

## Psychosexual and Psychosocial Development of Male Protagonist: A Bildungsroman Analysis of “Born On a Tuesday” By Elnathan John

Ogechukwu Martha Ezeani

Department of English Language and Literature  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka  
Email: Mo.ezeani@unizik.edu.ng

### Abstract

This study has examined the psychological, sexual as well as the social growth of male protagonist in Elnathan John’s *Born on a Tuesday*. The study employed Psychoanalysis (Freud’s Personality Development theory of psychosexual development) and Eric Erickson’s Psychosocial Development Theory in order to examine dimensions of defence mechanisms adopted by each protagonist in combating life crises within the African cultural contexts. The study has analyzed social, cultural, familial, sexual and academic growth of the male protagonist revealing various psychological consequences that resulted to repression, sublimation, displacement, depression, anxiety and disillusionment. The study discovered that the male protagonist in the selected novel adopted different defence mechanisms in combating oppressive or violent conditions. Dantala in John’s *Born on a Tuesday* used ‘repression and sublimation’ as unconscious defence mechanisms, strategies that push disturbing feelings out of consciousness. The study investigates different perspectives of growth such as social, cultural, familial, sexual and academic in the selected novels. The study also examined the different techniques employed by the novelist in depicting the experiences of the male protagonist in Nigerian or African context as explored in the selected novel revealing the journey of growth of male protagonist from childhood to adulthood.

**Keywords:** Bildungsroman, Psychosexual, Psychosocial, defense mechanism.

### Introduction

Critics and women writers have consistently shown that important distinction exists between the male quest of bildungsroman and the female quest of the ‘coming-of-age’ because the condition for self development is vastly different for women (psychologically and culturally). The process leading to selfhood and creative self-assertion consequently varies from that of male counterpart (Ike, 2015:23). Therefore, considering the fact that there have been a lot of writings done on female bildungsroman unlike the male, this study deems it important to step out of the routine and explore this genre from a unique perspective. Most importantly, Africans are obsessed with colonization that most of the reviews are often channelled towards that context. However, despite the historical setting, this study will only attempt to evaluate the concerns of the male protagonist outside colonial context; his sexual as well as social growth are fully explored.

Bildungsroman is generally seen as a literary term or a class of formative novel that depicts and explores the manner in which the protagonist develops morally and psychologically from his youth into adulthood. The experiences that result to the growth of the protagonist are followed from childhood to adulthood in order to trace their spiritual, moral, psychological and physical growth. Bildungsroman is a genre that focuses on most times the development of the protagonist both physically and psychologically in each stage of the changing environment, the awakening of the protagonist about his/ her present condition and aspiration for a better future. The protagonist’s interaction and intermingling with people and movement from the said environment eventually culminates to gaining self-awareness and identity formation to stand against the forefront of the imminent or impending crises. Bildungsroman covers the development of the protagonist to identify the original identity and culture when truth is unfolded amidst the crises the protagonist is experiencing. It equally focuses on the feeling of exile during the stay at home and the feeling of familiar environment during the stay outside the home. (Okezieorji, 2019:1)

Psychosexual development is viewed by Sam (2013) as a libidinal development, referring to Sigmund Freud’s view as a model of sexual instinct in chronological order which occurs in life. He further opines that it is the development towards being sexually mature in behaviour and attitude from

infancy through puberty to adulthood. This then explicates the progressive series of sexual development of the protagonist as they mature physically, psychologically and emotionally through the stages stipulated by Sigmund Freud.

On the other hand, Aubrey (2022) defines psychosocial development as how a person's personality develops and how social skills are learned from infancy through adulthood. He equally refers to Erik Erikson's assertion that people advance through stages of development based on how they adjust to social crisis throughout their lives. The psychosocial development helps to predict, evaluate and interpret situations, behaviors and provides a basis on how one needs to react and intervene with people who have a certain backgrounds. These social crises which instruct individual's reactions to the surrounding world provide a stepping stone for movement towards proper growth and support for tackling difficulties and challenges. Erikson is seen by Bailey as believing that during each stage of development, a person experiences a 'psychosocial crises' that either has a positive or negative effect on a personality. This attests that a protagonist undergoes a series of crises which could either be innate or physical in his transition to maturity. These crises could serve as a contributory factor to growth, development, maturity, self-awakening and self actualization.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2006) in revealing the notion of youth crisis states that there seems to be a shared understanding that young people are somehow in crisis (12). The review seeks to analyze this concept by identifying two different meaning of the expression: (i) a crisis of society impacting on youth; and (ii) a crisis originality from youth and impacting on society at large (12). The UNDP's (2006) review equally seeks to emphasize that young people in their transition from childhood to adulthood tend to encounter some conflict situations and sometimes they tend to fight for their own causes. The young people sometimes fight both psychologically and physically to change the circumstances of their particular grievances. This translates to the fact that young people (especially minors) can be rational actors, or have the rational maturity to understand the implications and underlying causes of their decisions. A cursory look at young people as a category seems to be highly unsatisfied with their lives. They sometimes feel deprived or alienated with their environment or the behaviours of their parents. They could also feel let down or marginalized by society which lend credence for their being in crisis, then impact of these various crises on the young protagonist results in a feeling of uneasiness in the face of societal changes and constraints. The young protagonists are the greatest casualty of these crises which make them turn into a source of despair, not only does it have negative effect on them but also affects their ability to fulfill their ambitions and to live up to the expectation placed upon them. It also impaired their capacity to master the transition out of youth and into adulthood. Okuyade (2011) asserts that "the child-figure in postcolonial Africa hardly goes through the normal developmental pattern associated with the African people before incursion of the Europe in Africa" (118) as a result of this, the global challenges being faced by them unequivocally transform the African child into an adult during the prime of their adolescence (Okezieorji, 2019).

More so, the young people migrate to other areas at some point in their lives for myriads of reasons – including the search for economic opportunity boredom with traditional rural life or the escape from community disruption due to violent conflict. Once in the cities, however, they find little outlets for their talents and energy. This phenomenon is more evident and prevalent in Africa and the ability of the young protagonist to scale through this scenario of youth crisis is where growth and maturity come to play (Okezieorji, 2019).

One can deduce that the above forms the foundation of this study which explicates the genre of Bildungsroman that focuses on the sexual and social growth of the male protagonists from adolescent to adulthood in which character change is important. This study is focusing on the growing up or coming of age of generally naïve male protagonists who go in search of answers to their lives questions with the expectations that these will result in gaining experience of the world. These characters' minds are explored to discover the defence mechanisms each applied to combat life crises as well as their individual's success or failure. In a Bildungsroman study like this, the goal is to explore the sexual and social maturity of the male protagonist which he achieves gradually and

sometimes with difficulty. The Bildung analysis of some selected African novels chosen for this study lies in the fact that the crisis encountered by the protagonist is a unique contribution to their formation and maturation; and they dealt with these challenges differently to attain growth.

The protagonist in the course of growing from childhood to a more mature awareness of his/her social milieu encounters a plethora of challenges and more difficult situation. He/she negotiates his maturity in strife, conflict, dilemma or situations of crises which can be religious, political and psychological since the main theme of the bildungsroman and the one most frequently discussed in the classic bildungsroman is the development of the protagonist (Okezieorji, 2019).

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### **Sexual Growth of the Male Protagonist in John's *Born on a Tuesday***

Buckley opines that a bildungsroman's protagonist must grow sexually by having at least sexual encounters. In which the first debases him and the second exonerates or exalts him. This is a coming of age novel of a male protagonist Ahmed popularly known as Dantala( An Hausa name for a person born on a Tuesday John (2015:33) writes: "...Dantala is not a name. To say someone was born on a Tuesday, is that a name?". This young man journeys through life leaving his mother's lap and father's house at a very impressionable young age to become an Almajiri under the guidance of MalamJunaidu. "about the time I finished my Quranic training in MalamJunaidu'sIslamiya. When I finished, Malam said I could go back to my village in Sokoto"(John, 2015:6a) and from there he goes into the street in Bayan Layi where he joins the popular street gang known as "The Boys who sleep under the kuka tree" John (2015:7b) writes: "I cannot say when I decided to join the boys under the kuka tree. At first I still wanted to go back home, but as each day passed, I lost the desire to do so". These boys are very notorious for all sorts of bad deeds, smoking wee – wee, killings, fights and more. John (2015:1) tells us:

The boys who sleep under the Kuka tree in Bayan Layi like to boast about the people they have killed. ... I have never killed a man. Banda has, but he doesn't like to talk about it. He just smokes wee - wee while they talk over each other's heads. ... Gobedanisa and I had gone into a lambu to steal sweet potatoes... (They also work as thugs for political parties. John writes further):Banda gets a lot of money now that it is election season: to put up posters for the Small Party and tear off the ones for the Big Party or smash up someone's car in the city.... I am the smallest in the gang of big boys in BayaLayi and Banda is the biggest.... (3) The men from the Small Party trust Banda and they give him money to organise boys from Bayan Layi for them...(5) The Small Party has promised we may even get one thousand naira per head if they win the elections(8).

And they go about committing all sorts of violence crimes. The writer tells us: "MalamJunaidu had warned us about the kuka tree boys, who come to the mosque only during Ramadan or Eid days - 'yandaba, thugs, who do nothing but cause trouble in Bayan Layi. We despise them because they did not know Quran and Sunna like us and did not fast or pray five times a day. 'A person who doesn't pray five times a day is not a Muslim,' ..." (John, 2015:7a). Our young male protagonist Dantala, desires to become fearless like his friend Banda who is considered the head of the gang "I like walking around with Banda. The men respect him and even boys bigger than him are afraid of him. Banda became my friend two years ago,..." (John, 2015:6b). He always tries to initiate Banda or at

least to impress him and the people until after the riot they initiated, burning the Big Party Office and killing the people therein John (2015:16a) writes: "I strike behind his neck as he stumbles by me. He crashes to the ground. He groans. I strike again. The machete is sharp." A situation that attracted the police, leading to a shootout. Too many were killed including Banda. Dantala is compelled to take a flight in order to escape the police (John, 2015:16-17). He meets a terrifying road accidents on his way while on flight from the crime scene. The writer says:

... the lorry began veering from left to right until one of it's back tyres behind came off and we started going down a slope and into the bush. We were all screaming because the planks were falling out of the lorry. I held onto one big plank as the lorry tumbled down. Next thing I knew, the plank I held slid out of my hands and before I could let go of it, I was in the grass on cow dung, with bruised elbows and knees. I got up feeling dizzy... (John, 2015:19a).

In order to overcome this terrifying experience, he adopts repression by Freud as a defence mechanism to combat the traumatic event. He tries his best by closing his eyes praying to forget whatever he has witnessed. John (2105:19b) writes: "Now that I think of it, I wish I didn't hear his name, because when I close my eyes, I hear his name and see his swollen head and all the blood. It makes me want to scream". This defence mechanism becomes his favourite that in subsequent times, he applies same defence mechanism in dealing with any situation he feels uncomfortable with. And this is seen when he remembers the tragedy and tries his best to silence and erase it from his memory. John (2015) writes "I lie down and block out all the voices. Flashes of blood and mangled bodies and fire are going through my head. Allah forgive me, but some wee-wee would be good right now so that I could forget these horrible images" (28a).

He arrives in Sokoto and took refuge in the mosque at the Tipper garage managed by Sheikh Jamal and Malam Abdul- Nur Mohammed. John (2015:24) holds: "I lie down in the mosque and begin to doze off". This place becomes his home and refuge. It is at this place that he continues his Latency and Genital psychosexual developmental stages as stipulated by Freud. His first erotic encounter is listening to the boys at the park often talking about penis. Measuring to ascertain who has the longest penis and how curvy it is. The writer tells us: "I don't like sitting with the boys around the mosque or the motor park because all they do is talk about whose penis is big and whose penis is small and whose penis is curved like a fishing hook. And every time Abdulkareem is around everyone jokes about how he has to fold his penis tree times before it can fit in his pants. I wondered how everyone knew what his penis looked like" (John,2015:57b). Then, he witnesses the haram his two roommates commit; after witnessing their act of sodomy in the general toilet, he experiences his first sexual explosion through tormenting nightmares John (2015:59-60).

This latency stage, according to Freud is marked with sexual impulses which are hidden at this stage and is sublimated to school work, hobbies and friendships especially friendship with same gender and this is the case with Dantala. After witnessing what he wished not to have seen, he begins to have nightmares about the boy "Abdulkareem" chasing him and trying to force his penis into his anus. Then, he Dantala will be crying and begging to be let go after which he wakes with an erection and sometimes compelled into masturbating. John (2015) holds: "I dreamt I was out in the bush with Abdulkareem and he pinned me against a tree and made me bend over and forced his huge penis into me. The penis wouldn't enter and I begged him to stop. But he kept pushing and pushing and laughing. I woke up with my penis erect and sweat all over my body" (61).

Now, been that he is not a school student, to channel his energy into studies to forget the horrors of his mind playing cruel tricks on him in order to forget about what he witnessed; he focuses more on doing more work at the mosque until a new roommate is brought. He struggles between wet dreams and denial of his desires and feelings which are awoken just by his thoughts after what he saw John (2015 :62-64). So, he tries to channels his thoughts to his new roommate Jibril establishing a strong friendship bound with him and trying to improve himself by learning English from him. "I thought him Arabic with the agreement that he would teach me English" (John, 2015:79) . Although he hates the strong feelings of his erection thinking of the sin(homosexual act) he witnessed but he loves the feelings too but refuses to admit it.

Dantala is a character that lives in his thoughts. He recounts everything he experiences. He takes mental images of things and recounts them in his mind. He also prefers to live in denial of unfavorable experiences. He often adopts denial or repression defence mechanisms to suppress an unpleasant experience that seems traumatic to him; be it sexual encounter or tragic event. John (2015:55) writes: "I have learned to tell lies to escape bad memories that come from telling my stories".

Further towards the development of his sexual life, Dantala encounters another unhealthy sexual habit. His best friend Jibril is caught by him pant- down with his brother's wife. "I stepped closer and see Jibril, his hands in the air, trying to get into his caftan. A woman walks across, her hair uncovered, clutching a wrapper across her chest" (John, 2015:147). He is shocked and utterly disappointed but still, he does not judge his friend; instead tries to understand the difficult situation that must have compelled him into such. "I sit with him. I want to put my arm around his shoulders 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 not my business. I didn't see anything'" (John,2015:149a). He is unable to forget this experience and inquires from his friend as to how it feels. Then his friend suggests taking him to a whore house to have his own experience. 'Is it nice?' I ask. 'Yes,' he giggles, wiping his eyes (John,2015:149b).

Dantala's first physical sexual encounter is not so good. He feels embarrassed and ashamed of his performance. Being that he is in awe of women; he picks more interest in admiring the prostitute's bra and looking at her naked body. He once again experiences a strong erection and is beckoned to come to the bed and perform what he paid five hundred naira (₦500) for an hour for; but before he gets in bed, he has a premature ejaculation which makes him feel ashamed and he pleads with the girl to not share the experience with his friend waiting outside and the girl promise to keep it a secret between them John (2015:159-160). But he feels ashamed of this encounter and refuses to ever revisit such a place. Dantala continues to have wet dreams. He imagines the woman he loves Aisha and dreams of being with her. John (2015:150) writes:

Aisha is in my heart like a spirit. When I close my eyes I see her. I open my eyes and any girl that is wearing a green hijab looks like her. She is the girl I am dreaming of. Sometimes when she comes in the dream, her face is another persons face or sometimes she is not even wearing green hijab. Sometimes she is not even wearing hijab at all and her body is like some of those bodys in EVERY WOMAN. Sometimes I wake up and I am sweating and my trouser is wet. Every time I wake up when my hand is almost touching her body.I think I am OBSESS.

He lives in his dreams and thoughts where he experiences erection and wakes up wetting and messing up himself. This continues until he sees a CD in Sale's office under the computers and slotting in to watch; he realizes is porn and he is tempted to continue watching. He imagines the white lady to be Aisha and the other to be the girl (prostitute) behind the tipper garage. He experiences the strongest erection he has ever known and is compelled to masturbate as his body refuses to go down John (2015:201-202). Even this experience is cut short when the sheikh walks into the office seeing what he is doing. He feels so ashamed and embarrassed praying for the earth to swallow him. "I feel like the earth beneath me should part and swallow me. It felt like walking through a wedding ceremony with shit on my face" (John,2015:202b). But the Sheikh understanding his panic and embarrassment tells him about his first failed marriage and how he cheated on his wife. This story helps him to relax and stops feeling ashamed. Then the sheikh tells him that it is time to settle down. "What is the problem?' he begins. 'I have given you enough time I believe and you still act as if what I told you is not important. It is sunna to marry. You do not have to wait until you find the best woman. You do not even have to like her. Find a good girl and we will conduct the marriage'" (John,2015:209).

Ahmed Dantala's sexual experiences are not so impressive but regardless one will say that he successfully completes his genital stage of psychosexual development. In as much as he does not become homosexual; he is a person that often masturbates. He lives more in his head and dreams that his sexual escapades are often as a result of his imaginations and thoughts.

### Aspects of Social Growth of John's Protagonist

The social development of the male protagonist is explored in several dimensions: his social life, moral growth and family. Bakhtin(1986) opines that a protagonist will encounter crises which will refine him and add to his new virtue. Ahmed Dantala is represented to have fully and successfully accomplished his social growth as stipulated by Erikson in his psychosocial developmental stages. In interpretation of industry vs inferiority, Dantala is a person that is socially reserved although he interacts with others; but only those he feels acquainted and at home with. Being that during his latency psychosexual stage, he channels his sexual impulses into developing friendship with his gender; first with Banda and then Jibril. These friendships are beneficial to him. He gains protection and wee-wee from Banda. John (2015) holds: "I followed Banda and he gave me first wee-wee I ever smoked" (7c). "This is why I like Banda: he fights for me. He is a good person" (13a) while he learns English from Jibril after his friendship with Banda abruptly ends due to his death. "I taught him Arabic with the agreement that he would teach me English" (John,2015:79). Although while in Bayan Layi, he does not feel so proud of himself because he is neither as brave as Banda nor a story teller like Gobedanisa who makes tall claims of things he would never do "... I don't care that Gobedanisa lies ... sometimes I just want to ask him to shut up" (John, 2015:1). He often looks up to Banda; trying to impress and imitate him. In order to prove himself worthy of Banda's company; he strikes a man down at the night of the riot but later sticks to lightening the match that sets things ablaze John (2015:16B). "I am not thinking as we move on, burning, screaming, cutting, tearing. I don't like the feeling in my body when this machete cuts flesh, so I stick to the fire and take back the matchbox from Banda". An incident he often tries to repress and erase from his mind. He regrets the act. Growing up at under the kuka tree, he lives a life he is not so proud of; that he often tries to hide making him dread others company to avoid having to tell his story. John (2015:57b) writes: "Sometimes it is good to be invisible, to just go around the park doing my own thing and helping out in the mosque without anyone noticing me. Also I don't have to share any stories that will put me in trouble. When one talks too much, one exposes oneself".

Even when Sheikh speaks to his former teacher; he fears what he must have been told. "I wonder where I will go if sheikh Jamal throws me out of this mosque.... I wonder what he now knows: if he knows about Banda, about our burning of the Big Party Office" (John, 2015:35). His past often make him feel inferior and unsure of himself. But he constantly tries to justify his past by living in denial, repressing his thoughts and making excuses for their crimes. John (2015) holds:

These thoughts are suddenly going through my head-my mother who is far away, how I have hardly prayed since I left my Quranic teacher and how we only go to the Juma'at mosque in SabonGari on Fridays because there are people giving alms and lots of free food. 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 SabonGari, it is because we are hungry, and when someone dies, well, that is Allah's will. (11)

Progressively, he is able to repress his troubling past. He buries it and tries to live like the past never existed. That way, he grows in new friendship with Jibril. This friendship is so special and the bond so strong that he is willing to sacrifice his life in jail instead of giving up Jibril as a member of the Islamic group Mujahideen terrorizing the community John (2015:250). He feels proud and accomplished with this new friendship. He has no regrets attempting to give up his life in exchange to protect Jibril. He even gives up all his fingers in this noble attempt. Again, he is not at lost nor feeling inferior for he is able to teach Jibril Arabic in exchange for Jibril teaching him English "I taught him Arabic with the agreement that he would teach me English"(John,2015:79).

Further, in exploring Erickson's 'Ego Identity' that is within identity vs confusion stage of psychosocial development; one can say that John's protagonist is not so successful here. He is a person that is easily influenced. He is too self-conscious and self-aware that he spends most time wondering what others think of his actions. He is so suspicious and often live to impress his mentors. This need to impress often leaves him in a dilemma or lands him in trouble. His attempt to impress Banda leaves him traumatized. "what I was thinking had left my heart and started coming out of my

mouth, goose bumps were all over my arms and I was shaking like I had fever” (John, 2015:19c). Then his need to please the cheering audience and impress the soul of his late teacher Sheikh Jamal results in the biggest mistake of his journey. It leads to his doom; that he loses it all. John (2015:232-233) writes:

‘They want the crowd to disperse; they say all public gathering and preaching is prohibited. ... The soldiers shoot into the crowd. Some run away but most people stand their ground, pelting the soldiers with even bigger stones. I get down from the benches and pick up a stone.... I am back in my room, folding a few clothes into my bag, wondering if sheikh would have listened to the soldiers and disperse the crowd or continue speaking, if I have made Sheikh proud or disappointed him. ... I have never felt the ground tremble the way it does now under the armoured tanks that roll onto the street. The sound of the guns they are shooting now are different from the ones the soldiers who came to disperse the crowd were shooting. I will not wait until the soldiers start destroying the town and killing people.

Unaware still of how good or bad his decision is; he still struggles to survive believing and hoping to have been right. His refusal to dispatch the public leads to more public harassment of the people by soldiers that majority died and others imprisoned. Dantala is imprisoned for over nine months. He loses his fingers during the interrogation but still refuses to die John (2015: 253-254) writes:

Every time a mutu comes to check for dead bodies he shouts 'Black Spirit!' to see if I am alive and I shuffle my feet to respond. I cannot say now how long I have been here. It feels like a really long time since he pulled out the last three bodies, since they last brought someone in.... After ten fingers and ten toes, and you don't say anything, even the person torturing you knows there is nothing you can give them and they stop. They leave you to die.

Dantala has strong will to survive and to tell his story; but he is not so able to make his own personal decision without outside interference. Despite his becoming a Malam and second in command, he still needs others opinion in making his own decision. He is represented as confused most times and only does as suggested or told. That is he needs mentor to be a man. Erikson's strong emphasis on 'ego identity development' in this stage impacts Dantala because he is not so successful in developing his 'ego identity'; and that is why he constantly seeks others' approval in making decisions or taking action and this complexity in his psychosocial development leads to his one wrong choice that ruins it all.

More so, Dantala is able to successfully develop his intimacy vs isolation psychosocial developmental stage. Although he does not get to enjoy serious relationship with Aisha, he loves her so much that he only thinks and dreams of her. He does not want to get involved with any other girl just for her. He is always imagining her and seeing her in every girl. John (2015:142-143 & 150-152) holds:

When I close my eyes I see the smiling image of Aisha with her green veil and dimple on her right cheek. My mind replays our last meeting, when she gave me Sheikh's account details and smiled at me. I keep wondering if she just smiled or if she smiled at me. There must be a way of seeing her again.... (142-143) Sometimes there is no why. Like if somebody ask my 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 (150-151).

His social life is not so in a mess. Dantala is able to grow himself social wise. He knows how to take advantage of friendship for his benefits that are selfless. Despite not being educated he loves book and never stops reading. That he is happy about Sheikh Jamal often given him opportunity to discover things himself. “I like that Sheikh always asks me to go and read more about anything I ask.... I am thinking of an English book in Sheikh's library that I really want to read call Baba of karo, which is still wrapped in transparent polythene” (John, 2015:113b).

On his own, he negotiates to learn English as he is already fluent in Arabic and Hausa too. All this knowledge he gains on his own places him on pedestal of gold. “That was the day he found out I could read English. I told him I had been learning it with Jibril. He was so happy. 'You will go far, insha Allah,' he said. Then he said that his library was mine and gave me the book” (John,2015:113a).

The Sheikh makes him his second in command. John writes thus: “I cannot have an unmarried deputy, you must think about this and me if there's anyone in your mind, otherwise we can arrange something for you. You are young, but you are mature enough to marry. The earlier the better” (169). And he address him as Malam; despite being so young. This new status makes Dantala feels so proud and happy; he feels accomplished and successful. John (2015) writes: “Since Sheikh found out I know how to read English, everything has become different. He gives me the key to his office when he is going out. There are things he tells me - his plans for the future - ... Sheikh refers to me as Malam Ahmad. No one has referred to me like this before and it makes me feel important” (114 & 140a).

### **Dantala’s Family Life**

He is represented to have a sense of responsibility and compassion. He feels his mother's pains and loves his mother so dearly. He also somehow feels responsible for his brothers that he reaches out to them despite the risk involved at the time John (2015:172). He is also a family person; his love for his mother Umar is clearly visible; his yawning to hear her speak to him; his agony for his mother's pains and his constant hallucination of her “I thought that I would slump over if ever I heard that my mother had died. But hearing now how much she suffered, I feel both sadness and relief in my heart. Relief because Allah has taken away her suffering. ... Allah is merciful”(John, 2015:89). He never abandons home. He has good thoughts for his homeland. To help build and develop it so that his people will stop suffering from lack of water and hospital. John (2015:42) holds that:

If, insha Allah, I ever have the money, I will build a road to DogonIcce and a hospital. And a nice mosque with a rug, like the new one at the motor park in Sokoto, but bigger. I would paint it completely white and build a concrete house for Umma by the side. I would give her all she needs and stop her from selling gruel or doing any work for that matter.

He also cares for his elder brothers despite the uncertainty that surrounds their relationship as they seem like strangers despite being blood relatives. The writer says:

There is no feeling in my heart or in my head when I meet my brothers Maccido and Hussein. Even with their beards, I recognise them the moment I see them. Hussein's eyes have become more like Umma's; his eyes are deep and have dark circles around them....There are no words between us, only nods and handshakes and salaams. I do not know what to say to these men who have become strangers, who I know nothing about apart from the fact that we used to live in the same home a long, long time ago (John, 2015:104a).

But he still wants to associate and be there for them. When he learns Macido is hospitalized; he leaves everything behind and rushes off to see him at the hospital and visibly worries for his safety John (2015:172-173). His love for his Aunt also shows as he often worries for her and regrets that she suffers so much because of Umar John (2015:56 & 103) details that:

Kadija suffers alone with her daughter and Umma because her husband has abandoned her and built a little hut nearby where he lives with his new wife-the last daughter of the village imman.... Kadija thinks that Shuaibu married another wife because he was tired of her spending so much time taking care of Umma. She says that nothing will make her stop and that after all, taking another wife is sunna for him. I feel guilty and grateful all at the same time. She shouldn't have to choose between Umma and her husband. (56) ...I do not know how to behave towards Shuaibu. ... I am grateful that he made the six- hour trip to tell me that my Umma had died. I am grateful that he paid for the white cloth and the gravediggers. While it is hard to forget how he abandoned Khadija because of Umma's sickness, I am sad that because of Umma he had problems with his wife. I want to dislike him. It is easier to dislike him, easier to just tell myself he is a bad man who hated my mother (103a).

He is equally helpless and could do nothing much to help relief the aunt. Despite growing so much, he never forgets his root. He is constantly going back home. He even goes after Umar’s passing for her burial. John (2015) writes thus: “He was talking to me like a man, not like a man, not like boy, not like he used to talk to me. He tried to explain everything as if we were members of the same majalisa” (104b). And when there is chaos in the city; he tries to rush back home, to his people but is captured on his way and imprisoned for several months.

### **Ahmed Dantala's Moral growth**

Ahmed is portrayed as a repented sinner. He loses his way early in life back at Bayan Laye while he trains as Almajiri; but he is able to retrace his steps after he flees from there. He asks Allah to forgive him and he hopes to turn a new leaf John (2015) writes:

I am exhausted. I slow down. I am still high and all these thoughts are suddenly going through my head- my mother who is far away, how I have hardly prayed since I left my Quranic teacher and how we only go to the juma'at mosque in SabonGari on Fridays because there are people giving alms and lots of free food. 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 shops in SabonGari, it is because we are hungry, and when someone dies, well, that is Allah's will (11-12).

He becomes so dedicated and passionate with religious activities. He learns and masters his Hadith and he avoids Haram. He tries to live a righteous life as much as he could. Whatever seems haram; he literally avoids. In as much as he has visited whore house once; he never goes back. Though he is constantly masturbating whenever aroused; after the sheikh walks in on him doing so, he tries not to repeat his mistake; instead he takes the step to order his life by proposing to Aisha John (2015:213) says: "I want to ask your father,' I say. ... 'Ask him what? ... 'I'm not joking around I want to marry you, Aisha."

He is seen being fair in his judgment; during his attempt to separate the fight between Jibril and the Sheikh's driver. This is his first exercise of his newly acquired power as deputy Sheikh, that is second in command to the Sheikh. He flogs them both and offers to treat their sustained injuries and cautions them to not engage in violence John (2015:170-171).

Again, during the outbreak of Cholera, he joins the movement to go to affected villages and help the people by distributing palliatives, drugs and even taking some to hospital. The writer tells us:

Since the cholera outbreak in many villages, our movement has been supporting the volunteers going round talking to people about defecation, hand washing, boiling or purifying water and washing fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating... Sheikh gave me eight hundred thousand naira to fill two thousand sachets with soap, rice and oral rehydration salts. We will add one water purifier and two hundred naira in each sachet. About half of the sachets are for our members and the remaining we will distribute to others. There are also leaflets in Hausa about how to maintain hygiene and what to do when someone starts vomiting or stooling. I don't know how many people can read Hausa...I find that since the day I broke up the fight between Jibril and the driver, no one even tries to challenge me around here. It is interesting that it is not Sheikh saying I am his deputy that has made people respect me but me flogging and slapping two grown people in public (John, 2015:182-184).

He is represented as being compassionate and kind; and accepted as well as respected as the deputy without being announced by Sheikh. John (2015:183) writes: "I find that since the day I broke up the fight between Jibril and the driver, no one even tries to challenge me around here. It is interesting that it is not Sheikh saying I am his deputy that has made people respect me but me flogging and slapping two grown people in public". During the time Sheikh is shot; he remains at his side in the hospital. "I am lying down with my bag in the open area of the hospital. I am exhausted from waiting and from travelling.... I am not going anywhere until I see Sheikh" (John, 2015:121). And the day Sheikh is killed he ventures to go rescue him but restrains himself on remembering Sheikh's wise words. John (2015:221- 222) tells us:

I make to scale the fence, to go and save Sheikh. I stop. His words come to me crisp and clear: ... the president and vice President never travel together in the same plane ...someone has to take over in case something happens to one person ... I am fighting with myself, holding myself down. After a couple of minutes there is silence. They tie his hands behind his back and lay him on the ground.

He washes Sheikh's dead body in order to get it ready for the burial and he sincerely mourns his (John, 2015: 224-225).

Ahmed is transformed from a street thug; a nonentity to somebody. He changes from Dantala to respectful and dutiful Malam Ahmad. Attending important meetings with governors and the likes. John (2015) writes: "Tomorrow is the big meeting. Sheikh made me get a new white caftan sewn even though I insisted that the one I was planning to wear was still fairly new. I am going with Sheikh to take notes, together with Malam Yunusa, Malam Abduljalal and Malam Hamza, who are all also trustees of Jama'atullhayauslimilHaqiqiy"(136).

He becomes a respected person in the mosque by calling for prayers. An experience that he describes as heavenly as it transforms him and brings him such peace he is unable to describe. John (2015:137-138) holds:

Especially now that I have started singing the call to prayer at the mosque. Wallahi, I love it more than I ever thought I would. Closing my eyes, covering one ear with my hand, holding the microphone with the other and singing:

Allahu Akbar

Allahu Akbar.

Ahmed grows from a boy to a man that his uncle, Sheikh and other people see and speak to him man to man not as a boy anymore. "He was talking to me like a man, not like a boy, not like he used to talk to me. He tried to explain everything as if we were members of the same majalisa" (John, 2015:103b) and from being one of the boys under the kuka tree to sharing one room behind the mosque to having his own self contain chalet (John, 2015:164-165) . He even owns an office now. "I open Sheikh's former office in the mosque to rest before I call the Zuhr prayers. I still call it Sheikh's office even though it is now mine. I still see myself as a visitor especially because of the big shelf that has all of his books" (John, 2015: 187-188).He even manages important documents including Sheikh's bank account. "If I am good enough to handle his money and our movement then I should be good enough to take care of Aisha.... But then, perhaps a daughter is not the same thing as a bank account" (John, 2015:218). He becomes so responsible that he never smokes wee-wee or sticks again. He abstains from violence and preaches peace. "So what if he insulted you? Do we go blinding everyone who says something bad to us?" (171). He equally follows the hadith religiously and avoids haram. He only wishes to obtain Allah's forgiveness and heaven at last. He has been shortlisted to visit Meccah before the brutal murder of the Sheikh. John (2015:222b) speaks: "Then one of the men brings out a short knife. He steps on Sheikh's head then rolls him over to make him lie on his belly. The man steps on Sheikh's back and pulls his hair to expose his throat. As two others pin Sheikh down, the man begins to cut..." Thetragedy that shatters his life completely and makes him lose all he has gained including his future wife Aisha.

### **Summary**

It is evident that the male protagonist's sexual and social growth are explored and it was discovered that Dantala goes through lots of hurdles both spiritually and otherwise in his passage into maturity. He adopts denial and repression defence mechanisms to silence all his scary troubled thoughts ranging from his ugly experience at under Kuka tree, Banda's death, the death of two Almajiris, his lost money, his mother's demise, his temptation to sleep with a prostitute, even the sexual encounter he witnessed in the bus. He is able to refine and reform himself using sublimation from a complete street boy to a religious scholar and second in command to sheik. Dantala masters and has a good grip of English language and finally returns to his roots looking for a way to better his people's lives and bringing development to them.

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