

Streetism: A Socio-cultural Challenge for the Male Child in Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*

Thomas-Michael Emeka Chukwumezie and
Onyeka J. Uzuegbu, <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1076-3358>
Department of English and Literary Studies,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

In many African narratives, streetism has become a recurrent motif as creative writers use their works as a medium to call attention to the vulnerability and inadequate representation of the plight of the almajiri children who constitute the majority of the street children in Northern Nigeria. Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* has been critically engaged in issues on child abuse, bildungsroman, religious ideology, fanaticism and extremism, survival strategies, character formation, and psychosexual and psychosocial development of protagonists. Despite the relevance of these issues, there remains a significant knowledge gap in understanding the specific needs and experiences of Almajiri children and other male street children. This highlights the need for further research and targeted interventions to improve their care and well-being. Therefore, this study delves into how streetism is portrayed in African literature, with a focus on John's *Born on a Tuesday*. Through the lens of Sandra Laugier's concept of care, the text is analysed, projecting the vulnerability and social exclusion of the almajiri and the discrimination emanating from such ill-treatment. The study unraveled that traditional/informal Almajiri Quranic training, poverty, and dysfunctional family structure are the root causes of streetism in Northern Nigeria and West Africa.

Keywords: African Literature, Streetism, Male Child, Almajiri Minors, Concept of Care, Vulnerability

Introduction

Streetism is a widespread social problem affecting many countries, particularly developing nations. UNICEF (1984) defines street children as young boys and girls who live or spend long periods in abandoned buildings, wastelands, or public spaces, turning these places into their

homes or workplaces. These children fend for themselves in dangerous conditions, without proper supervision, protection, or support from adults. The stigmatisation they face varies across regions: in Addis Ababa they are called "Borco" (pig), in Romania they are called "children in conflict with the law," and in Nigeria they are known as "area boys and girls." "Male street children make up 58.3% to 60% of this population, while females account for 40% to 41% (Owojeje et al., 10-11). The attention given to girl children has helped reduce their numbers on the streets, while the persistent neglect of boy children continues to drive the rise of male street children. This gendered disparity became a subject of scholarly discussion from the 2000s onward (Pike 100; Chamg'ach 181-183).

UNICEF categorizes street children into three groups: children in the street who return home at night; street-based children who live on the streets without family support; and abandoned children who are entirely on their own and maintain no contact with relatives. However, this classification does not adequately highlight the predominance of male children among street populations. The causes of streetism across African countries are rooted in a combination of historical, contemporary, and sociopolitical factors. Colonial legacies, economic hardship, political instability, religious extremism, and armed conflicts have orphaned or separated countless children, pushing them into destitution. These conditions are worsened by limited resources, unequal wealth distribution, and policies that benefit the elite. Children from poor families lack basic necessities, driving them to the streets in search of survival. Limited access to education traps them in poverty, while dysfunctional families marked by neglect, abuse, and domestic violence force children to seek refuge elsewhere. Weak child protection policies and poor law enforcement further increase their vulnerability.

Born on a Tuesday by Elnathan John shows how literature can bring attention to the struggles of street children. John has said in interviews that he wanted to write about Nigeria's "invisible people," i.e., the almajiri, the many Quranic scholars who are often overlooked. But existing studies on the novel have not adequately examined the root causes of streetism. While scholars have explored child abuse, bildungsroman techniques, religious ideology, violence, fanaticism, and psychosexual development in the novel, they have largely focused on the

immediate effects of street life, harsh conditions, exploitation, and lack of basic services. They have not paid enough attention to deeper factors like the traditional Almajiri system, poverty, and dysfunctional families. This study fills that gap by examining the neglect, vulnerability, and survival strategies of Almajiri characters in the novel. It looks at socio-economic inequality, cultural failures, and limited access to education and healthcare as fundamental causes of street children's suffering. Using Sandra Laugier's concept of care as a framework, the study reveals the systematic absence of care in how Almajiri characters are portrayed and treated. Laugier's ideas, care as everyday practice, attention to vulnerability, and the political nature of care work help show that the neglect of these boys is not just personal but structural. Through this lens, the study explores the lived experiences of Almajiri children, their struggles, their harmful coping mechanisms, and their resilience as they try to build better lives for themselves.

Laugier's Concept of Care: A Framework for Understanding Almajiri's Vulnerability

Sandra Laugier's concept of care centres on the idea that care is fundamental to human relationships and society at large. It involves connection, protection, and attention to the well-being of others, especially the vulnerable and dependent. Drawing from philosophy, politics, ethics, and feminism, Laugier builds on the care ethics movement, which challenges traditional ethical theories that prioritise autonomy. Care ethics instead emphasises interdependence, empathy, and nurturing.

For Laugier, care is not abstract moral theory but ordinary practice. It is the everyday work of paying attention to vulnerability and dependence, listening, and checking on someone. Ethics begins with moral perception rather than fixed principles: the ability to notice what a person needs and respond with sensitivity. She insists that care is political, not just private, because the invisible work that keeps society running, i.e., hospitals, schools, and childcare, is often devalued. Devaluing that work means devaluing people. She links care to democracy, arguing that a just society must be organised around interdependence and give voice to caregivers. She also critiques justice-only ethics: while justice asks, "What are the rules?" care asks, "What

does this person need here and now?" Both are necessary. This concept has far-reaching implications for healthcare, education, and social work. Social work, in particular, plays a key role in promoting well-being among Almajiri children, with a focus on social justice and human rights. When examining streetism in Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*, Laugier's framework proves valuable. By emphasising interconnectedness over isolation, she highlights the ties between Almajiri children and their communities. Her perspective gives a clearer understanding of streetism, shedding light on the moral obligations involved in caring for vulnerable populations. It shows that the neglect of these children is not just personal but structural and that addressing their suffering requires recognising the everyday work of care that has been systematically denied to them.

Themes and Styles in *Born on a Tuesday*: Reminiscent Approach of Female African Authors

The portrayal of the boy child protagonist in *Born on a Tuesday* offers insights into the specific challenges and vulnerability of almajiri and other boys in the street. The author's depiction of the boy child in the novel offers an in-depth exploration of the complexities of streetism and its impact on young males. He provides insight into the experiences and challenges faced by this demographic, shedding light on the intricacies of their lives and struggles. Through his narrative, John brings to the forefront the realities of streetism, showing how the lives of male characters are shaped by Almajiri social systems, Hausa culture, religion, and poverty, allowing readers to engage with the story on a deeper level. This representation helps shed light on the social and gender issues that impact the lives of male street children, addressing potential gaps in understanding that arise from some exclusively female-authored narratives like Amma Darko's *Faceless*, *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Housemaid*, Ama Ato Aidoo's *Changes and Our Sister Killjoy*; Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa*; Nawal El Saadawi's *Women at Point Zero*; and Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*.

These female authors explore themes and styles of feminism and patriarchy, cultural identity, and social justice. They challenged societal norms and expectations of women's roles and examined the complexities of African culture and its impact on women's lives and also highlighted

issues like exploitation, marginalization, and inequality. In the same vein, Elnathan John challenges social exclusion, exploitation, and marginalization of street urchins in *Born on a Tuesday*. Be that as it may, his narrative humanizes the experiences of marginalized almajiris and street boys in Northern Nigeria by focusing on their personal stories and struggles, making their plight more relatable and sympathetic. This approach is reminiscent of Ama Ata Aidoo's and Amma Darko portrayal of women's struggles in Ghanaian society, as it sheds light on the harsh realities faced by marginalized almajiri groups which includes poverty, exploitation, and violence, critiquing societal norms and institutions in a manner similar to Nawal El Saadawi's works.

Overall, Elnathan John's narrative brings the world of almajiris to life through vivid storytelling, critiques societal norms such as the conventional Quranic/Amajiri system that marginalise them, and fosters empathy and understanding in readers. His approach makes their experiences more accessible, encourages critical thinking about social issues, and promotes a more detailed view of these individuals.

Streetism and Almajiri Minors in *Born on a Tuesday*

Examining the catalysts for the boy child's experiences in *Born on a Tuesday* involves looking at the factors that instigate or significantly influence the boy's growth, challenges, decisions, perceptions, development, and transformations throughout the narrative. However, each of these catalysts shapes his identity, beliefs, and responses to the world around him. In the novel, several catalysts contribute to the boy child's journey. First is religious influence. Dantala's association with the mosque and his relationship with Malam Sheikh, the Imam of Sokoto Motor Park Mosque. His involvement in religious teachings and the guidance he receives from Malam Junaidu and Sheikh shape his beliefs, decisions, and actions. Going by Laugier's concept of care, Dantala, who has been on the street and park of Bayan Layi, needs care and support to navigate and mitigate risks and consequences of vulnerability. At the early stage of his life, he is denied this care and support from supposed parents, and as a result, he becomes vulnerable. Therefore, joining street boys in Bayan Layi appears to be the only option left for survival.

When we apply Laugier's concept of care to Dantala's narrative, we observe that Almajiri's vulnerability is not merely a personal failure but a

systemic condition produced by the absence of care at family, community, and state levels. For instance, for Dantala's father to send him away for Quranic training is not out of malice or hatred but out of economic necessity, yet the result appears the same: a child abandoned to a system that offers religious instruction but no care for his physical, emotional, or psychological needs. Due to social exclusion of almajiri children in Northern Nigeria, the boys are often marginalised, stigmatised, and denied access to better education, healthcare, and social services. This clarifies the fact that streetism in Northern Nigeria starts from the point of social exclusion of almajiri children who are dominantly boys sent from far and near and entrusted to the care of Malams (Quranic scholars). It is apparently true that the life's journey of every almajiri boy starts from a poor family background and, in some cases, dysfunctional families. Almajiri face rejection, abandonment, and social exclusion, starting from their immediate families and then perpetuated by society. There has never been any one of them whose family is a well-to-do family. And of course, parents who share this viewpoint are unlikely to send their children to an informal setup like this. Laugier would argue that lack of care is a failure of "ordinary ethics," i.e., the daily, concrete acts of attention and response that sustain life. As the text reveals, the almajiri and other street boys in Bayan Layi and the Sokoto motor park mosque do not receive the good gestures of care that would make their sufferings bearable: that is, someone to ask if they have eaten, someone to notice their injuries, and someone to remember their birthdays.

Meanwhile, the author's creation of the character of Malam Sheikh is deliberate in the novel in that it shows how necessary care and support are for the almajirai. His role in Dantala's journey to survival is strategic. This alone supports Joan Tronto's view on ethics of care: "Care is fundamental aspect of human life, and it consists of everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible." (Laugier, 219). Notably, the light that shines in Dantala's life through Sheikh's relationship is timely and fundamental. It is only through him that the reader sees hope for the vulnerable almajirai in the novel and how important it is that they all need care and support from an adult figure to navigate vulnerability.

Secondly, political unrest, turmoil, and conflicts in northern Nigeria act as another catalyst, significantly impacting Dantala's life and other street urchins in the novel. The violence and instability force him to navigate complex situations, altering his perceptions and choices. Again, Laugier's concept of care, which states that vulnerability has significant ethical and political implications emphasises the need for a caring and supportive society that addresses the vulnerabilities of all individuals, particularly the most marginalized. This is not the case with Dantala, his brothers Maccido, Hassan, and Hussein, or other almajiri like Alpha, who never returned to their family roots after the completions of the Quaranic trainings. Instead of receiving care and support from their societies, they receive violence, torture, turmoil, conflicts, denial, hunger, abandonment, and what have you. Notwithstanding, Laugier's democracy of care finds its echo in the novel's political dimensions. Dantala's story is set against the backdrop of Boko Haram's rise, religious violence, and state collapse, precisely the kind of political breakdown that Laugier would attribute to a society that does not care for its most vulnerable members. The novel suggests that the failure to care for Almajiri boys is not just a moral failure but a political one, with consequences that reverberate through the entire society. When Malam Abdul-Nur's extremist movement emerges, it recruits from the same pool of neglected boys, offering them a perverse form of belonging and purpose. This is what happens when care is absent: vulnerability becomes a resource for manipulation rather than a call for response.

Thirdly, friendships and relationships, especially with characters like Banda and Jibri, act as catalysts for his personal development. These friendships influence his understanding of the world and himself. Laugier would argue that care reveals human dependence on others for meeting their needs. (221). Going by this, Dantala's relationships and friendships have both negative and positive impacts, but each satisfied his need at one point in time. From the early stage of their childhood onwards, they are alone in the world and must earn their living as errand boys, street vendors, or beggars. They are treated as rags and numbers in their supposed country, and people notice and observe them only when they become violent or commit crimes of different degrees. Dina Yerima-Avazi's *A Blitz in the Haze* explains how almajirai are used in Northern

Nigeria as puppets and often paid meagre cash for aiding a crime for adults (70-71).

Certainly, giving voice to almajiri is a way of offering them support, and if that support is sustained, it gives the African street boys agency. In order to achieve that, Elnathan John positions Dantala, the young narrator and protagonist of the novel, to be the voice for the voiceless as he states the following: "But Allah judges the intentions of the heart. We are not terrible people. When we fight, it is because we have to. When we break into small shops in Sabon Gari, it is because we are hungry, and when someone dies, well, that is Allah's will." (16). almajiri are not thought of as human beings, but they have stories to tell, feelings, dreams, and aspirations just like every normal individual:

I remember when I was very small, my father almost beat me to death because I burnt a whole bag of millet stalks. That was before the rain stopped falling in our village and my father sent me and my three brothers far away for Quranic training. I don't know where they are now, my brothers. Maybe they have gone back home. Maybe they have decided to stay like me. (19)

Nevertheless, giving voice to the voiceless often fails because their stories are either spoken for by others or silenced altogether. In the novel, almajiri, predominantly boys, represent a marginalised group of street children sent to Quranic schools at a young age; many never return home after completing their training. For Dantala, joining the Kuka Tree Boys becomes his only option. He feels no affection for his father, even in death, but his heart longs for his mother, Umma. Yet his reluctance to reunite with his family shows a deep disconnection. Shuaibu, his aunt's husband, asks: "Dantala! When did you get into town? But you have not been fair, wallahi. Are you the first to be sent away to be an almajiri? Your brothers have been coming, but you, no. What happened to you?" (42).

Dantala is one thread in the larger tapestry of almajiri who end up on the streets. Their stories often end in obscurity, and some die without anyone to mourn them. Two almajirai lose their lives in a truck accident while travelling from Bayan Layi to Sokoto, crammed among

heavy loads of wood. Their names and stories remain unknown to their society and loved ones. The narrator, who is also an almajiri, cries in pain as everyone agrees to bury them. The driver, who knows their homes, would inform their parents. (22).

Voice, Visibility, and Vulnerability: Humanizing the Almajiri Through First-Person Perspective

The investigation and revelations within *Born on a Tuesday* extend far beyond merely giving voice to the almajiri or Kuka tree boys, whom the author perceives as the marginalised and unseen individuals, often referred to as 'subalterns' in the discourse inspired by Spivak's essay. In this literary work, the author goes to great lengths to grant them visibility, a tangible presence, a voice to articulate their experiences, and a platform to convey their hardships and challenging life narratives. This profound transformation is artfully achieved through the character of Dantala, the novel's central protagonist and young narrator. As the youngest among the Kuka tree boys in the Bayan Layi community, Dantala becomes not just an observer but an active participant in their activities. Rather than maintaining a distance from the group, he forges the closest bonds, particularly with Banda, who holds the esteemed position of the group's leader in Bayan Layi. This unique perspective afforded to Dantala serves as a channel for exploring the multiple challenges and trials of the Kuka Tree Boys, ultimately humanising and shedding light on their concealed existence within the narrative. "I am the smallest in the gang of big boys in Bayan Layi, and Banda is the biggest. But he is my best friend." (9)

In the Bayan Layi community, Banda emerges as a central figure consistently associated with the instigation of chaos, disruption, and criminal activities within the community, drawing upon the revelations provided through the perspective of Dantala. Through Dantala's narrative lens, a comprehensive examination of the various crimes committed by the group of boys, as well as the underlying motivations behind their actions and inactions, is presented. Banda's leadership position as the catalyst for mayhem in Bayan Layi ultimately contributes to a detailed understanding of the complex interplay of characters and events within the community. This exploration, rooted in Dantala's perspective, serves as a valuable foundation for unraveling the broader socio-cultural and

psychological dimensions that underlie Banda's influence and the resulting consequences in the Bayan Layi community. As previously noted in this study, there are cultural variations among African nations when it comes to the concept of streetism and its associations with so many unfortunate and unpleasant events. The almajiri as described in the text appears to be more formal due to its rudimentary truth and the religious underlying principles, while Kuka tree boys in Bayan Layi and motor park boys in Sokoto appear informal and derogatory as they describe the toxic masculinity stereotypically associated with them:

Malam Abdul-Nur decided this was the time to give me a long sermon about not joining the motor park boys who smoke cigarettes under the mango trees at night. He has never seen me smoke or sit with the boys who smoke and, wallahi, since I left the boys under the kuka tree in Bayan Layi, my mouth has not touched a cigarette. (55)

However, the toxic attitudes and violent behaviour of these Kuka boys and motor park boys impact the people and the societies. Needless to say, it is when the boys become violent that they are noticed, but factual issues leading to such toxic build-up are ignored. One of these issues is the way they are treated by the Malams (Quranic scholars). However, Laugier's emphasis on care as political illuminates how the Almajiri system is not merely a cultural practice but a structure of power and labour. The Malams who teach the Quran rely on the boys' begging to sustain themselves, effectively extracting value from their vulnerability. This is care's opposite: exploitation masked as religious instruction. The "invisible work" that Laugier speaks of, the labour of maintaining life, is performed by the almajiri themselves, begging for food, working in their Malams' farms, and running errands, yet this work is neither valued nor reciprocated with care. Describing his ordeal and plights of being an almajiri, Dantala states the following:

Sheikh is kind. He is different from Malam Junaidu in Bayan Layi, who made us beg even after working on his maize farm. Working on a farm during planting and harvest season is better than standing by the road, chasing after cars,

and having people turn away from you like you are a huge mound of shit. It is better than fighting over food and money at the Friday Mosque. (54)

Notably, Malam Junaidu in Bayan Layi employs tire whips to mercilessly flog boys who struggle to remember Quranic verses, resulting in severe injuries and instances where they bleed and vomit blood. The Young Narrator notes: When in Bayan Layi, Malam Junaidu flogs a boy who couldn't remember his Quranic verses with his tire whip, and the boy threw up blood. He was taken away and never came back." (62). Again, this is against laugier's point of view on the care concept. Dantala, Banda, Dauda, and Gobedanisa are dreaded and seen as nonconformists and persona non grata. "The boys who sleep under the kuka tree in Bayan Layi like to boast about the people they have killed. I never join in because I have never killed a man. Banda has, but he doesn't like to talk about it. He just smokes weewee while they talk over each other's heads" (8). Thus, the insight here is that while Quranic school may serve as a training ground for Islamic scholars, it also serves as a breeding ground for streetism because many almajiri boys, upon completion of the said training, join other street boys. An example is Dantala, who joins Kuka Tree Boys and motor park boys. These are boys who are seen to have lost control and connections to their parents and their societies and are now experiencing the full weight of street life (UNICEF, 1989). However, understanding the life experiences, plight, obstacles, feelings, emotions, desires, aspirations, and denials of these boys in general through the lens of the concept of care resonates and calls for the amplification of their voices. This is so because the concept enables an investigation of how the viewpoints of almajiri, the Kuka tree boys, and the motor park boys in North Nigeria are represented and given agency in *Born on a Tuesday*. The above fact shows that Elnathan John maximises his knowledge and creative ability in his representation of the abandoned boy child who needs to be given care and support.

Furthermore, the author skillfully navigates the delicate balance of portraying the boy child's vulnerability while also addressing the issue of silencing the ordinary. A notable instance of this occurs during Dantala's conversation with Mallam Abdul-Nur. In this exchange, the young narrator expresses his disapproval and complex emotions

regarding Mallam Abdul-Nur's decision to prohibit Jibril, his younger brother, from engaging in conversations with others. From Dantala's viewpoint, this prohibition hinders his understanding of the challenges and hardships that Jibril faces. It is possible to interpret Mallam Abdul-Nur's intentional restriction as an act of suppression that effectively silences the boy-child who is struggling with intense anger and distress. It is worth noting that although Jibril's experiences differ from those of almajirai and street boys like Dantala, his mistreatment and traumatising encounters at the hands of his supposed brother shed light on the harsh realities that an average male child encounters daily. Dantala explains:

In my heart, I should have been happy, but I was not. I have a funny feeling about Malam Abdul-Nur; Allah forgive me. It is hard to describe. It is a little bit of fear, a little bit of anger that he doesn't want Jibril to talk to me, and a little bit of confusion because I don't know what is going on in his mind. I cannot say that he is kind because he slaps people when he is angry. (69)

However, Dantala's unique experience as a Hausa-speaking boy introduces a complex layer to his struggle with identity. Navigating the relentless challenges of survival as an almajiri street boy, he constantly finds himself compelled to adapt and assimilate into unfamiliar environments. This perpetual cultural metamorphosis compounds his overarching sense of cultural displacement, intricately complicating his evolving self-concept. The validity of this assertion is reinforced by the aforementioned statement. Another pivotal juncture in the text revolves around Dantala's transformative encounter with Sheikh Jamal, a charismatic and influential figure. Gravitating toward Sheikh Jamal's teachings and benevolent disposition, Dantala experiences a profound sense of belonging within the religious and social community presided over by Sheikh Jamal. During his initial days of residence in the mosque within the motor park, Sheikh Jamal reveals Dantala's birth name, Ahmad. This pivotal encounter underscores Dantala's profound struggle to reconcile his identity with his place within the broader societal context. In this moment, the author's portrayal of his protagonist crystallizes, offering insight into Dantala's dual nomenclature Ahmad, his

true name, and Dantala, his street moniker, each playing a distinctive role in shaping Dantala's psychological landscape. He adopts 'Dantala' as a street name, which reflects an element of his personality, background, or experiences within that specific context or urban environment. These facets are conspicuously evident in his conversations with Sheikh Jamal:

By what name are you called?' Sheikh Jamal's very formal tone breaks through all the sounds and blocks them out. 'Dantala. But my father named me Ahmad' (32). Then Malam Abdul-Nur speaks, holding up his right palm like a slate and turning between me and Sheikh. '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, Sall Allahu alaihiwasallam. You should stop using that Dantala.' (33). Everyone shakes hands and does introductions. Sheikh refers to me as Malam Ahmad. No one has referred to me like this before, and it makes me feel important. (117)

John gives voice to marginalised street children, making them visible and recognised. His narratives give them space to breathe, live, and thrive. These forsaken boys possess untapped potential. When Dantala meets Jibril, whom he describes as remarkably intelligent and agile, this encounter sparks his self-realisation and growth. Sheikh Jamal's moral support and nurturing environment play a key role in this transformation. Despite their waywardness, these boys harbour talents waiting to be channeled. The author's portrayal of Dantala's transition from adolescence to adulthood examines the psychological impact of street life on the boy child. Applying Frantz Fanon's framework of colonial psychology shows how Dantala and other male characters develop coping mechanisms while dealing with trauma, affecting their mental health. Recalling his late grandmother's belief that women feel chest pain because they think with their hearts while men think with their heads, Dantala rejects this idea. Despite his youth, he feels intense chest pain when thinking of his lost friend Banda and worrying about his mother Umma, whom he has not seen during his years of Quranic training. This gap between his experiences and traditional gendered views of emotion

shows the complex emotional terrain of street life: "Today I think my dead grandmother is wrong. It is not only women who get that pain in the chest. I feel it now when I think of Umma and Banda in my stomach, in my chest, in my head, everywhere" (32).

The mentioned pain subjects him to psychological and traumatic experiences, leading to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and lasting emotional wounds. These challenges come from isolation and homesickness. Dantala and his three brothers, Maccido, Hassan, and Hussein, are cut off from their family in Dogon Icce. The separation causes intense loneliness, anxiety, and depression with lasting effects. Dantala also struggles with violent memories of his father, his mother's mental distress, and his brother's conversion to Shiits, all adding to his chest pain and sense of alienation from his family. The psychological impact on Dantala's psyche is woven throughout the narrative, showing the lasting effects of his experiences.

A few months after, I was off to Bayan Layi because the malam in Tashar Kanuri didn't have space for more students. 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. (41).

Many memories float in my head. Memories of when all of my family was still in one house in Dogon Icce. When Maccido used to pinch me, I would cry, and nobody would believe me when I would say what he did. When I used to be angry that the twins got anything they wanted and my father hit Umma, Maccido, and me, but never them. (62)

Subsequently, street life exposes Dantala to pervasive violence and trauma. As he joins the Bayan Layi Kuka Tree Boys, they proudly and boastfully recount their proficiency in killing victims, engaging in activities like breaking into shops, stealing, and acting as political thugs. This environment is marked by physical abuses inflicted by Quranic teachers responsible for training Almajiris, subjecting them to distressing sufferings and maltreatment.

Conclusion

Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* powerfully captures the harsh realities of street life in northern Nigeria through Dantala's firsthand account. The novel masterfully conveys the difficulties of his experiences, emotions, and tumultuous journey to adulthood. By sharing the stories of street boys navigating a region marked by religious, cultural, and socio-political challenges, John sheds light on the often-overlooked struggles of marginalized and forgotten almajiri youths. Through the lens of Laugier's concept of care, this narrative invites readers to empathize and reflect on the complex world of the Almajiri. Notably, the novel highlights that street children in this context are predominantly boys. This work is both a literary achievement and a sociocultural reflection that amplifies the voices and perspectives of the boy child, ensuring they are heard and understood.

Laugier's concept of care, with its emphasis on ordinary practice, attention to vulnerability, political dimensions, and moral perception, provides a robust framework for understanding the plight of Almajiri children in the novel. It reveals that their suffering is not merely individual but systemic, rooted in a society that has failed to recognize interdependence as the foundation of ethics and politics. The novel offers a vision of care as both possible and transformative: through Sheikh Jamal, Dantala experiences what it means to be seen, named, and supported. Yet this care remains precarious, threatened by the very structures that produce vulnerability in the first place. The novel thus poses a challenge to readers and to society: to move beyond abstract sympathy toward the ordinary, concrete work of responding to the needs of the most vulnerable among us

Work Cited

- Bhukuth, Augendra, and Jérôme Ballet. "Children of the Street: Why Are They in the Street? How Do They Live?" *Economics & Sociology*, vol. 8, no. 4, 20 Dec. 2015, pp. 134–148, <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-789x.2015/8-4/10>. Accessed 10 Sept. 2019.
- Clark, Helen, et al. "A Future for the World's Children? A WHO–UNICEF–Lancet Commission." *The Lancet*, vol. 395, no. 10224, Feb. 2020, pp. 605–658,

[www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS01406736\(19\)32540-1/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS01406736(19)32540-1/fulltext), [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(19\)32540-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(19)32540-1).

Accessed 23 Feb. 2020.

- Cumber, Samuel Nambile, and Joyce Mahlako Tsoka-Gwegweni. "The Health Profile of Street Children in Africa: A Literature Review." *Journal of Public Health in Africa*, vol. 6, no. 2, 17 Aug. 2015, <https://doi.org/10.4081/jphia.2015.566>. Accessed 15 Apr. 2020.
- Egbunu, D. Egbunu, and Umar, M. Aisha. "Surviving Trauma through Perseverance in Crises Situations: Exploring El-Nathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*." *Www.ijsrp.org*, www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-0518.php?rp=P777432. Accessed 17 Nov. 2023.
- Ezeani, Ogechukwu Martha. "Psychosexual and Psychosocial Development of Male Protagonist: A Bildungsroman Analysis of *Born on a Tuesday* by Elnathan John." *Interdisciplinary Journal of African & Asian Studies (Ijaas)*, vol. 9 no. 1, 2023.
- Dauda, Susan. "Ending Religious Extremism in Northern Nigeria: A Study of Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*." *Nile Journal of English Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 22 Dec. 2016, p. 16, <https://doi.org/10.20321/nilejes.v2i3.97>. Accessed 1 Dec. 2020.
- Hassouna, Mohammed. "Religious Fanaticism in North Nigeria: Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*." vol. 7, no. 3, 1 Jan. 2018, pp. 257–288, journals.ekb.eg/article_71681_0.html, <https://doi.org/10.21608/herms.2018.71681>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2021.
- Ikhida R. Ikheola. 'Elnathan's song: Born into a war on a Boiling Tuesday (Review)', n.p., Jun 25th 2017, <http://xokigbo.com/2015/11/14/el-nathans-song-born-into-a-war-on-a-boiling-tuesday/>. Ireland, Craig. *The Subaltern Appeal to Experience: Self-Identity, Late Modernity, and the Politics of Immediacy*. Montréal, McGill-Queen's University Press; Chesham, 2005.
- John, Elnathan. *Born on a Tuesday*. Open Road + Grove/Atlantic, 3 May 2016.
- Kopoko, Peter Anthony. "The Problem of Street Children in Africa: An Ignored Tragedy | the Homeless Hub." *Www.homelesshub.ca*,

- www.homelesshub.ca/resource/problem-street-children-africa-ignored-tragedy. Accessed 30 June 2023.
- Laugier, Sandra. "The Ethics of Care as a Politics of the Ordinary." *New literary History*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2015, pp.217-240, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2015.0016>. Accessed 3 Oct. 2020
- Major-Pearce, Adewale. 'The Successor: on the African Renaissance.' University of Virginia, 2016. Vol.92, No.4 fall 2016, pp. 203-206.14th Dec 2017, journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/002198941.
- Owoaje, ET, et al. "Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Street Children in Rural Communities Undergoing Urbanization." *Annals of Ibadan Postgraduate Medicine*, vol. 7, no. 1, 3 Mar. 2011, <https://doi.org/10.4314/aipm.v7i1.64055>.
- Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Verso Books, 27 Nov. 2018.
- Save The Children. "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child." *Save the children.org.uk*, 2011, www.savethechildren.org.uk/what-we-do/childrens-rights/united-nations-convention-of-the-rights-of-the-child
- Seiferle-Valencia, Anna. *An Analysis of Franz Boas's: Race, Language and Culture*. London, Routledge, 2017.
- Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990.
- The State of the World's Children, Special Edition: Celebrating 20 Years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child." Harvard.edu, 2022, repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/11595/. Accessed 1 Sep. 2023.
- United Nations. "Human Rights." *United Nations*, 2022, www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights. "Protect Human Rights." *United Nations*, 2021, www.un.org/en/our-work/protect-human-rights. "The Foundation of International Human Rights Law." *United Nations*, 2022, www.un.org/en/about-us/udhr/foundation-of-international-human-rights-law.
- UNICEF. "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) - Unicef UK." *UNICEF*, 1989, www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/.

- “UNICEF and the Sustainable Development Goals.” *Www.unicef.org*, 2021, www.unicef.org/sdgs.
- Xidias, Jason. *An Analysis of Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities*. CRC Press, 2017.
- Yerima-Avazi, Dina. *A Blitz in the Haze*. Kraft griots. ISBN: 9789789188987, 20225
- Young, Robert. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Chichester. Blackwell, 2016.