikh. He further employs a direct approach by creating a debate where Sheikh and Abdul-Nur both share their views of education and Islam. Abdul-Nur, till

the end, participated in violence which did not benefit the members of hismembers his movement. Abdul-Nur platformes the propaganda for violent intolerance which is interesting because his intentions did not include the implementation of the Sharia, a glaring instance of his hypocrisy. In addition, Sheikh does not believe in the stripping of identity to seek good knowledge. This, in a way, can be said to be in line with the arguments of the Islamic leaders quoted earlier that the almajiri system is not Islamic as Allah did not instruct them to deny themselves of basic needs in the search for knowledge.

The money. About the money. When I first started, I used to reject money. All of it. Even from Alhaji Usman. But you know what I've learned, Ahmad? Poverty does not make a man decent. Poverty is not piety. In the same vein, money does not make a man evil. A man's character is not defined by what money he has or does not have, but what decisions he takes in spite of having or not having. There are people who have lived a life of abject poverty who will be first at the gates of hell. But even now there are people whose money I cannot accept because they will tie obligations to it. I can take your money, but you will never control me (*Born on a Tuesday* 168)

The above excerpt negates the argument that knowledge seeking involves extremism in terms of choosing poverty in the search of knowledge. A more specific example is Dantala's former mallam in Bayan Layi, Mallam Junaidu who was not wealthy but still abused and dismissed the children in his care.

I had been there six years, and when I told him my father had died, he paused for a moment, then said 'innalillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un' and walked away. It is not that I didn't agree that it is Allah who gives life and who takes, it is the way he said it in that dry tone he used when teaching that made me sad. (*Born on a Tuesday* 6)

He spoke only in Arabic and if we did not understand he would lash us with a whip made from old motorcycle tyres.... (*Born on a Tuesday* 21)

The excerpt above creates a contrast between Sheikh and Junaidu. Sheikh, though well to do, is not portrayed as a corrupt, violence loving, extremist leader

but Junaidu on the other hand embraces fundamentalist views on religion, child labour, and child assault. Furthermore, Sheikh believes in formal western education and seeking knowledge in order to follow the preaching of Allah.

'To fight an enemy, you must understand an enemy. How do you struggle against those whose elements you know nothing about? Seek knowledge, the prophet sallallahu alaihi wasallam said. Where are the Muslim schools for our children to attend? Have we built them? I have built one.... Give me one hadith or Quranic verse that tells you English itself is Haram, even by analogical deduction...' (*Born on a Tuesday* 198)

I love learning new words. I love reading the definitions and examples in Sheikh's dictionary, then finding those words in books or magazines and using the words with the only person who can get them, Jibril. Occasionally I find somebody in the park I can speak English with. People are always surprised when I speak English. I have bought a bigger hardcover notebook and started using the words I like in sentences... (*Born on a Tuesday* 87)

The second excerpt above explains the zeal and ambition displayed by Dantala. John is interested in exploring this zeal that is often hidden behind the anonymous state of the Almajirai. Significant portions of the book are dedicated to the development of Dantala's character in terms of education. In these aspects, John writes in undiluted and raw forms of self-expression that can be found among people of Dantala's educational level. He writes unapologetically with unabashed determination to accurately represent these boys without totally enforcing an alien language on them. He expresses this slowly but consistently which in return gives the book elements of a bildungsroman.

Sometimes a ~~man~~ somebody is asking me why I am doing something or why I say something and I don't like it. Because it is not ~~all-time~~ every time that ~~person~~ will know I will know the why. Sometimes you do something and it is only after you think of the why. Sometimes, there is no why. Like if someone should ask me why Aisha is making my chest to do somehow

do I know? I just know that when I see her then I will feel something in my chest. (*Born on a Tuesday* 151)

In the above, there is the conscious and unmistakable effort to make these parts of the book Dantala's personal self-expressions. In addition, through the character of Dantala, his views on extremism and fundamentalism are revealed. It adds to the tension in the book that has already been established through the emergence of Malam Abdul-Nur's new movement that advocates for violence, the implementation of the Sharia in the entire country, the extreme belief that education is Haram and also the concept that Islam has to do with complete submission to Allah. It is often viewed that all Almajirai are supporters of violence and against education but this is a notion that was debunked by the author by making Dantala use his own words to show his reservations about extreme religiousness. It is not disputed that in some parts of the text, especially the beginning, there are instances of Dantala believing that Allah is responsible for every human action but this is not to say he is in support of the violence that comes with it; this can further be referred to as part of his developmental process.

The worst for me is that he is calling the people who send their children to university kafiri when he know that Sheikh went to the big university in ~~Egypt~~ Egypt. Sheikh heard him once and told him to stop talking like that and told him there is nothing in the Quran or Sunna that says it is haram (sin) to work for government or go to university. (*Born on a Tuesday* 97-98)

The excerpt above shows that not all Almajirai advocate for violence but this is often ignored as they are usually referred to as an entity without trying to understand that some of them are not indoctrinated or have totally different views.

But what I also think is nonsense is what Malam Abdul-Nur says, that we should stand up and fight against the government because they are not doing anything about the Muslims that killed by those Berom people in Jos and that we should burn all the drinking places and the mosques of those who are not agreeing with us...he says that those who work for this government in any position are working for Shaitan and are making themselves enemies of Islam. I

don't know what he means because we all get money from Alhaji Usman who is doing contract with government and who is Governors friend. (*Born on a Tuesday* 97)

In relation to the above, all through the initial parts of the narrative, Abdul-Nur's character has had an interesting build up such that everything he does or says points to the part of him being dangerous, power thirsty and heartless. These pointers are subtle but they are noticeable. The author also presents the fear that dwells in the boys as against the notion that they are always heartless and quick to start a fight or retaliate. This fear is implemented through religious extremism mostly by Abdul-Nur whose actions represent the third world fundamentalism (also known as the Global South) that was identified by Jeff Haynes. In Third World countries like Nigeria, fundamentalism is usually a reaction to changes being thrust upon a society from outside and this could be the Islamic Revolution being triggered by modernism and globalisation.

Many things TERRIFY me. How it is easy for Malam Abdul-Nur to say the word kill especially when he is talking about the Shia people and the Darigas. When Sheikh travel and Malam Abdul-Nur is the one preaching, he say plenty bad bad things about them...I think he likes to TERRIFY people. (*Born on a Tuesday* 118-119)

The above is evident of the fear earlier discussed. Dantala, although has done terrible things in the past to survive, he is still very much scared of someone talking about killing and death and being so unapologetic about it.

I wish I wasn't sitting right in the centre of the Mosque where everyone will see me if I get up. The hot tears that are flowing from my eyes down my cheeks- I do not know where they are from. But I know they are not from the sermon. I am trapped- in this Mosque full of anger and tears, in my body full of pain, in my head full of confusion, in my heart full of fear. I do not know anything. I do not know what is happening to Sheikh or what Jibril is thinking. (*Born on a Tuesday* 127-128)

In the excerpt above part of the text expresses compassion, love, uncertainty and fear as it is a time when Dantala's Sheikh is attacked and this arguably takes him back to when he was in Bayan Layi and the life of survival he had to live. Here, it

almost feels like Sheikh holds the future of Dantala in his hands and if he dies, a part of Dantala will die too, as he had quit living to survive for a while. In addition, fundamentalist sentiments are not only limited to the religion, the society and culture but they are also applicable to the parents that drop their children off in Quranic schools when they lack the resources to adequately care for them, therefore contributing to their anonymous state where in most cases, the only thing the average almajiri would know about himself would be his name. This form of displacement is portrayed in *Born on a Tuesday* as Dantala was not aware of his age, he mostly guessed.

I hate it when people ask me my age because I don't know. I just tell them I have fasted nearly ten times. Some people understand when I say so, but others still ask annoying questions... But since the recent voter registration I have been saying I am nineteen, even though I have to fold the sleeves of the old caftan Banda gave me. (*Born on a Tuesday* 8)

The Notion of Adolescent Bonding in *Born on a Tuesday*

Company and relationships with other people are crucial in adolescent development and how this particular group of people tries to survive the cruelties that come with life. Representation of adolescent development in contemporary texts addresses the core issues faced by these young adults. These issues can range from lack of parental care, drugs to violence in order to survive. This representation also allows for detailed expressions of the transitional state into adulthood of these adolescents. Also, this type of writing, according to Al Jomaa (2010) allows for fluidity (23), this is a feature that is imbibed in Dantala as readers of *Born on a Tuesday* are able to experience his immature moments as well as his matured ones.

Freud suggests that the relationship patterns portrayed by the author and how they affect the characters should be examined. Some of these relationships are often responsible for the process of the character developments. Even though the theory advocates for individuality and independence, it is also expected to form bonds with other people and this is represented explicitly in *Born on a Tuesday* by John. From the formed bonds between Dantala and the boys under the Kuka Tree in Bayan Layi to the close friendship with Jibril in Sokoto, the author expresses the different dynamics of friendships and how they affect character development. The individuality in this theory plays out in different

aspects of the book. A very obvious one is boys being sent to Koranic schools to survive by themselves under the unusually cruel and harsh conditions usually anchored by the Mallam; in the midst of all of these, they form friendships to protect each other.

I did not cry until that evening when I heard Alfa telling some boys I was a cikin shege. A bastard pregnancy...I kicked Alfa on the thigh and we started fighting...two boys held me down so Alfa could keep slapping me. I was kicking and crying when Banda passed by...with one punch, Banda knocked Alfa down and flung one of the boys down. That day, I cried like I had never cried before. I followed Banda and he gave me the first wee-wee I ever smoked, it felt good...he gave me one of his flat cartons and took me to where they slept. (*Born on a Tuesday* 7)

The above excerpt is the first friendship bond Dantala formed in the book. Even though it does not resemble the conventional grounds on which friendships are formed, these boys continue to protect themselves until the day Banda dies, until when Dantala runs to Sokoto. Another instance of the bond between Banda and Dantala can be seen below:

Banda whispers something to the man and then collects a note. He stretches it out to me- it is another one hundred naira note. I am glad and suddenly the sleep has cleared from my eyes. This is why I like Banda: he fights for me. He is a good person. (*Born on a Tuesday* 13)

Arguably, Dantala's bond formation with other boys exists to make up for the relationships he does not have with his parents and his brothers. He desperately needs the closure and protection he gets to cover up for what he does not experience for almost half of his life. There is a build up to Dantala looking for compassion, company and protection from other people. Here, the concept of transference proposed by Freud is applicable. Sigmund Freud refers to this concept in terms of libidinal urges but it can still be applied while ignoring the sexual aspects which are not really prominent in the instances that are related to the objective being discussed. According to Thompson (1998), Freud discusses transference in terms of wishes and this also includes a longing for parental influence and it can lead to looking for things that represent the parents

or things that remind the individual of them (545).

I move my little radio, my bag which Sheikh gave to me and the photo of Sheikh Inyass I found one day at the motor park. The photo of Sheikh Inyass is identical to the one Umma had in her room in Dogon Icce. (*Born on a Tuesday* 70)

The above is a representation of Dantala keeping things that remind him of his mother. Even if he is not entirely attached to the picture mentioned in the above excerpt, he keeps it because it holds some of the memories he has of his mother.

pictures make me remember. There are many things I want to hide away in my head. I imagine that when you have a picture, the things become permanent and you can never remove the thought from your head. But sometimes, I want to remember. It is why I keep this photo of Sheikh Inyass. I see it and the walls of Umma's room come back to me, when she still had words in her mouth and life in her eyes. That is the only memory I want. (*Born on a Tuesday* 74)

This excerpt is reflective of his parental longings that lead to his search for company of company and bond. It is understandable that the events in his life did not happen intentionally and he would have had a better life if his parents had a better understanding of the actual concept of education.

Suddenly, I want to tell him of my stories of Bayan Layi that I have not told anyone, so he can tell me his own stories of how he got his scars and where he comes from... I can't sleep. I roll over and find the boy restless and slapping his body to fight mosquitoes. The ceiling fan is off because the noise it makes in my ear is like bottle tops being scrapped over concrete. But it keeps away the mosquitoes. I turn it on and give him one of the cloths I use to cover myself. He looks up with his puffy eyes and take it from me. (*Born on a Tuesday* 70-71)

The above shows Dantala's urge to share his stories with someone as it is something he has not done in a long time and having Jibril around makes him feel less alone. It also shows compassion and selflessness. As wishes are an important aspect of transferences, Jibril moving in with Dantala is the fulfilment

of one of Dantala's wishes which is to have someone to talk to. Furthermore, transference does not only involve wishes and transfer of roles and desires, it also has to do with empathy and transfer of compassion based on past trauma. When Jibril first arrives at Sokoto, he is scared and alone. Seeing this in him reminds of when he was with his mallam in Bayan Layi and how he also felt the same. This helps with the bond because he is able to relate and be patient with Jibril.

I saw Jibril with two small bags of rice, from ~~inside~~ among the rice that Alhaji Usman usually sends to share on Fridays. Even though he still was not talking to me, I asked him where he was taking the rice. At first he said it is none of my business. But then his eyes fell down and he started to play with his hands until he started talking and told me everything even the things I didn't ask him...and then when I heard about the woman going mad, I started telling all the stories inside my head, how my Umma stop talking and is now more mad each time I go back. How they tie her to her to the bed until when she needs need to go to toilet or bathroom or to walk around. They say if she does not walk around, her legs will become useless. (*Born on a Tuesday* 100 and 101)

The above asserts the definition of transference explained by Levy explained Levy and Scala (2012) as the transfer of strong feelings developed within a particular relationship to another person who was independent of the origin of those feelings (391). Jibril and Dantala are two independent individuals whose lives getget intertwined when they met. These two people also have independent traumas that existed before they met but they get close, share storiesstores with each other and form a bond they both wish they had with their family members or people they grew up with.

'I am afraid,' Jibril texts.

Me too,' I reply

I want to ask him why he is afraid so I can tell him why

I am afraid. (*Born on a Tuesday* 122)

The above portrays bond, self-expression and vulnerability. *Born on a Tuesday* is a book that can be referred to as an adolescent story as identified by Al Jomma (2010). This is because it allows the reader the opportunity to be at "the scene of loss, of dissolve between childhood and adulthood" (1). This can be regarded as an obvious transition in Dantala's character and his relationships with other

characters in the text, most especially, Jibril. Discussions on sexuality, violence and drugs are common discussions often found in adolescent texts. This can be applied to *Born on a Tuesday* as most of the discussions related to violence and sexuality between Dantala and Jibril are normal expectations between adolescents; this adds to the concept of their bonding as it is not only based on the trauma but also on the present and things considered taboo by the society and religion but that adolescents do anyway. An example is Jibril taking Dantala to meet a prostitute. The sexual aspects expressed are not usually extremely intentionally sexual but are moments of intimate truths and openness.

I start walking out of the room. Just when I am at the door, he starts

'He treats her like a donkey.'

'What?' I pretend not to have heard him

'Like a donkey. He treats her like an animal that he despises.

I sit with him. I want to put my arms around his shoulder but I don't, all of a sudden, I feel stupid for giving him such a hard time

'Don't worry,' I say. 'it's none of my business. I didn't see anything

'Is it nice?' I ask

'Yes,' he giggles, wiping his eyes. 'Very.' (*Born on a Tuesday* 148-149)

The above, although sexual, is not intended. The actual intention is Jibril opening up to Dantala about his affair with his brother's wife, it is not entirely about the sexual aspects of it. *Born on a Tuesday* exists as a correctional text that reevaluates the psychological developmental aspects of adolescents and in this context, almajiri boys and boys that are victims of a society riddled with hatred and lack of empathy. It is important that the existence of this book and its characters are recognised as it creates a new perspective in regards to the bonding of the boys represented in the book. It is also worthy of note that family bonds are reexamined and redefined in *Born on a Tuesday*. Dantala comes from a displaced family which consists of parents and siblings trying to survive how they know. Dantala, in his pursuit of survival meets Sheikh and Jibril whom he could die for and he does this literally as he was almost killed when he was questioned about the whereabouts of Jibril which he did not disclose even when he is dangerously close to being killed.

I want to tell him about our conversations, about how Jibril's heart was broken but his spirit was strong. But this man does not deserve the truth.

'Jibril is not a Mujahideen, that is all I know. You can beat me from now until tomorrow, refuse to give me food, but that is all I will tell you.' I push the plate aside and spread my palms on the table to show him I have no more nails for him to take. (*Born on a Tuesday* 250) But Sheikh, I can tell a hundred pages about him. As I can about Jibril. Is family really family if relatives are strangers to you? Are they not blood, those for whom you would risk your life and die; those who know how your heart beats, and what makes you laugh and what makes you cry; those whose secrets are your secrets? (*Born on a Tuesday* 256)

The ending of the text sums up all the love, bond and protection shared between Dantala and Jibril. It goes further to give hope that they might meet later in the future but even if they do not, it is evident that the love they share will never die.

I came back for you. They said you were dead but I didn't believe. I will come back again, insha Allah.

He does not write his name. he knows I will know. I am lightheaded. I heave a sigh. My heart tells me he is OK. Jibril is OK. (*Born on a Tuesday* 260-261)

Conclusion

This paper explores the instances of anonymity among the almajiri boys in *Born on a Tuesday*. Also, it employed theories (fundamentalism and psychoanalysis) and excerpts from the book to shift the focus away from the violence and terrorist acts that are often attributed to the almajirai. In addition, it examines the importance of naming and how it contributes to identity. The aspects of bonding have often been neglected in the representation of the Almajirai, but this was adequately catered for in *Born on a Tuesday* and in the textual analysis offered in the paper.

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