

The Trauma Continuum: Narrating Deprivation, Dissent and Desecration in Elnathan John and Tricia Nwaubani's Fiction

Opeyemi AJIBOLA

University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

ajibolaopeyemiwumi@gmail.com

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Abstract

Northern Nigeria has in contemporary times been renowned for dissent that manifests in civil unrest, violence and insurgency. Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* and Tricia Nwaubani's *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree*, are closely read, to underscore the texts' recreation of northern Nigerian young adults' experiences of trauma occasioned by the Boko Haram insurgency. This is to foreground the writers' insiders' perspectives on the causes and consequences of dissent, to underscore the novels' contribution to a nuanced understanding of dissent as a complex and multidimensional reality. Aligning with Ngugi wa Thiong'o's certainty on the novel's capacity to advocate for political change, and the estimation of trauma, especially within the postcolonial context as pluralistic, I read dissent, deprivation and desecration as normatively traumatogenic categories cum sites, thereby foregrounding the primacy of social contexts and historical processes in the complex interplay of place and power that undergird insurgency. The novels reveal that youths, who bear the brunt of insurgency-induced traumas the most, must arise and raise the cudgel against the inept leaders under whose watch insurgency and banditry have become the highest income-grossing enterprise if the trauma continuum of deprivation, dissent and desecration will be terminated.

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Nigerian Literature is increasingly replete with representations of dystopian realities, bordering on violence, terrorism and trauma. Many literary texts published post-2000 recreate characters' experiences of what Mbembe and Roitman (1995) estimate to be the tragedies that have plagued the African postcolony — a chain of upheavals and tribulations, instabilities (political, economic, cultural), fluctuations and ruptures of all sorts (wars, genocide, large-scale movements of populations, sudden devaluation of currencies, natural disasters, brutal collapses of prices, breaches in provisioning, diverse forms of exaction, coercion and constraint). The catastrophes have had varying degree of impact on women as well as men, children as well the aged. Literary texts by Nigerian writers, on the state of affairs in Northern Nigeria, especially the recreation of the populace's encounters with Boko Haram

insurgency, come in a varying mixture of the fictional and the factual, in documentaries, memoirs, novels, plays and they essentially bear witness the traumatic imprints that make orphans of children, widows of wives, homeless the wealthy and seasoned criminals of children.

Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* and Tricia Nwaubani's *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* are two creative works dedicated to the imaginative recreation of Nigerians' experience of the nation's existential futility at nationhood. The two novels were purposively selected for critical analysis, to underscore the texts' recreation of young adults' experiences of civil dissent, wanton deprivation and the desecration of their souls, bodies and spirits occasioned by the Boko Haram insurgency. While John's *Born on a Tuesday* employs a third person point of view, where the story is told by Dantata, a teenager, at the start of the narrative, Nwaubani's *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* is narrated and focalised through a teenage girl, simply known by what her parents affectionately call her: Ya Ta. Of the emergent literary corpus on the reality and the impact of insurgency in North-eastern Nigeria, John and Nwaubani's accounts present a sustained engagement with the hydra-headed problem of insurgency that is sourced in citizens' displeasure, desperation, restlessness, lawlessness and intolerance arising from systemic corruption that makes a criminal of saints and ruffians of the righteous, a state that forces everyone to adjust to a violent reality (Sloan, 2006)

Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*, a bildungsroman, recounts the story of a boy's journey from his home in Dogon Icce, a village in Sokoto, to a Qur'anic School in Kaduna, under the tutelage of Malam Junaidu. His brothers, Maccido, Hassan and Hussein are sent off to another Malam in Tashar Kanuri. Dantata exemplifies the life of the average almajiri who leaves his home, more often than due to poverty rather than in search of religious knowledge. After the expiration of Dantata's time with Malam Junaidu, having completed his studies and unable to go back to his village, he joins the bad boys who reside under the tree at Bayan Layi. In a twist of events, Dantata flees from Kaduna en route to Dogon Icce, when his life alongside those of other thugs employed for electoral violence becomes endangered. He again does not succeed in going back to his mother in Dogon Icce. He stops at a motor park in Sokoto and decides to stay at Sheikh Jamal's Mosque. From the start of the novel to the end, Dantata completes the cycle of being an accomplice, a witness and a victim of violence heralded by deprivation. *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree*'s Ya Ta, unlike Dantata, is privileged to attend a school, even though like Dantata, her parents are poor struggling village dwellers. Her dream of completing elementary school and proceeding on to the government school, having won the Borno State

government scholarship for exceptional children from disadvantaged homes, is cut short when Boko Haram men attack her village, kill her father and kidnap her, alongside her younger brother, Jacob and other girls from her village.

In writing *Born on a Tuesday* and *Beneath the Baobab Tree*, John and Nwaubani strive to focalise the plight of the average dweller, especially the young adults in northern Nigeria. *Born on a Tuesday* is dedicated to those the novelist refers to as stars without a name — the boys who will never be known and the girls who become numbers. Similarly, Nwaubani dedicated her narrative to the girls and women of Nigeria, “in the hope that they may know brighter times than these” (Nwaubani, 2018, p. 3). Both novelists employ their craft to fight against the reduction of the plight of real people to numbers in the news and statistical figures for arguments in the Senate Chambers. Ngugi wa Thiong’o asserts in *Writers in Politics* (1981), (dedicated partly to all the writers in Kenya and elsewhere who have refused to bow to the neo-colonial culture of silence and fear), asserts that because literature cannot escape from the class power structures that shape everyday life, every writer is a writer in politics. Hence, a writer must choose the side of the people or the side of the social forces and classes that seek to enslave the people. John and Nwaubani have taken sides with the victims, choosing to draw attention to the characters’ experiences of insidious as well as psychological trauma. For them, trauma is commissioned by single traumatising events as well as everyday realities. Their representations depart from Caruthian estimation of trauma as arising from a singular overwhelming event that resists integration and expression, and present trauma as arising from collective, ongoing, everyday forms of traumatizing violence (Craps, 2013). This article conceives of trauma basically as a psychological wound and aims to underline Nwaubani and John’s representations of the causes and consequences of insurgency, especially with regards to young adults in northern Nigeria, in addition to highlighting how character’s experience of violence and deprivation, basically a transformative experience (Tal, 1996) presents a trauma continuum in northern Nigeria.

The Roots of Dissent

Thousands of Dantatas populate the cities in northern Nigeria where the Almajiri system of education thrives and flourishes better than any plant. The Almajiri system of education is an informal, traditional and least-expensive kind of education where an established Islamic scholar passes on religious education to children as young as four-year-olds. The Almajiri system burgeoned in northern Nigeria on the strength of the Prophet’s admonition to Muslims to migrate in search of knowledge. “Almajiri” is the Hausa rendition of the Arabic

almuhajir, which denotes a migrant who journeys in search of Qur'anic education. However, over the years, "Almajiri" has undergone semantic extension to also refer to a child, usually a boy, who begs on wealthy streets and large markets for food and money. In tracing the history of the Almajiri system of education and its popularity in states in northern Nigeria, scholars often referred to either the history of Dantata Alhassan who was born in 1877, in Bebeji, to Amarya and Abdullahi, of the Kano Emirate, or that of the Prophet who migrated from Mecca to Medina, for education. It is noteworthy that a man named Dantata Alhassan, an almajiri who moved from place to place, and who along the line learnt the trade and became very wealthy would become the great-grandfather of Aliko Dangote, one of the wealthiest men in the world. It is not unlikely that Elnathan John, like a skilful storyteller crafted his protagonist, Dantata, from the story of the Dantata Alhassan.

In *Born on a Tuesday*, Dantata journeys from his village to Kaduna in search of Qur'anic education and more importantly, a means of sustenance; since each year seemed to bring a new-born baby to his father, who was barely able to feed himself on the proceeds from his rented farmland. There are so many children in Malam Junaidu's Islamiyya, such that each child must learn to survive without active parental care. There are the *Kolo* as well as the *Titibiri*. In an almajiri school, the *Kolo* are infants, the *Titibiri* are adolescents and the *Gardi* are adults. The *Gardi* and the *Titibiri* are often able to support the Malam, the teacher, by working on his farms while the *Kolo* are often only able to support him through alms begging. Malam Jinadu's school, according to Dantata's description, has mainly the *Kolo* and the *Titibiri*, who are often sent away as soon as they complete their Qur'anic education. Dantata spends a total of six years in Malam Junaidu's Islamiyya, before joining the boys under the Kuka tree, for lack of the transport fare for a space in the back of the trucks which carry wood to Sokoto from Kaduna. It is under the Kuka tree that Dantata gets baptised into the world of thuggery, violence and lawlessness. Having been sent away from a home which was not home, he finds his bearing with the boys under the tree, whom Malam Jinadu had predicted would come to no good. Malam Jinadu's admonition is as hypocritical as it is effete since life on the streets is hardly strange to an almajiri who had traversed the same streets roaming and begging for sustenance. Joining the boys under the Kuka tree becomes Dantata's best option, as there is no home to return to.

After an average almajiri "graduates" from the Qur'anic school, there is not much of a standard career awaiting the "graduate", except in religious scholarship. Almajirai is almost always from a peasant family. Almajirai would rather go out to fend for themselves rather than

return to families that have little or no need for them. The mobile nature of the almajiri system of education, and the fact that the children are often too numerous for a single Malam to effectively parent, make almajirai easy prey in the hands of political and religious dissenters. Malnourished children are quick to run “other” errands once there is remuneration; jobless almajiri graduates would heed the call of wealthy politicians to foment trouble. Almajirai aids religious extremists to create mushroom movements, whose potential to wreak greater havoc in society has an example in the Maitatsine Movement, which unsurprisingly drew a large followership from the poor, the jobless and the loafers. In one of the first detailed studies of the Movement and its activities, Bako (1993) relates that the Movement over time blossomed into “a class movement for the migrant urban poor, who were subjected to the most untold and incredible pauperization, marginalisation and repression in the course of their social transformation from peasant to proletarians in the biggest and most industrialised northern Nigeria’s city of Kano” (Bako, 1993, p. 1). The Maitatsine Movement would later metamorphose into the Boko Haram sect.

The twin main factors responsible for the growth and popularity of the Maitatsine sect, despite proscription, are still responsible for the power that the Boko Haram sect wields in Nigeria at present. The Maitatsine Movement was aided by the socioeconomic climate in northern Nigeria at the time. The Movement came on board at a time when a massive agrarian crisis led to the influx of dissatisfied poor rural migrants, “who were completely torn away from their means of livelihood and agrarian communities” (Bako, 1993, p. 2), into urban areas. Deprivation and misplaced aggression are thus at the root of the Maitatsine Uprising of the 1980s and the Boko Haram insurgency of the contemporary era. As seen in the Maitatsine Movement’s metamorphosis and survival within Nigeria, dissent arising from deprivation is the hardest to completely snuff out. When dissent arises from other reasons or concerns, it is easily snuffed out, but when it is rooted in deprivation and absurd fanaticism, the movement will always have a massive followership for as long as socioeconomic conditions remain. Terrorist acts will continue for as long as the poor and discontented remain in society.

Deprivation, like what Dantata, alongside other almajiri suffers, is a certain breeding ground for radicalisation. This is “especially the case when poverty is combined with high levels of individual and group inequalities” (Umar & Abdul, 2015, p. 3), as it does in Nigeria. In Nigeria, according to the World Bank’s databank of 2018, the poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines is at 40.1% of the population. More and more people are poorer every day. Thus, people will do anything to have full stomachs. It is no wonder that organ sales and organ trafficking have become increasingly popular. While deprivation does not automatically

translate to dissent and terrorism, in the case of Nigeria, diverse studies (Bako, 1993); Hansen, Jima, Abbas, & Abia, 2016) and Edinyang, Bassey & Ushie, 2020) have shown that the major uprisings and insurgencies in Nigeria's recent history have their roots in abject poverty. Until systemic poverty is effectively tackled, insurgency in Nigeria will remain an incurable wound. The Dantatas will always be vulnerable and the Ya Tas will continue to suffer the consequences of the inextinguishable fire that burns uncontrollably. This is because for the citizens to ascend from the level of physiological needs to self-actualisation needs, their basic needs must have been settled, not only in their minds but also in their souls.

The Fruits of Dissent

Born on a Tuesday and *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* present Northerners' collective traumatisation occasioned by insurgency; both narratives underscore how young adults have been the chief victims. *Beneath the Baobab Tree* especially draws sympathy for the victims of insurgency. The protagonist of the novel, Ya Ta is a girl full of dreams and life; she is as enthusiastic about education as she is passionate about living a fulfilled life. She derives joy from learning all she is taught by Malam Zwindila and defeating the boys in her class, by remembering terms and definitions earlier taught. By presenting Ya Ta's imagined promising future with what became of her reality, Nwaubani paints the gory picture of dreams deferred, lives destroyed and the fragile hope that heralded the terror reign of Boko Haram insurgents. The narrative starts with Ya Ta's "Big dreams", every line pouring out with certainty the glorious future ahead of Ya Ta — a big house, husband and students. It turns out that her big dreams were not big dreams after all. Ya, Ta did not fantasize about building a castle on the moon or setting up a bank in Jupiter. Her dreams only looked big because of her limiting background. Her dreams, only big dreams in comparison to those of other girls who do not have the meagre opportunities that she has, are dashed, even though they were not grand dreams, in the first place. The narrative begins with her dreams but ends on a note of uncertainty. The pastor of her home church has just located her but she is uncertain of what awaits her, even if she is to successfully locate her mother. Her life is irrevocably altered by trauma.

Ya Ta's world is one conditioned by deprivation. The very first line of the narrative revealingly tells of her sleeping on a mat, she having to fetch from the village well, where everyone in her village draws water. She relates how whatever the family is fed on is prepared on firewood and how she sleeps in places where rats can nimble away on people's fingers, mistaking soiled fingers for pieces of fish. She goes to school by trekking for hours with her

friend, Sarah, and whenever Sarah is on her period and she has to stay back at home, Ya Ta treks to school all alone. Ya, Ta and Sarah have always had to wear old clothes and rags whenever they are on their period. It is not until the woman in the pink van comes to their school that they welcome the relief that a sanitary pad affords. Ya Ta and Sarah obviously cannot afford the sanitary pads on their own because each pad costs “four loaves of bread”. This world, these realities captured by the novelist tells of a society’s reality in the millennium. They will articulate the realities of a very good number of Nigerians. The characters’ desire, to be allowed to live and work and realise their “big” dreams, is cut short and denied.

The coming of Boko Haram men to unleash terror on Ya Ta’s village and villagers had first been mistakenly for a blessing. The thunderous herald of the attack had had Ya Ta, her father, Abraham and Jacob shouting for joy, assuming that the rains had come. The rainstorm, like the one they were expecting, came with a loud bang, which they mistook for thunder, but unlike the one they were expecting, their supposed rainstorm left several people dead, homeless, helpless and hopeless. In a matter of seconds, angry guns, firebombs and ferocious men had wreaked havoc of unimaginable proportion. After the initial inertia after the sacking of her village by Boko Haram men, and after Ya Ta exhausts her tear tank, with great difficulty, she seeks reason to be grateful to God. With great courage, she recalls her Christian faith and still puts into practice all she was taught, on the way to Sambisa Forest. However, in the forest, her resolve to remain a Christian crumbles. In Ya Ta’s presence, an elderly man dressed in a green Nigerian army uniform is beheaded with “a curved knife with a pointed blade that reflects the rays from the sun” (Nwaubani, 2018, p. 124). Having seen within a day, more blood and bodies to feed her nightmares for many centuries, Ya Ta, alongside Sarah converts to Islam and they are given new names. Ya Ta is rechristened Salamatu while Sarah becomes Zainab. Like in a war situation, where the bomb respects neither the native nor the immigrant, the casualties from dissent are everyone- the terrorists and the terrorised, the perpetrators and the victims, Christians and Muslims. Like John Pepper Clark asserts in “Casualties”, a poem on the aftermath of the Biafran War, all are casualties. The Boko Haram boys and men are also casualties; “they are those who started a fire and now cannot put it out” (Clark, 1970).

In Sambisa Forest, all the occupants, the terrorists and the terrorised are in prison. Sarah’s husband, a Boko Haram man, longs for a time that he can take Sarah to meet his parents in Maiduguri. Ya Ta’s husband- “the man in the mask”, is possessed by different demons at different times, and mourns the loss of his parents. He is a bundle of contradictions. Neither Ya Ta nor Fanne has the answers as to why he acts the way he does. He is never tired of watching videos of young boys cutting people’s throats and bombing places. His mentor is

Osama bin Laden and his favourite video is the crash of the Twin Towers in the United States of America, on September 11, 2001. While Ya Ta's husband pulls off a rough exterior every time, and like Osama bin Laden, has a poker face, his breaking down when the army bombs his parents in their home in Michika affirms that even the terrorist can be tormented. Ya Ta's husband becomes a perpetrator and a victim. He gets burnt by the fire he helped to start. Towards the end of the narrative, as the Nigerian Army comes to rescue the captives, Ya Ta's husband, alongside other *rijale*, of whom Fanne had boasted that every army in the world was afraid of Boko Haram and that seasoned soldiers drop their weapons and flee at their sight, are simply terrified. The terrorist is equally intimidated. Ya Ta relates that great Boko Haram men, small Boko Haram men, lean Boko Haram men, brawny Boko Haram men, brown-skinned Boko Haram men, dark-skinned Boko Haram men, light-skinned Boko Haram men, veteran fighters and recruits — “all scampering about in panic, like bats disturbed from their cave” (Nwaubani, 2018, p. 274). Essentially, what differentiates the terrorists from those they unleash terror on is the complex process of radicalisation.

The costs of insurgency transcend the body. In the forest, Ya Ta, Sarah and others experience varying degrees of brutality, from renaming, from rape to forced marriage, to murder, to sheer bestiality. In addition to the sufferings unleashed on the victims in the forest, there is the pollution of their captives' minds. Nwaubani details Sarah's gradual descent into fanaticism. At first, when Sarah talks fondly about her *rijale* husband, Ali, Ya Ta does all she can to support her, reasoning that she was only in love, but with time, it is clear Zainab has been indoctrinated. Sarah's mind does not withstand the onslaught of indoctrination and misinformation for too long. She starts to befriend and believe Fanne. While the causes and processes of radicalisation are varied, Sarah's journey to radicalisation is largely due to emotional vulnerability. Having listened to Fanne's lectures again and again, and moved by Ali's woos, Sarah discards all that she had earlier believed about Boko Haram men. She asserts that Boko Haram men are only trying to change the world for Allah. When Ya Ta asks her if Allah will have four-year-olds like Fanne's son training to bomb places and destroy lives, Sarah responds that none can question the will of Allah. Sarah continues on a slippery slope, a slippery slope that is a “notable pathway that gradually leads to radicalisation through social ties with friends and family members who are already radicalized into complete radicalisation” (Umar & Abdul, 2015, p. 4). Sarah goes on to betray her friend and have her beaten for blasphemy. She continues her descent until she becomes “privileged” to go out, wearing the special vest, as the first suicide bomber amongst the wives, a day before the military comes to the aid of the captives.

Ya Ta could have become like Sarah but she is able to read between the lines. In the dark, she recalls the Islam that Aisha and Malam Isa, Aisha's husband practised, which was nothing like what Boko Haram preached and practised. She is able to beyond the veils. The more she attended the Qur'anic classes, led by Malam Adamu, who sneaks in at night to steal girls away, the more she saw the contradictions. Ya Ta quizzes the possibility of Islam, whose name stands for peace and submission to God, encouraging the faithful to work "for the death and destruction of human beings" (Nwaubani, 2018, p. 164). In her reflections, she reasons that "the same Allah who asked his followers to give alms to beggars with jiggers in their feet" (Nwaubani, 2018, p. 164) could not have also asked them to slaughter unarmed, innocent boys. Despite all that Fanne teaches them, Ya Ta is certain that there is nothing gracious about taking girls away in the middle of the night, nor is there anything merciful in "stabbing a girl who was singing about Jesus's love for her" (Nwaubani, 2018, p. 164). In fact, when Fanne tells Ya Ta and other wives that the suicide bombing is the easiest and fastest way to paradise and that millions of angels appear with money once a lady pulls off the controls on the bomb, Ya Ta worries that Fanne's paradise must be different from the one Pastor Moses talked about. Ya Ta can withstand the mental colonisation and indoctrination sponsored by the *rijale* because she constantly works her mind to recall the Islam practised by Aisha and her late husband. She disallows her mind from the pollution by refusing to feel at home in the forest. She continues to plot her escape and think of means to escape the mystery and misery.

Born on a Tuesday also relates how the fruits of dissent wreak havoc on the bodies, souls and spirits of both perpetrator and victim. *Born on a Tuesday* is littered with dead bodies, mangled bodies, drained souls and troubled spirits. Dantata relates that under the Kuka tree in Bayan Layi, "nothing was complete without some fire and broken glass" (John, 2016, p. 16). To the youths who sleep under the tree during the dry season, and on the cement floor in front of Alhaji Mohammed's rice store, during the rainy season, human life was not worth much. In fact, a character like Gobedanisas will boast and lie about the number of people he has killed. Dantata relates that such boasting was the order of the day and a thing of pride under the Kuka tree in Bayan Layi. This is why during the elections of 2003, Banda led his boys to cause mayhem, without any of them caring about the lives lost and property destroyed. The disavowal, the inability to see the worth in another man's life has become so entrenched that the youths they will rather kill than spare an unarmed man. Having been on the street, suffered neglect, fended for themselves and learnt how to survive by all means, the young adults have simply become hurting people who go about hurting others. This is in itself a testament to the trauma's capacity to turn a victim into a perpetrator. Dantata's striking of the fat man at the

party house with a machete, again and again, captures one of the aftermaths of traumatising — revictimization, whereby the traumatised goes on to traumatise others and the hitherto oppressed seeks to oppress others, all of which are repetitive re-enactments of a tragic past.

Dantata's flight from Kaduna does little to shield him from the aftermath of violence. The raging fire had spread to many states in the North. Even in Sokoto, Dantata witnesses the pseudo pull of a fresh start, only to be plunged back into the cycle of violence that he had sought to escape from. Witnessing Sokoto's gradual descent into mayhem and lawlessness, in the aftermath of Malam Abdul-Nur's vicious betrayal and desultory extremism, Sheik Jamal's death and the destruction of the school building affects Dantata much more than others around him. By the time Dantata is released from prison, having witnessed dissent both as an active oppressor and the oppressed, his very being has suffered a split. His body, emaciated and desecrated beyond recognition, bears the scars of the violence witnessed since the days of sleeping under the Kuka tree in Bayan Layi, in the same that Ya Ta's body testifies to the desecration it witnessed in the Sambisa Forest. In fact, not only does Ya Ta's body bear witness, but within her body grows another witness, to the trauma that marks and mars life when insurgents rule. Danta, Banda, Gobedanisa, Jubril, Ya Ta, and Sarah are all scarred young adults. Even with time, Dantata, for instance, is so damaged that when an agelong acquaintance sees him, Saudatu calls him a mad man. In both novels, young adults suffer the cultural aftermaths of needless conflict and violence sponsored by the nation-state's ineptitude and reckless disavowal.

Conclusion: The Trauma Continuum

The reality of the aftermaths of dissent occasioned by insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria is immediate, lethal and continuing. In truth, the root causes of insurgency in Nigeria are multifactorial. However, deprivation- of the spirit, soul and body, is especially at the root of it all. A Yoruba proverb says hunger does not enter the stomach and allows anything else in. Another asserts that when hunger is taken out of poverty, poverty ends. A close reading of *Born on a Tuesday* and *Beneath the Baobab Tree* reveal the representation of violence and insurgency in Northern Nigeria, especially as it affects young adults, as constituting a trauma continuum that starts with deprivation, and graduates gradually through dissent unto desecration. In both novels, poverty occupies a magnificent space. The narrator in *Born on a Tuesday* recounts how entire villages are swept away by floods and cholera. In *Beneath the Baobab Tree*, Ya Ta's household is never free of worries about having their basic needs for food, clothing and shelter met. In the two narratives, deprivation, dissent and desecration are

normatively traumatogenic categories cum sites. Essentially, the two novels, representative of the creative recreation of the lasting effects of civil dissent and insurgency-induced traumas in Nigeria, bear witness to characters' experience of psychological trauma arising from a single shocking event- insurgency in northern Nigeria, as well as insidious traumas, which are often not "overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit" (Greenfield, 2013, p. 41). The texts foreground the primacy of social contexts and historical processes, and the complex interplay of place and power, in the continuous retrogression affecting especially the states in the northern Nigeria. Hansen et al, (2016) affirm that all statistical indices show higher educational/income levels among southern/Christians in Nigeria than among their northern/Muslim counterparts.

The cultural aftermath of insurgency is visible in its destruction of the present and the future. At the end of both novels, hope remains a precarious and scarce commodity. The novels end on a note of uncertainty. Even when Ya Ta and others like her seem to have escaped from the Sambisa Forest and its traumatic imprints, and Dantata too has been released from the prison, they still live in the constant treat of torture and post-traumatic stress disorders. Ya Ta, for instance, continues to live in mental captivity, afraid that her masked Boko Haram husband may surface at any point in time. Additionally, Ya Ta is uncertain that she will ever be accepted in her community the way she was before her kidnap. The trauma of captivity does not end for Ya Ta and others rescued by the military; they face a different kind of maltreatment — rejection, suspicion and depression. Viviana Maaza writes in the afterword to *Beneath the Baobab Tree*, that reintegration into the community is a challenge for captives rescued from the Sambisa Forest, especially in religious communities, where a woman's dignity is tied to her body and her virginity. In fact, Maaza learnt that pregnant returnees face worse discrimination, because of the people's belief that that Boko Haram's children will definitely inherit their fathers' ideology and they will be a danger to their communities. In such communities, people spread rumours of returnees as dangerous brainwashed bigots who are capable of killing their family members. For a character like Ya Ta, who comes out bearing the seed of a militant growing within her, the future is bleak and at worse, endangered. Thus, the scourge is far from being over and the battle is not won, as long as the fire of insurgency rages on.

John and Nwaubani in writing *Born on a Tuesday* and *Beneath the Baobab Tree*, respectively, write, skilfully merging fictional and factional contexts, tropes and narrative techniques, to create imaginative resistance against the circumstances, institutions and systems that allow for the perpetration of the trauma continuum. Both novelists are righters,

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underscoring the possibility of representing the unrepresentable and bearing witness to the unspeakable, in bid to lift “the barriers of denial and repression” (Herman, 2001, p. 2), and allow for their evocative stories to activate subjectivity and compel emotional responses (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Both novelists uphold the unique relationship between the word and the wound, whereby the word indeed helps to read the wound, in its ethical commitment to redemption, renewal and recovery. Dantata in *Born on a Tuesday*, on the very last page of the novel commits to writing out his story, just as Ya Ta expresses her yearning for education. The novels demonstrate that trauma can and should be represented, no matter how difficult or seemingly impossible, for as Emma Hutchison asserts, the processes of representation are key to the wider social, political and emotional significance of traumatic events. Moreover, representations allow traumatic occurrences to be known beyond immediate experiences; they are the mediums through which “trauma can attain and proliferate wider social meanings — meanings that can be politically influential and help to constitute communities in various national and transnational contexts” (Hutchison, 2016, p. 111). In conclusion, the two novels present a testament to the destructive consequences of insurgency, the persistence of the traumatic aftermath and an enduring call to action- political, intellectual and even spiritual.

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AUTHOR'S BIO

Dr Opeyemi Ajibola is a lecturer at the Department of English, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Her research interests are Trauma Studies, Medical Humanities, African Literature and Gender Studies.