The Crisis of Self and Individuation in Nigerian Postcolonial Fiction: A Close Reading of Cyprian Ekwensi's *Iska* And Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossom*

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Abstract

The impacts of colonialism and postcolonialism have positioned Nigerian literature as a creative space where individuals seek to find their identity. From early heroic tales by Amos Tutuola and Chinua Achebe to later works that address socio-cultural issues, some critics argue that these literary worlds often reflect how culturally ingrained beliefs can hinder personal development, making it hard to define a unique identity within society. This paper re-examines these conflicts through selected works by Ekwensi and Ibrahim. Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, especially Carl Jung's and Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas of individuation, the study reveals that these authors' efforts to rethink social identity lean towards promoting inclusion rather than exclusion. It argues that Nigerian postcolonial fiction offers a symbolic reflection not only on the crisis of human identity but also on the possibilities of achieving what Jung calls a sense of individuation, or "wholeness," in human relationships across social, cultural, religious, and racial boundaries. It concludes by calling for further critical research into how literature can expand and protect the boundaries of the intersubjective domain.
Keywords: individuation, individual, crisis, postcolonial fiction, conscious, unconscious

Introduction

The quest to discover and express the uniqueness of human identity is not only rooted in a people's cultural memory but also deeply ingrained in the "collective unconscious" (Jung, 1969, p. 384). The provocations of history have often shaped this quest's trajectory and preserved its hunger. But studies have, equally, shown that the complex nature of those provocations scuttles the quest process, making the desired goal of finding one's true place in the scheme of things appear elusive. The failure of history seems to have become a gain for the literary art, as it has foregrounded an escape route, or put differently, an avid space for a fuller search and truer expression of one's

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individuality. In fact, for some writers, literature is "some sort of therapy" (Adichie, 2009, p. 103) and as such, what "our spirits could rest upon" (Arnold, 1865, as cited in Akwanya, 2017, p.133). The early life of Nigerian literature seemed to be guided by this humanist orientation, seen as a rescue mission to restore order amid colonial and post-colonial chaos. Thus, for Achebe (1975), one of its goals is to teach Africans that "their past -with all its imperfections -was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them" (p.45). Obiechina re- echoes Achebe's sentiments when he states that West African writing has

> a purpose implicit or explicit to correct the distortions of West African culture, to recreate the past in the present to educate the West African reader and give him confidence in his cultural heritage and also to enlighten the foreign reader and help him get rid of the false impressions about the West African culture acquired from centuries of cultural misrepresentation. (cited in Achebe, 1975, p. 81)

But Achebe (1975) has also affirmed that "Art exists independently of us, of all mankind and is, and always in the service of man" (p. 19). This means that, as art, Nigerian literary works project themes that resonate beyond their national boundaries. It is true that "No text exists in a vacuum, in splendid isolation from its social and historical contexts" (Kearney, 1991, p. 66). However, what applies to one person in a particular setting may also apply to another in a different setting. Hence, Ricoeur (1991) has maintained that the self, "narratively interpreted", is "a figured self, which imagines itself in this or that way" (p. 199).

Arguably, the evolution of Nigerian postcolonial literature coincided with the period when the modernist mind was imagining itself 'this or that way.' The historical legacy of colonialism seemed to intensify this dilemma, giving rise to a strong desire for self-expression: to be heard as a specific voice and to be seen and regarded as a "basic particular in a spatio-temporal framework" (Ricoeur, 1992, pp. 32-34). What appeared to drive the individual within the Nigerian socio-cultural context was a zest for finding answers to the question: "What it means to be a human being and [how] this being is setting his existence" (Heidegger, 1949, as cited in Akwanya and Anohu, 2001, p. 221). Given the array of literary works, from Onitsha Market literature to texts that offer "symbolic meditation" (Jameson, 1981) on the labyrinths of contemporary experience, Nigerian literary artists could claim to have provided some concrete answers to this question. But in the narrative worlds they created, what is evident is the individual's continuous struggle to lay claim to his true self as societal norms and hegemonic ideological structures confront him. On some occasions, the conditions of existence offered to him/her create the moods of angst and despair, triggering, at some point, tragic consequences. This paper offers deeper insight into this literary reality by examining Ekwensi's *Iska* and Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossom* (hereafter, *Season*). It raises and attempts to answer the following questions: Should the postcolonial society create the template of existence for its subjects? Can the postcolonial subject achieve the "wholeness" or "the essence of personality" (Jung, 1969, p. 303) vis-à-vis the ideological and normative prompts of his/her society? Could conditions or situations engender a tension-free

relationship between the postcolonial individual and his/her society? The choice of Ekwensi's novel (from the old generation) and Ibrahim's novel (from the new generation) is intended to help the paper demonstrate how Nigerian postcolonial fiction has evolved in its representation of this uncertainty and the dynamics of individuation.

Notably, in the paper, the term "individual" (as distinct from individuation) is used to refer to "a person who has the power of self-designation, [or] a basic particular in a spatio-temporal framework… with an orientation or attitude that is different from other individuals" (Ricoeur, 1992, pp. 32-34). In other words, a being who possesses an ontological identity that situates them as different from other beings. The meaning of this term comes down to the bare, as the individual assumes the status of the opposing other in the selected novels. This status opens the lid on the crisis of self at both the levels of narration and integration.

Review of Literature

Ekwensi's *Iska* and Ibrahim's *Season* have attracted considerable critical attention. However, most studies treat these novels as mirrors of Nigerian society, particularly the destabilising effects of inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflicts engendered by the colonial experience. For instance, in his study of *Iska*, Ile (2018) argues that the novel primarily exposes the sources of ethnic conflict in Nigeria and shows that such conflicts will not cease unless the nation's diversity and cultural differences are appreciated. By implication, he reads Ekwensi's novel as presenting a pessimistic outlook on Nigeria's socio-cultural landscape. But reading the novel this way shuts out the power of literature to offer solutions to societal issues. This paper underscores this power by demonstrating that Ekwensi's creative vision not only exposes the inter-ethnic and religious crises of the Nigerian state but also provides narrative layers that show these crises can be resolved. The paper opens these layers through Jungian and Nietzschean theories of individuation, showing that, amidst cultural and religious diversity, social cohesion is achievable. However, Okereke (2018) agrees with Ile's view in his sociological reading of the text. According to him, Ekwensi's novel foregrounds Nigeria as a "multi–ethnic nation without nationalism" (p.80). Through characterisation, he sees Ekwensi as a concerned Nigerian who advocates social integration "through inter-ethnic marriages and culture exchanges" (p.87). But the fact that the inter-ethnic marriages in the novel, especially the one between Dan and Filia, do not receive their parents' blessings, shows that the relevance of Ekwensi's text extends beyond advocacy. This paper argues that it leans more towards understanding the psychology of human integration at both the individual and collective levels, because it is in the human psyche that the balance between acceptance and rejection of the other is established. Ola (1985) is more direct in her study of Ekwensi's text. For her, the novel primarily foregrounds the destructive nature of tribalism, a social reality that culminated in the Nigerian Civil War in the 1960s. Lawrence (2001) also insists that tribalism is the central governing idea in Iska. In fact, for her, Ekwensi seems to use the novel to expound his own experience as someone who lived in Northern Nigeria for a long time. She insists

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that this is evident in his vivid description of the Igbo-Hausa riot in the text. But the Igbo-Hausa riot also has a religious colouration, as Ile (2018) and Okereke (2018) have rightly highlighted. Therefore, to limit the societal conflicts in Iska to tribalism alone is to ignore the magnitude and complexity of the metanarratives that informed Ekwensi's work. It is, in effect, to present the novel as literature of tribal or ethnic concerns. This study interprets it as a postcolonial text that offers a symbolic reflection on the crisis of the postcolonial subjects in postcolonial settings. It presents a psychoanalytic perspective on this crisis, arguing that it is possible to renegotiate an individual or collective postcolonial identity that favours inclusion rather than exclusion.

Nonetheless, in their study of Ibrahim's *Season,* Bisimi and Kure (2024) do not see the possibility of such an identity. They see Ibrahim's novel as a text that unveils the disturbing realities enshrined within the frames of politics, region, cultural differentiation, and influence. They contend that the disorientation some of the characters suffer in the text is clearly engineered by social "constructs" that function as anti-human subjects. While this study agrees with the devastating effect of traditional and religious constructs in the text, it also foregrounds characters who refuse to allow these constructs to disrupt their sense of integration and intersubjectivity, thereby underscoring that, as a writer, Ibrahim leans towards the synthesis of the self and the community. However, in their feminist reading, Olaoye and Zink (2021) seem to agree with Bisimi and Kure (2024) about the weaponisation of social and religious "constructs" in the novel, and they see women as the most pitiable victims. For them, Ibrahim simply reveals how a misogynistic society can force women to internalise several conflicting ideologies at once, creating individuals who are layered both in memory and reality. They see this evident in the lives of Binta and Fa'iza, who feature in the novel as voiceless and privately disempowered. Again, while this study acknowledges the negative impacts of these ideological constructs, it argues that their delimiting does not totally prevent the female characters from fostering a sense of wholeness. There are times when both Binta and Fa'iza get out of the ideological prisons to reclaim their voices, by allowing both their conscious and unconscious impulses to come into productive relation with each other. Basiru (2019), in his own study, remains silent on this possibility of individuation because he sees the novel as a narrative that foregrounds disempowered individuals and, therefore, exemplifies a society ensnared in cultural, political and religious dogma. According to him, the implication is that the major characters encounter a conflict between a normative and a freely chosen orientation. Again, he does not explore the depth of this conflicting fusion as this paper does, especially as it relates to the psychic struggles the characters encounter in their bid to conform to societal norms and their desire for individuation.

Thus, while the above critical views offer valuable insights into Ekwensi's and Ibrahim's novels, they fail to open up and probe the critical spaces where both the individual and society are haunted by the trace of each other's psychic identity; spaces that equally suggest that they can be brought "into a productive relation to each other" (Nietzsche, 1967, p. xi). This paper critically examines these spaces through close reading. It demonstrates that the crisis of self in the novels is

less about the creation of these "normative orientations" than about the failure of both the individual and society to create "balancing acts" (Derrida, 1976, as cited in Bradley, 2008, p. 110) that should enable the formation of a social identity that projects both as two indispensable human units. The paper also highlights narrative situations that show that the creation of these 'balancing acts' is achievable.

The paper adopts the close reading approach because it aligns with Flaubert's (1963) assertion that "there is more to art than the straightness of lines and the perfection of surfaces" (cited in Derrida, 2001, p. I). Thus, it pays specific attention to how Ekwensi's and Ibrahim's use of language, belief structures, and characters' experiences enable the reader to make sense of the narrative worlds. It explores and establishes a connection between the cultural and religious beliefs operative in the characters' communities and the identity crisis that results from their fusion. The experiences of characters such as Dan, Filia, and Hankuri in *Iska*, and Binta, Reza, and Faiza in *Season* receive significant attention. This is because they not only help us identify the epistemological boundaries of belief systems but also the psychic struggles they create for individuals from different geographical zones (North and South), genders (men and women), and ages (young and adult). Most importantly, focusing on the experiences of the designated characters enables us to establish that the process of individuation defies cultural, religious, gender, and age barriers. It is initiated when postcolonial subjects accept and integrate the psychic frontiers of their personality, recognising that contradictions can also be complements.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by psychoanalytic theory, particularly Jung's and Nietzsche's concepts of individuation. In his analytical psychology, Jung (1969) holds that the human mind, or psyche, is governed by two main impulses: the conscious and the unconscious. The conscious governs everything we are aware of – thoughts, emotions, and sensory experiences. The unconscious harbours memories, repressed emotions, patterns of thought, and images we cannot consciously relate to. For Jung, the personal development or psychological growth of any individual depends on the integration of the conscious and unconscious impulses – a process he calls "individuation". He states that "individuation" denotes the process by which a person becomes a psychological "in – dividual"; that is, a separate, indivisible unity or "whole" (p.275). As Jeffrey (2024) explains, individuation implies "becoming one's own self… coming to selfhood' or 'self realisation'… [or] embracing our innermost, last and incomparable uniqueness" (p. 4). In the words of Johnson (1986), it further entails "feeling more secure… more complete [by], possessing the essential human qualities that bind us together in the human tribe" (cited in Jeffrey, 2024, p.4). However, for Jung (1969), achieving this state of "completeness" or "wholeness" is a conscientious process. This is because it is generally assumed that the 'conscious' is "the whole of the psychological individual" (p.275). Yet the phenomena we can explain on the hypothesis of the 'unconscious' cast doubt on whether the ego consciousness is, in fact, identical with the whole. The unconscious

phenomena, he argues, are autonomous and, as a rule, "they manifest themselves in fairly chaotic and unsystematic form" (p.276). In fact, for Jung, the conscious grows out of the unconscious psyche, which means it is older than it and continues functioning despite it. Although there are numerous cases of conscious contents becoming unconscious again (through repression, as Freud proposes), Jung maintains that "the unconscious as a whole is far from being the remnant of consciousness" (p.281), because it contains contents utterly different from the conscious. This, however, does not mean it lives in isolation. According to him, the unconscious normally collaborates with the conscious without friction or disturbance. But "whenever an individual or social groups tries to deviate too far from the instinctual foundations in the unconscious, they usually experience the full impact of the unconscious" (p.282), which may manifest in sudden, strange ideas or actions that can trigger tragic consequences (as we see in the selected novels). To avoid this scenario, Jung proposes that the conscious and unconscious should always be recognised as two "aspects of life" (p.288). This is because achieving the "wholeness" or "incomparable uniqueness" of the individual cannot be realised when one suppresses the other. Hence, in situations where both compete for attention (which is usually the case), he advocates that the conscious should protect itself and that the unconscious should be given the chance to have its way as much as possible. In other words, "there should be open conflict and open collaboration" (p. 289) between the two, for this will enable them to forge a union in which "new situations and new conscious attitudes" emerge, creating in the individual a sense of "wholeness". According to Jung, this is "the essence of personality" (p. 303) and what every individual should strive for.

Nietzsche's (1967) idea of individuation also encompasses wholeness. While Jung sees its realisation in individuals as psychological beings, Nietzsche explores and underscores its importance within the literary context. He acknowledges, as Jung does, the presence of two principles or drives that inhabit every human soul, every institution, and every work of art. He calls the first principle the Apolline: "the drive towards distinction, discreteness and … the drawing and respecting of boundaries and limits". It is similar to the conscious impulse. The second principle is the Dionysian: "the drive towards the transgression of limits, the dissolution of boundaries, the destruction of individuality, and excess" (p. xi). It is akin to the unconscious. Nietzsche identifies the Apolline drive as the principle of individuality, because when led by this drive, the individual "suddenly become[s] confused and lose[s] faith in the cognitive forms of the phenomenal world because the principle of sufficient reason, in one or other of its modes, appears to sustain an exception" (p.17). To avoid this, he suggests the adoption of the "ethic of moderation and self-control" (p. xi). On the other hand, the Dionysian drive, according to him, preaches "the gospel of universal harmony", and, led by it, the individual usually feels "himself to be not simply united, reconciled or merged with his neighbour, but quite literally one with him" (p.18). Nietzsche argues, as Jung also hinted, that these two drives, although coexisting, are inherently opposed. He suggests that when individuals or characters fail to manage this conflict, it leads to tragedy in literature. However, like Jung, he sees the tension between them as creative rather than negative,

with the drives often inspiring each other to "produce new, more vigorous offspring" (p. 14). Hence, the challenge is to foster a productive relationship between them (p. xi). Thus, both Jung and Nietzsche agree that integrating these psychic drives is crucial for individuals to truly understand themselves and experience wholeness.

Jungian and Nietzschean theories of individuation are selected for this study because the failure of characters to balance the operations of the conscious and unconscious, or the Apolline and Dionysian impulses, leads to some of the tragedies encountered in Nigerian postcolonial fiction. For example, we see this failure in such characters as Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Ezulu in *Arrow of God* (1964), Okolo in Okara's *The Voice* (1964), Nnu Ego in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), Eugene Achike in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), and the prince in Okri's *Starbook* (2007), to mention but a few. In the texts under study, we see it in Dan and Filia, in *Iska* and Binta, and in Reza in *Season.* By applying the theories of individuation, this study proposes overcoming this failure and its resulting tragedy in postcolonial settings. Thus, it examines, among other things, how the integration of the psychic drives is depicted in the selected works, arguing that Nigerian postcolonial fiction does not simply reflect the crisis of postcolonial subjects but also offers pathways to socio-cultural inclusivity through the development of a unique sense of self at both individual and collective levels. It is pertinent to note that the scope of this study does not include delving into the authors' psychological backgrounds or treating the characters as mere psychological beings controlled solely by psychic impulses or drives. Rather, we focus on Ekwensi's and Ibrahim's works as postcolonial fiction and on the characters as postcolonial subjects who find themselves in narrative settings where conflicting ideologies or beliefs of culture and religion cause inner and outer struggles that impede the process of identity negotiation and reconstruction.

The Crisis of Self and the Quest for Individuation in *Iska* and *Season*

One of the defining traits of postcolonial literature is the individual's desire for the "affirmation of autonomy" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 273), or, as Nietzsche (1968) puts it, "to get free from an overpowering domination by society" (p. 411). However, given the compelling force of societal norms and beliefs, this desire does not always lead to the emergence of "the new situations and new conscious attitudes" that, according to Jung (1969), create the feeling of individual "wholeness". Rather, it projects the individual as "a figured self" that is constantly imagining "itself in this or that way" (Ricoeur, 1991, p .199). This is the situation in which the major characters in Ekwensi's and Ibrahim's novels find themselves.

In *Iska*, Dan's rejection of his father's Northern supremacist narrative portrays him as seeking 'affirmation of autonomy'. However, this pursuit leads him to become a "constricted self–struggling with social conventions and boundaries" (Mackay, 1987, p.149). There are signs, though, that he initially aimed to challenge these 'boundaries. His father's reproach upon learning of his marriage to Filia is telling: "You have never seen it wrong. You were born a Northerner.

You would not study your Koran. You would not go to the Mosque…. You would not wear robes and sandals, only English dress…. You associate with other tribes. Now this is the result" (Ekwensi, 1981, p.30). Here, the paradigmatic placement of the words 'Koran', 'Mosque', 'robes' and 'sandals', which symbolise Northern Islamic culture, and the phrase 'English dress', which symbolises Southern Christian culture, highlights the epistemological and geographical boundaries erected by belief structures in the narrative society. By harping on them, what worries Musa Kaybi, Dan's father, is not only his son's involvement in what he considers an unacceptable marriage, but also that he habitually transgresses the religious and cultural lines set by Northern society. His worry may be justified because "Dan was virtually a member of the Government, a man looked upon as a leader, a man whose example to his own people was important" (p.15). In essence, Dan represents the future of Northern society, and he is expected to safeguard its cultural sanctity. However, from the sequence of events, Dan is not unaware of this responsibility. But he believes that carrying it out cannot be achieved through the exclusion of outside identities, but through their inclusion. His reply to his father— "Nigeria is one country whether you like it or not" (p.31)— reveals a character inclined to Ricoeur's (1992) notion that "The selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an extent that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other" (p. 3). Marrying Filia, despite her being from the South, exemplifies this view. It also sends a subtle message to his father that drawing rigid boundaries does not defend or preserve culture; it actually destroys it by preventing its natural tendency to foster "the humanity of the nation" (Ekwensi, 1981, p. 77). This message is echoed in his engagement with Filia's parents. After her father's bitter words, Dan states: "I am in love with her, and with Allah's grace I hope to make her my wife. This is no idle talk. I mean every word I say" (pp.19-20). While Dan's statement suggests an affirmation of self, influenced by the Apolline or conscious impulse, the phrase 'with Allah's grace' suggests that he is also drawn to the Dionysian drive that, according to Nietzsche (1967), preaches 'the gospel of universal harmony'. In other words, he is an individual who, at this time in the novel, makes an effort to integrate the psychic impulses by proposing inter-ethnic marriage as a way to cultivate 'the humanity of the nation'.

At an integrational level, what is also evident is that the wide gulf of beliefs in the text creates psychic struggles for Dan. The despair that surrounds him after his father disowns him in the hospital bed is telling. According to the narrator, immediately after his father "marched out of the hospital, followed by a wailing and moaning trail of patients. Dan turned over on his bed, but could not find rest" (Ekwensi, 1981, p.32). Here, Dan's restlessness is driven not only by the "wailing and moaning trail of patients," who see his father's disowning as the worst possible thing for a child, but also by his society's failure to understand, as Derrida (1964) suggests, that "our consciousness contains alterity… which we cannot eliminate without self-destruction" (cited in Stocker, 2006, p.2). Thus, he is caught in a conscious and unconscious struggle between his ideals of marriage and societal norms. In Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and "Marriage is a Private Affair" (1991), Obi Okonkwo and Nnaemeka, respectively, also face a similar struggle. But while

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both characters make conscientious efforts to elicit the desired understanding, at least from their family members, Dan's actions in the text suggest that "He instinctively posits himself as equal to all other individuals" (Nietzsche, 1968, p.411) and therefore feels the right to deploy his "power of self-designation" (Ricoeur, 1992, pp. 32-24). This is clear when the hospital nurse informs him that his father wants to see him. The narrator comments: "Dan felt as though cold water had been poured on his face" (Ekwensi, 1981, p.29). Dan's mental posture here shows a son already troubled by what he expects from his father. But the visit also provides an auspicious opportunity for him to painstakingly make his father understand the reason for his decision to marry, as Obi Okonkwo and Nnaemeka try to do. But when he tells his father, "Baba, I cannot see what is wrong!" (p. 30), he asserts his right to forge his own ethnic identity, just as his father did. However, by doing so, he seems to dismiss an alterity—the Northern identity—and risks self-destruction. Filia's warning upon hearing about his feud with Northern youths is notable: "Take it easy with them, Dan. Don't insist on having everything your way. Remember, it will blow over – like the wind" (p.43). Here, Filia's use of the word "wind' is noteworthy. In the context of the study, it symbolises the uncertainty enshrouding the lives of individuals in the narrative society, resulting from the conflicting fusion of beliefs, aligning with the novel's title (*Iska*-wind) and the forces beyond their control. In other words, her warning reflects her recognition that Dan is currently driven by the Dionysian impulse, which, from the sequence of events, "breaks the circuit of intentions and expectations" (Derrida, 1981, p. xxxii) of society, which claims rights and exerts pressure (Akwanya, 2005, p. 163). The words 'stop having everything your own way' also hint at her awareness that Dan is equally influenced by the Apolline drive of distinction and individualism, suggesting that at this time in the novel, he is a victim of "unhappy consciousness" (Derrida, 2001, p. xxii)—a figure torn within himself. Of course, this incites fear about his fate. Thus, Filia's warning significantly functions as mythic ideation: it foreshadows Dan's tragic death at the narrative level and, from an integrative perspective, emphasises his failure to harmonise his Dionysian and Apolline drives, leading to his death, because he attempts "to transcend the curse of individuation" (Nietzsche, 1967, p.71).

Dan's tragedy might not have been unexpected, but it appears to have led Filia to reject what she now perceives as a "discordant" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 141) Northern society that insists on the dominance of its right. She tells her mother: "Mama, I want to be famous…. I want to appear on stage, in newspapers, on TV… And when I marry, it must be a man who is known, a man with 'something… Lagos is the place I'll go" (Ekwensi, 1981, p.71). The repeated use of the personal pronoun 'I' emphasises Filia's individualism, aligning her with Dan's pursuit of the Apolline principle of selfhood. However, Nietzsche (1967) states that following this principle often results in "becoming confused and losing faith in the cognitive forms of the phenomenal world" (p.17). This confusion and loss of faith are evident during her stay in Lagos, especially as her mother affirms her mythic identity. We read: "You see, you come to us many times. You did not really want to stay with us. Yet you always came to us… Filia…. You are an Ogbanje…. When we lived

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in Northern Nigeria, they called you Iska – wind…. I have to tell this because… You must know" (Ekwensi, pp.136-137). Identifying Filia as Ogbanje shifts the narrative, revealing a character whose fate, like Azaro's in Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), is intertwined with an uncertain destiny. In other words, her inner world is governed by culturally rooted beliefs she must heed to avoid destabilising her external reality. Consequently, her individuation can't rely solely on "voluntary memory," which "merely produces images of the past" without re-engaging with them to influence the present (Lloyd, 1993, p. 131). Notably, Filia's mother's revelation comes on the heels of her suspicion that Filia is deploying this memory, given her inclination towards the Apolline principle or a conscious impulse. This suggests she's maintaining a deviation from her mythic identity and its "implacable necessity" (Derrida, 2001, p. 292). In turn, she experiences what Lloyd (1993) describes as "The lack of natural rhythm of consciousness to secure a firm distinction between self and world" (p. 9).

Remarkably, the sequence of events before Filia's mother's revelation indicates that Filia is aware of her mythic identity. Earlier in the novel, she tells Dan: "When I was very young… my mother took me to see a fortune-teller. I remember… he did not mince words. You will die young… I cannot believe it, but sometimes I see signs that it may be true" (Ekwensi, 1981, p. 35). This recollection confirms her mother's suspicion of her use of 'voluntary memory.' The sentence, "I remember… he did not mince words," suggests that her unconscious has been persistently influenced by her mythic fate. This idea is reinforced by her admission: 'But sometimes I see signs that it may be true.' Yet, in her statement: 'I cannot believe it,' we see a character attempting to deny her fate, not in the way her mother expects—accepting her mythic identity and applying Nietzsche's (1967) 'ethic of moderation and self-control'—but in her own way, seeking through the principle of sufficient reason to "search for her place in life" (Ekwensi, 1981, p. 77). Like Azaro in Okri's earlier cited novel, her quest appears to cast her as a "reverse-abiku" (Wright, 1995, p. 22). However, while Azaro's "reverse" status arises from his desire "to make happy the bruised face of the woman who would become [his] mother" (Okri, 1991, p. 5), Filia's status seems to stem from her desire to heal her own face—bruised by her mythic destiny and a narrative world where conflicting beliefs and values produce a brutal existence. Campbell (1971) posited that "The aim of one's life, psychologically speaking, should not be to suppress or repress, but to come to know one's other side, and so both to enjoy and to control the whole range of one's own capacities" (cited in Jeffrey, 2024, p. 5). Filia's conscious choice to suppress her mythic unconscious not only creates an identity crisis but also hinders her from enjoying and mastering the capacities necessary for a sense of 'wholeness.'

However, Filia's quest to master these capacities is evident when she joins the "Prayer People" in Lagos, who, as the narrator puts it, believe that "The enormous problems of life in the city could be solved by their devotion to prayer" (Ekwensi, 1981, p. 42). In the early stages of her membership, the narrator notes: "She felt an inner serenity which was to her a new experience" (p.134). Later, after speaking with the leader, Piska Dabra, the narrator also points out that she

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muses, "Was [the religion] going to make her a queer person? Somehow, she felt she was still an outsider" (p. 147). Here, the shift from "inner serenity" to seeing herself as "still an outsider" reveals a character in a dilemma about where she truly belongs. Hence, the rhetorical question 'Was [the religion] going to make her a queer person?' signals a raging conflict between her conscious and unconscious worlds. At the narrative level, we see this conflict snowball into nightmares that make her jump out of bed on several occasions. On one occasion, the narrator notes: "Her face was moist and full of terror. Her tousled hair and heaving bosom seemed to sharpen her terror" (p.135). In Ibrahim's *Season*, we also see Fa'iza terrorised by similar nightmares. But while in Fa'iza's case history constitutes the figure of terror, here the mythic unconscious is Filia's own source of terror, as she struggles to suppress and deny its reality. Again, we see this denial come to the fore when her friend, Remi, asks her: "What is your problem?" She responds: "My problem… I lost my husband… I am in Lagos, a city where one struggles…. I am alone in Life. I don't want to be alone because I am part of the world. I want to live with people…to feel they want me. But I must live a higher life" (pp.142-143). Here Filia's desire "to be part of the world… to live with people… to feel they want me" is indicative of the Dionysian drive, which, as we have seen, tilts towards the 'destruction of individuality and excess' (Nietzsche,1967). But again, we see this drive undercut by her desire: 'I must live a higher life', which signals the Apolline drive and, from the context of events, precludes her 'natural rhythm of consciousness' (Lloyd, 1993) from recognising and accepting her mythic identity. That Remi "looked at her while she talked, her lips parted but unsmiling" (Ekwensi, 1981, p.143) suggests a character who seems surprised by her friend's failure to secure the required distinction between self and the intractable societal belief system. We see Filia's mother's irritation at this failure when she berates her: "I don't know, you take life so deeply. You have the courage of a boy and determination too. It's unusual for a girl to want to fight alone. Marry and have children… It's getting late" (p.137). The statement "you have the courage of a boy" evokes the Jungian idea of the "animus complex", which, according to Robertson (1992), is "the interior companion or inspirer of life" (cited in Jeffrey,2024, p.5). But on this occasion, this inspiration seems to block Filia's 'natural rhythm of consciousness' from securing the distinction her mother expects. In other words, it creates a situation where, according to Derrida (2001), there is "opposition of consciousness to unconsciousness" (p.248). Her mother's suggestion of marriage could be seen as an attempt to calm this tense state. It also evokes Jungian 'open conflict and open collaboration' in the individuation process. In Okri's *Starbook* (2007), the prince (who also has a mythic identity) adopts this approach when he marries the maiden. As shown, it helps to bring a sort of "rightening of balance" (Frye,1957, p. 209) to his "obscure destiny" (Okri, 2007, p.54). Here, we also see this 'rightening of balance' in Filia's marriage to Dan, early in the text, when the narrator observes: "Comfort and peace flowed from him and enveloped her. With Dan near her, she could face the world" (Ekwensi, 1981, p.12). Arguably, the narrator's observation seems to justify why Filia's

mother suggested marriage in the first place. It also makes her desire to "fight alone" now quite unusual.

At the level of integration, this fight presents her as an individual engaged in a "layered struggle" (Akwanya, 2005, p. 218) between her conscious and unconscious identities. We also see an element of hubris in this psychic struggle. For, in telling her mother, "I don't want to marry – yet" (Ekwensi, 1981, p. 138), Filia presents herself as a character who believes she can overcome her struggles by holding onto her 'sufficient reason'. But Sewall (1980) has stated that "hubris is not sin but the mysterious dynamic of all tragic action, dangerous because it involves a challenge to the powers that be" (pp. 36-37). From the foregoing, it is evident that the powers Filia challenges are not only those of her metaphysical world but also her physical world, where, according to her, "the bare necessities of life for a girl" are lost in the maze of "distorted values" and beliefs (Ekwensi, 1981, p. 166). But at this stage in the text, it is a challenge neither her mother, nor the narrator, nor even the reader expects her to win. Of course, her tragic death may have informed Akande's (2017) view that "she is merely a victim of circumstance, an unfortunate character that struggles against forces that are clearly predetermined" (p. 11). However, in the context of our discussion, we see an individual who, like Dan, deviated from her "instinctual foundations" and, as a result, "experiences the full impact of the unconscious forces" (Jung, 1969, p. 282).

In Ibrahim's *Season*, Binta's and Reza's internal crises also stem from the repression of unconscious forces and a desire to liberate themselves from the "memories… enshrouded in a decade of cobwebs" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 17) they harbour. The robbery at Binta's house offers the first chance for this liberation, but it also sparks a psychic conflict between their true selves and societal perceptions. The opening scene describes: "Hajiya Binta Zubairu was finally born at fifty-five when a dark–lipped rogue with short, spiky hair… scaled her fence and landed boots and all, in the puddle that was her heart" (p.1). Here, the metaphor of 'the Puddle' evokes associations that cast Binta's life as a repository for unwanted, painful memories. Reza's 'boots' splashing reawakens these memories. Her finally being "born at fifty-five" suggests the emergence of a new consciousness demanding attention. According to the narrator, "The images she had woken up with had excited and vexed her more than she could admit. And to think that this moistening of her long-abandoned womanhood had apparently been provoked by someone who reminded her of Yaro was an added irritation" (p.18). The binary placement of the words 'excited and vexed' and 'moistening and irritation' indicates that Binta's new consciousness does not fully offer the liberation she desires, for it remains burdened by the traces of her suppressed sexuality, which have been provoked by someone who reminded her of Yaro, her deceased son. The binary opposites also underscore her knowledge of the cultural and religious belief system that imposes constraints on sexual relations with somebody as young as her deceased son. Thus, at this stage in the text, she is swayed, like Filia, by the 'opposition of consciousness to unconsciousness'.

Reza is also a victim of this psychic conflict. As a notorious robber, his excitement at conducting his business as a professional is cut short when he "caught sight of the gold tooth in

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Binta's gaping mouth" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 6). The "gold tooth" evokes the image of his negligent mother and immediately reawakens in him the need for motherly love. This need grows stronger when he chooses to return all he stole from Binta, stating: "Hajiya, please, I'm not here to hurt you… I brought back your things… I am sorry. I want to apologise for what happened" (pp. 25-26). Here, Reza's words reveal a character whose consciousness of being a robber has yielded to the unconscious influence of cultural and religious norms, exposing not only his need for motherly love but also his desire for acceptance. This aligns with Jung's idea of the collaboration between the conscious and unconscious mind. At this point in the story, this collaboration reveals a different Reza from the one society knows: a non-violent, focused, remorseful individual, but also unfulfilled and in need of wholeness. However, Reza's belief that Binta will help him realise this wholeness, not only as a mother-figure but also as a "lover" (p. 9), provides an ironic twist, since he knows that such a relationship would be considered "norm-breaking" (Jauss, 1974, p. 295) by the narrative society. Binta is aware of this, too. Yet these flashes of awareness do not prevent the sexual relationship that eventually develops between them, revealing that they are constrained by the Apolline principle to deviate from the societal belief foundations in order to secure the 'completeness' that the individuation process guarantees. But, in doing so, they also expose themselves to the "violent affect" (Jung, 1969, p. 277) of these foundations. For instance, on one occasion when they had the opportunity to satisfy their sexual yearning, Binta complains: "Since the last time you came…. I have been thinking people could look at me and see fornication written across my forehead. You may be used to such things. I am not. The first few days, I was overcome by guilt and shame" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 47). Here, Binta's internal struggle revolves around her religious and communal identity. The fear of losing this identity and its consequences is evident in the statement, 'people could look at me and see fornication written across my forehead'. But there is also the 'violent affect' of 'guilt and shame' which is triggered by her realisation that she is sleeping with someone as young as her dead son. This shows a character whose conscious act of fornication has "unsettled the boundaries of [her] inner and outer [worlds]" (Lloyed 9). The expression, 'You may be used to such things. I am not', evokes Jung's notion of "the shadow" – the "personal traits" in us we "deny" or try to "cut off" (cited in Jeffrey, 2024, p. 5). However, what Binta tries to 'cut off' here is not her desire for sex, but the freedom to enjoy it as much as she has with Reza. But from what we know about her marriage, it is a freedom that lies innate in her, which has been subdued by religious and cultural beliefs. That she feels threatened to express it now, again, shows how the settled beliefs in the text continue to block the psychological pathway that would have given the individual some sense of wholeness.

We find Binta's effort to resist this block by continuing to engage in sexual relations with Reza significant. On the one hand, it shows an individual seeking to deploy the 'principle of sufficient reason' to sustain an exception; on the other, it shows a character seeking to use her actions, like Reza's mother, to counter the dominant discourse. Olaoye and Zink (2021) argue that shame, wielded as a tool to uphold patriarchal and religious oppression, silences Binta and Fa'iza,

leaving them voiceless and privately disempowered. But, in the context of her relationship with Reza, we do not see Binta's unspoken resistance as indicative of voicelessness and private disempowerment. Instead, it indicates that she has rediscovered her sexual voice and uses its power to reaffirm her womanhood. The narrator highlights this at her first sexual encounter with Reza: "The petals of her life, like a bud that had endured half a century of nights, began to unfurl" (Ibrahim, 2016, p.35). This awakening is further shown in her willingness to suggest and agree to places meaningful to their affair (p.147). It is also reflected in her nurturing instinct, as she cares for Reza during his struggles (p. 100), and in her encouragement of his personal growth, urging him to return to school and even buying the forms (pp. 150-151). Yet her actions could also be viewed as expressions of the Apolline drive, helping her reaffirm her individuality amid cultural and religious influences. The 'violent affect' of these foundations remains evident. The narrator states: "After growing wings through indiscretion, Hajiya Binta, contrary to her expectation, did not transform into an eagle, but an owl that thrived in the darkness in which she and Reza communed" (p.97). Here, the narrator's evocation of "darkness" is significant. It reveals Binta as a character who, at this stage, is confronted with avoidance and as an individual who has become a victim of 'unhappy consciousness'. The narrator's implication that Reza is communing in 'darkness' is also noteworthy. It highlights his crisis of individuation despite his use of rational principles to ignore societal norms. According to the narrator, "He would never understand the sexual attraction he felt for her. Sometimes, his intimacy with Binta bothered him, not least because occasionally he ended up thinking about his mother when he thought of Binta or vice versa. It made him uncomfortable at times" (Ibrahim, 2016, p.147). Of course, Reza's discomfort stems not only from his attraction but also from the societal ideologies that indirectly prompt it and force it to be communed in darkness. The consequent internal struggles shed light on his killing of Munkaila, Binta's son, who attempted to interrupt their love, and on his own tragic death, which was undoubtedly a consequence of transgressing societal taboos.

The State of Individuation in *Iska* and *Season*

From the foregoing, our analysis of Ekwensi's and Ibrahim's novels might lead the reader to classify them as "Fiction of the loss of identity" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 149). However, there are narrative depictions that prove, as Nietzsche (1967) argues, that the synthesis of Apolline and Dionysian drives "in tragedy… is part of a complex defence against the pessimism and despair which is the natural existential lot of humans" (p. xi).

In *Iska*, for example, we encounter characters who believe that "Self-knowledge only comes through our understanding of relation to the world and our life with and among others in the world" (Pellauer & Dauenhauer, 2021). Hankuri Chemists is one such character. The first time we encounter him, the narrator describes him as "A man whose self-satisfaction proved how he had solved the basic questions of living at peace with himself and his new community" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 41). This is evident in his decision to adopt Northern religion and culture, despite being

from the South. This surprises many of his friends, including Dan, who at this time is struggling against forces opposing his marriage to Filia. Previously, Dan had only speculated about Hankuri's actions and doubted their practicality, given the large divide between Northerners and Southerners, Christians and Muslims. However, he now finds Hankuri's account inspiring, as Hankuri explains: "When I came here, I immediately set about learning Arabic and reading the Koran. I found in it a new way of understanding the Northerner. It was good for me and good for business. Then I went to Mecca, became a Haj… married four wives… I'm a Northern Nigerian. Fully integrated" (pp. 39-40). Here, what captivates Dan is not only the sacrifice Hankuri made to be accepted but also the sense of fulfilment it has given him. To Dan, Hankuri's statement, 'It was good for me and for business,' reveals a friend who has indeed discovered a new perspective on a society where the conflicting fusion of beliefs blocks one's individuation process.

For us, the statement foregrounds Hankuri as an individual who has successfully deployed the Jungian 'open conflict and open collaboration' strategy to manage his conscious and unconscious impulses. From his interactions, he realises that acquiring a new identity as a Northerner and Muslim does not necessarily entail discarding or loathing his Southern identity. Rather, it positions him as a bridge-builder not only between Northerners and Southerners but also between Christians and Muslims. Interestingly, the narrative society recognises him as such. We learn that the name "Hankuri, which means patience" (p. 41) was given to him by the people to show that, by his life and service as a chemist, he now stands before them as a symbol of inter-ethnic harmony, which only the virtue of patience can create. We see his pride at this recognition when he tells Dan, "You see, Hankuri Chemists serves the Northerners and serves them fairly. I do not make any large profits. At any hour of the day or night, I am in my shop, eager to help. I keep people's secrets… and believe you me there's plenty to hide" (9). The expression "there's plenty to hide" indicates Hankuri's awareness of the tremendous conflicts in people's inner and outer worlds; conflicts which reflect the nature of the macro society of Iska. But he seems to have handled these conflicts by deploying 'the ethic of moderation and self-control', and thus has not allowed the instinctual foundations of his Southern identity to interfere with his conscious act of attending to his patients. His belief is clear, as he tells Dan: "People are only human. There is no tribe which is called bad…. In the same way, there is no man who loves everyone in his tribe and hates everyone in the other" (p. 59). In other words, despite the interlocking nature of the ethnic and religious differences, in the narrative world Hankuri believes that no one can live in isolation. Of course, his migration from South to North and his marriage to Northern women demonstrate this belief. Again, in his selfless service to the people, irrespective of ethnic affiliations, the reader can sense the feeling of 'wholeness' that this belief brings to the individual. However, on a narrative level, Dan experiences this feeling only briefly. We learn that after his encounter with Hankuri, he "was thinking in reverse" because "A bright light had illumined his own problem" (Ekwensi, 1981, p. 40). But the syntagmatic relationship between the words "light" and 'problem' shows that the illumination he experiences does not help him achieve a sense of wholeness, as

Hankuri does. Thus, the image of the "bright light" highlights the crisis of individuation in the story and explains why the main characters' individuation journey is tragically hindered. Essentially, Ekwensi uses this image to satirise the wider society's failure to recognise the strength of unity amid diversity.

In *Season,* this failure manifests tragically in the deaths of Fa'iza's father and brother, as well as Binta's husband and son. Nevertheless, Fa'iza's attempts to prevent this failure from invading her personal space are noteworthy. While burdened by haunted memories, she also uses art not just as an "interesting Diversion" (Moh, 2001, p. 27) but as a means of forging her sense of individuation. For example, the narrator observes: "There was… something disturbing about the way Fa'iza bent studiously over her book… From her place on the mattress, Hureira could not see what Fa'iza was writing, but she could see the bold, virile curlicues, the drawings that appeared indiscernible from where she was lying" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 162). At various points, Fa'iza creates these "indiscernible drawings." Family members like Huraira often assume she is possessed by "djnns" or demons (p. 163), which they also believe cause her nightmares. As events unfold, it is clear that Fa'iza's drawings are part of a process of individuation—she attempts to recover and inscribe in her consciousness the disfigured image of her murdered brother, a memory the unconscious continually replays for her. Her love for the novella can be understood through this lens. She is described as often looking "at the lovelorn face of the girl on the cover and wishing she could disappear into the page and be woven… into… the story where there would only be love… and fragrant happy endings" (p. 66). This desire for 'fragrant happy endings' is the moment when her conscious and unconscious impulses tend to collaborate, portraying her as someone who refuses to succumb to the Apolline drive that sustains exception, unlike Binta and Reza. She allows her psychic processes free rein to find a balanced way forward, bringing healing to her troubled mind. Consequently, her interactions with friends and family often show her feeling relieved and lively. Though accusations of acting strangely or being possessed sometimes send her back into a moody state, her success in turning her brother's image into art always restores wholeness to her life. Her painting essentially brings her unconscious "grotesque fantasies" (Jung, 1969, p. 283) into her ego-consciousness. As she tells Binta, the purpose is that they will not "scare [her] as much anymore" (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 275). Thus, she becomes a character who not only creates "a new situation" but also "a new conscious attitude," which helps her rediscover "the essence of [her] personality" (Jung, 1969, p. 303). While her efforts challenge societal norms and create contradictions within her "dominant discourse" (Prakash, 1994, p. 288), Ibrahim uses them to highlight the importance of "willpower and determined optimism" (Wright, 1995, p. 19) in facing the crisis of individuation.

 Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that in Nigerian postcolonial fiction, the ideas of the individual and society are fluid and unstable. This instability stems not only from conflicting societal norms and

beliefs but also from competing claims to define the space and conditions of individual existence. When individuals reject these claims and assert their autonomy, conflicts often arise. In the novels of Ekwensi and Ibrahim, the paper agrees with other critics that these conflicts are primarily ethnic and religious, with characters seeking self-identity disrupting both internal and external worlds. However, drawing on Jung's and Nietzsche's theories of individuation highlights the challenges of this process, showing that constructing a postcolonial self or collective identity requires actively synthesising conscious and unconscious impulses, or the Apolline and Dionysian drives. The paper emphasises the importance of the narrative settings created by Ekwensi and Ibrahim, within which this synthesis takes place. It suggests that the crisis of self in postcolonial contexts results not only from societal pressures but also from the failure to rethink these beliefs to develop a social identity that acknowledges the interconnectedness of the individual and society. The portrayal of this idea in both older (*Iska*) and newer (*Season*) postcolonial narratives reveals that Nigerian postcolonial fiction serves as a "thought laboratory" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 148). Here, critics not only explore themes such as ethnic and religious conflicts, displacement, disillusionment, civil war, decolonisation, corruption, and social injustice, but also, through distinct theoretical lenses, interrogate the self in the midst of postcolonial realities and embark on an introspective journey towards self-discovery. This research highlights the potential for self-discovery by opening up the imaginative spaces created by Ekwensi and Ibrahim, where elements that promote social and cultural cohesion in postcolonial environments can be re-evaluated.

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