

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

**THE PRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE NOVELS OF CYPRIAN EKWENSI: A
STUDY OF *JAGUA NANA*, *ISKA* AND *JAGUA NANA'S DAUGHTER*.**

BY

OTI- DURO, NARDIA AFIA

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, KWAME
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NOVEMBER, 2015

DECLARATION

I certify that this is my own original work. Where references have been made to other people's views and analysis, full acknowledgements are given. This thesis has not been presented in whole or in part to another institution for any degree.

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DATE

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the men in my life: Kwadwo, Gideon, Jeremy and Daniel. Guys, you take my life closest to heaven on earth.

And to my family (especially my father), for all the prayers and the unflinching belief in me.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the Almighty God who has been my primary source of strength and motivation. To him be all glory and honour. To my parents Mr. and Mrs. Oti-Duro, I say, thank you so much for your prayers, pieces of advice, encouragement and support.

To my supervisor, the late Professor Stephen Kofi Okleme for his tireless reading of my work and for believing that I could do something challenging. God richly bless you, sir. To all and sundry who helped in diverse ways to make this work a success I say may the lord richly reward you.



ABSTRACT

Many literary artists have written about the position of women in real life and their role in literary works. Some of these writers both male and female have argued about the less desirable roles assigned women over the years in literature. However, the roles assigned women in literary works have changed and are continuously changing especially from the 1960's onwards.

This research analyses the presentation of women in three novels from Cyprian Ekwensi, a male author, taking into consideration the changing roles of the women in the novels. The project uses the literary theory of Virginia Woolf to show that women can be empowered by being given their privacy and financial independence. The project studies women who initially use what they have – their bodies – to gain what they want – financial independence. Progressively however, the women add professionalism to their sexual exploits.

The study concludes by making recommendations that women should pursue education to free themselves from the economic domination of men. Also, the study suggests that women should be willing to rebel against oppressive societal norms and expectations such as patriarchy and team up as and when necessary in order to achieve much in life.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to explore the role of the women in Ekwensi's work with particular reference to *Jagua Nana*, *Iska* and *Jagua Nana's Daughter*. The study seeks to find out whether the roles of women change or remain the same as the plots of the various novels conclude. This essay begins by exploring the background of Cyprian Ekwensi as a person and as a writer, a broadcaster, a film star and a dramatist for the British Broadcasting Corporation (B.B.C).

Cyprian Ekwensi, known to some as the 'Nigerian Defoe', has indeed become the enigma of modern African writing. In his preface to *Cyprian Ekwensi*, Ernest Emenyonu, one of the most popular Ekwensi critics, describes Ekwensi as 'more prolific than most of his contemporaries and more versatile than any other Nigerian author except Soyinka.'¹ Ekwensi's novel *People Of The City* was published four years before *Things Fall Apart* (which is erroneously regarded as the first modern novel of Africa) and was the first work by a Nigerian author to gain international acclaim, and also the first modern African novel to be published in Britain.

It is therefore no wonder that Ernest Emenyonu regards Ekwensi as 'the originator of the Onitsha Market pamphlet and the true grandfather of the Nigerian novel.' Additionally, in his address to the Association of Nigerian Authors entitled *Nationalism and the Creative Talent*, Emenyonu applauds the contributions of Cyprian Ekwensi and Amos Tutuola. He admits that these novelists are

two literary giants that Nigeria is lucky to have as her sons and should be proud to acknowledge without blushing at any forum anywhere in the world. These two writers have a prestigious place in the historical

development of not just Nigerian, but indeed, African literature.²

Cyprian Ekwensi, an Igbo, was born in Minna, Northern Nigeria, on 26th September, 1921.

After his primary education he went south in 1936 to receive his secondary education at the Government College Ibadan, and for over five years was part of the Yoruba culture. His records in the secondary school show that he had a high aptitude for literature and was a voracious reader. In the classroom, he performed distinctly well in English, Mathematics and Science. The only things that concerned many of his teachers and school mates were his quick ‘temper and occasional sullen moods’ according to a school report card.

His active life in the secondary school was to inspire some novellas with school campuses as the background. After his secondary education in Ibadan, Ekwensi went to Yaba Higher College (now Technical Institute), Lagos, but it was at Achimota College, Gold Coast (now Ghana), that he finished this part of his education. After his successful intermediate examinations in science, Ekwensi opted to study forestry at the School Of Forestry, Ibadan, in Western Nigeria. At the completion of his forestry studies in 1944, he was qualified for jobs in the fields of science and forestry. He was also proficient in the three major Nigerian languages – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba – as well as the language of his education, English which he was to use later in his writings.

In 1945 he began working as a forestry officer, supervising forest reserves for two years. It was during those two years, while wandering in the domains of animals and trees that Ekwensi decided to become a serious writer. Taking advantage of his wild and lonely environment he began to create adventure stories with forest backgrounds. Some of the stories written in this early time include *Banana Peel* (a man who was bequeathed a banana plantation), *The Tinted*

Scarf (a lumber man and his romantic infatuation), *Land Of Sani* (a man about to be dispossessed of his agricultural land because of urbanization).

He also wrote a number of Igbo folk tales he had learnt from his parents. These were published in 1947 as *Ikolo Wrestler and Other Ibo Tales*. In 1947 Ekwensi left forestry to become a teacher. His first assignment was at Igbobi College where he taught English, Biology and Chemistry. As a teacher, Ekwensi continued to write short stories and was soon recognized by the Public Relations Department (later Ministry of Information) which commissioned him to write and broadcast a weekly short story on Radio Nigeria. It was in this capacity that Ekwensi came to be nationally known every Saturday night as ‘Your Favourite Story Teller’. Ekwensi’s stories at this time were mainly derived from life in Lagos with the city as his setting and romantic love as his subject. The success of this programme awakened outside interest in Nigerian creative writing and helped to lay the foundation bricks of Ekwensi’s literary career. It led an official of the British Council in Nigeria to found the Scribblers’ Club, the first literary club of its type in the country. Its membership comprised among others Cyprian Ekwensi, T.M. Aluko (author of *One Man, One Matchet*), and two promising women writers – Mabel Dove-Danquah and Phebean Itayemi.

Their first literary output, a collection of fourteen short stories, was published in England in 1947 by Lutterworth Press under the title of *African New Writing*. Five of the stories were contributed by Cyprian Ekwensi. Besides leading to his introduction to the international community, the programme ‘Your Favourite Story Teller’ produced other effects of significance to Ekwensi’s literary career. Apparently, a Nigerian entrepreneur in publishing, Chuks (of Chuks Bookshop, Yaba) commissioned Ekwensi to write for him a story similar to those he had heard on the radio, which he could publish and sell locally. Hence in the last

weekend of February 1948, Ekwensi wrote *When Love Whispers*, a short story which was soon published by Tabansi Press in Onitsha.

This light romance was one of the earliest works of fiction in English in Nigeria and may have helped to inspire the popular Onitsha pamphlet literature. Before *When Love Whispers* went out of print in the fifties, it had been reprinted several times and sold more than 2000 copies. Ekwensi, surprised by this success, spent much of his time in Lagos collecting material about people and incidents, some of which became the basis of some of his later works.

In 1949, Ekwensi left Igbobi College for the Lagos School of Pharmacy where he taught pharmacognosy and pharmaceuticals. Along with his teaching assignments, he wrote and published in the newspapers and featured regularly on the 'West African Voices' broadcast by the Nigerian Broadcasting Service every Wednesday. In 1951 he won a government scholarship for further studies in pharmacy at the Chelsea School of Pharmacy, London University.

It was in the ship that took him to England that Ekwensi achieved his first major literary work. He began stringing together those short stories he had broadcast on Radio Nigeria into one long story that was meant to be entitled *Lajide of Lagos* after an obnoxious character in a story about extortionist landlords. At the end of the fourteen days abroad, however, it was as *People of the City* and not *Lajide of Lagos* that the finished manuscript emerged. The finished work was published by Andrew Dakers in 1954. His immense success in the field of literature can be attributed to his ability to write realistically about current issues affecting ordinary people especially the problems that confront rural people who move to the city in search of greener pastures. In 1955, Ekwensi now towards the end of his medical studies, was attached to Old Church Hospital, Rumford (Essex), as a pharmacy assistant. In this position he combined

medical practice with intensive literary activities. He tested and analysed orders sent in by manufacturers, but outside the laboratory he wrote and broadcast plays and stories for the B.B.C Overseas Service.

Once in 1954 his voice was ‘dubbed’ on to the sound track of the film *Man of Africa* which was shown at the Venice Film Festival that year. It was therefore not surprising that an article entitled ‘The Chemist and the Author’ was published in the *West African Review* of

June 1956 about Ekwensi’s multiple interests. The article pointed out that,

There are two Cyprian Ekwensis. Cyprian Ekwensi, the Nigerian novelist, broadcaster, short story writer, the man who lives in the world of ink and literature – and Cyprian Ekwensi, the pharmacist, the man of the white coat, dispensing medicine, sterilizing injections and controlling drugs.³

As time went on Ekwensi moved closer and closer to the media. He took part in plays on the stage and radio and wrote film scripts. One of his film scripts which was made into a film was entitled *Stretch A Little, Bend A Little*. It was the story of a man with two wives, one very tall and the other very short, and the husband had to adjust himself to please both without losing his identity.

In 1956 when the film *Nigeria Greets the Queen* was produced, Ekwensi was one of the commentators. A year later, he appeared as a film star in Ghana, when he performed the part of a university professor in a film marking Ghanaian independence. Before he left England in 1956 Ekwensi had completed two as – yet unpublished novels – *For a Roll of Parchment* and *Beware Bight Of Benin*. The former, a story of distorted love, concerns an elderly Nigerian who goes to England to study law. While there he marries a white girl. He returns later to Nigeria only to find his family dispersed during the long years in England. His wife,

too, is unable to adjust to life in Nigeria. The latter, *Beware Bight Of Benin* is also a historical novel which predates *People of the City*. The story is set in both Nigeria and Fernando Po. The heroine of the story, a chief's daughter from Eastern Nigeria, is taken to Lagos as a slave in the 1840's; she marries Chief Akintoye who is forced into exile by the powerful and ruthless King Kosoko.

This novel is what most critics referred to as Ekwensi's 'only attempt at a full length historical novel.' On Ekwensi's eventual return to Nigeria, the medical profession and the news media competed for his services, as he had by now become by training a pharmacist and by inclination a seasoned broadcaster and writer. Initially, he entered the medical service as a staff pharmacist, but soon quit for the broadcasting service. Later, he went back to London, this time to train as a broadcaster at the B.B.C under Leslie Gilliam, the man who originated the radio features as a form. After the training, he returned to Nigeria as a professional in broadcasting and became head of features, Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. In the next three years Ekwensi seemed to have been so involved with broadcasting that he did very little writing. Only two children's stories were published during this period – *Drummer Boy* (1960) and *Passport of Mallam Ilia* (1960).

In 1961, a year after Nigerian independence, Ekwensi left radio to become Director of Information, Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos. His new position meant he had to be in charge of the Nigerian multiple media including films, radio, television, printing, newspapers and public relations. In that same year, he published *Jagua Nana*, his most famous novel by far. It seems *Jagua Nana* was inspired by the new spirit of nationalism which arose in Nigeria after she gained her independence. The novel has no white character, and the heroine, Jagua, though a prostitute, admits no European customer in any guise. The dominant language in the

novel is also pidgin, which seems to be an assertion of the importance of how West Africans do talk and act and feel on their territory, unconcerned by alien standards of speech. Undoubtedly, Ekwensi's style in the book depicts the confidence of a writer who has finally discovered the form that suits his temperament best.

The resounding reception of *Jagua Nana* by the literary world also equipped Ekwensi with new strength and the next five years became the most fruitful of his literary career. Many western critics in particular praised the novel as indicative of Ekwensi's growing mastery of the novel genre. For example in a review entitled 'A New Regionalism' *Jagua Nana* was described as;

A very good novel in its own right and one of the first to give us a truly authoritative picture of a little-known side of the new Africa... Mr. Ekwensi has dealt with themes of great importance and though he has not solved them... he has depicted them eloquently and with compassion.⁴

Vladimir Klima sees *Jagua Nana* as 'surely one of his [Ekwensi's] best creations' and adds that 'no other Nigerian author would present Jagua Nana's story like Ekwensi'.⁵ Una MacLean in welcoming the novel also states that

He [Ekwensi] now conveys, in his confident mastery of the medium, the essence of West African existence, and invites comparison, in his choice of subject and his vigorous use of language, with some of the best West Indian writers such as Roger Mais. In Cyprian Ekwensi, West Africa has at last found a spokesman who is not ashamed to speak with the authentic voice of the people.⁶

Subsequently, three major novels followed in quick succession – *Burning Grass* (1962), a pastoral novel about the nomadic Fulani written a decade earlier, *Beautiful Feathers* (1964),

a thematic novel on Pan-African movements, and *Iska* (1966), a semi-prophetic novel about the Nigerian Civil War. There were four collections of short stories namely, *Rainmaker and Other Stories* (1965), *The Great Elephant Bird* (1965), *The Boa Suitor* (1966), and *Lokotown and Other Stories* (1966). Additionally, there were four children's readers; *Yaba Roundabout Murder* (1962), *African Nights Entertainment* (1962), *Trouble In Form Six* (1966) and *Juju Rock* (1966). Most of these published works were manuscripts which for years had been buried in drawers, lockers and cupboards.

When the war ended in Nigeria in 1969, Ekwensi returned to his job in Eastern Nigeria as the Director of Information Services. During the war, he served as Chairman, Bureau for External Publicity for Biafra (1967 – 1969), and produced only one work during the Biafra period, 'Africhaos' which ended up unpublished. The novel was supposed to be an indictment of the Soviet Union and Western powers for their involvement in the Nigerian crisis. After the war, Ekwensi was not reappointed to his post as Federal Director of Information and he went into private business at Enugu, the capital of East Central State. A short story, 'Minus Everything' (in the first issue of *Okike* edited by Chinua Achebe), was the first thing he published after the end of the war. He also helped form the now powerful Association of Nigerian Authors and was awarded a national honour of the Member Of The Order Of the Federal Republic.

However, Ekwensi died on 4th November, 2007 in Enugu, where he underwent an operation for an undisclosed ailment. The Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), having intended to present him with an award on November 16, 2007, converted the honor to a posthumous award to acknowledge him as the first Nigerian to garner international attention with his novel *People*

of the City. He died at the age of eighty -six (86) having published over forty books across literary genres as well as radio and television scripts and working on his biography.

In admiration of the great literary talents of Ekwensi, Emenyonu posits;

[have we ever paused] to ask ourselves about Cyprian Ekwensi's contributions to the short story in Africa or his contributions to children's fiction? How many other Nigerian novels have documented for us with passion and sensitivity the social idiosyncrasies and cultural heritage of the Cattle Fulani in Nigeria as did *Burning Grass*? How many Nigerian novels today have given us with equal pathos the innocence and indulgence of the handicapped children's world as *The Drummer Boy*?⁷

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There is a widely held notion that women worldwide (like the traditional Cinderella) are 'dependent creatures who without question or doubt accept the commands of their patriarchal society.' However, women, feminists declare,

must define themselves and assert their own voices in the arenas of politics, society, education, and the arts. By personally committing themselves to fostering such change, feminists hope to create a society in which not only the male but also the female voice is equally valued.

8

This study is based on the feminist theory espoused by Virginia Woolf, a feminist. In her '*A Room of One's Own*' she argues that women are unable to achieve artistic and intellectual laurels because they lack the financial capability with which to develop their talents. In '*A Room of One's Own*' Woolf theorizes that 'Shakespeare's sister' will never flourish because she cannot afford a room of her own.

The 'room' is Woolf's symbol of the privacy and autonomy needed to isolate one's self from the world and its social limitations in order to find time to think and write. This kind of loss of artistic capability is the result of society's opinion of women as inferior. Woolf argues that women must challenge the prevailing, false cultural norms about their identity. If women were financially and educationally empowered, they would be able to perform better in more competitive roles.

Simone de Beauvoir also another feminist, in her *The Second Sex* insists that women must see themselves as autonomous beings and not relative to man. Because of this idea, de Beauvoir argues that women must define themselves outside the social constructs in which they find themselves (which is largely patriarchal) and refuse to be known as 'the other.' Where it becomes difficult for them to break out, de Beauvoir advises that women should use what they have to get what they want – including sex.

Mary Wollstonecraft in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* which states that

till women are led to exercise their understandings, they should not be satirized for their attachments to rakes; or even for being rakes at heart, when it appears to be the inevitable consequence of their education.⁹

That is to say women behave the way they do because of the kind of education they receive. So according to her, for women to behave better, they should be given better education as a form of empowerment.

Emenyonu declared in the late 1970's that writers were yet to discover 'the other woman' in society. He called for 'a more courageous attempt at the updating of the female image in contemporary Nigerian fiction. This will be the woman of the 1980's.'⁹ This essay is therefore

an attempt to discover ‘the other woman in society’ using the major novels of Ekwensi to test whether this ‘other woman’, the ‘assertive, individualistic, daring, and sometimes outright careless” woman exists in Ekwensi’s work as she does in the novels of Ama Ata Aidoo, Bessie Head, Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta among others. This essay would attempt to answer some study questions on the role of women in literary works. Some of these questions include ones like; do women like the stereotypical roles assigned them in literary works? Are they comfortable with these roles? Have they made any conscious efforts to change the roles assigned them? And most importantly, has there been any significant changes in the roles assigned women in literary works especially novels?

METHODOLOGY

This essay is purely based on library studies and findings. Thus, this thesis focuses on the major novels written by Ekwensi with *Jagua Nana*, *Iska* and *Jagua Nana’s Daughter* as the primary research materials.

This researcher has read most of the works of Ekwensi and will draw references from any of the works whenever necessary for a holistic approach to this project. Also, references from well acclaimed Ekwensi critics like Ernest Emenyonu, John Povey and other African and European critics would be used in this research paper.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter one of this essay delves into critical works about women and their roles in African literary works. The second chapter will extensively discuss the roles of the women in *Jagua Nana* with special reference to the heroine’s “assertive, individualistic, daring and sometimes

outright careless” nature towards the goals she wants to achieve in her quest for financial and sexual independence. It is an examination of the heroine as a woman who is a woman of her own right and not just an appendage of the man she loves. Also, the chapter will deal with the style Ekwensi uses to put his theme across.

The third chapter of this paper will undertake a study of the novel *Iska* with respect to Ekwensi’s portrayal of women in the novel and the style he employs with particular reference to how his style helps to bring out the roles of the women in the text. The reason for the study of the style is to establish the issues treated in the texts as ideas that are more literary than social. The fourth and final chapter of this project will handle the novel *Jagua*

Nana’s Daughter.

In the same way, we would look at the presentation of women in the novel and the style Ekwensi uses to present the women. In looking at *Jagua Nana’s Daughter*, we would look specifically at how education and female cohesion helps women in their quest to gain freedom from domineering man.

Then a comparative study of the roles of the women in the selected texts will be briefly carried out. The reason for this comparison is to find out whether all the women have a common trait throughout the novels or whether they go about achieving their aims differently.

Finally, the essay will highlight the contributions of Ekwensi to African literature and the body of world literature as a whole. Also, observations and recommendations that were made in the course of the study will be brought to the fore.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE SUPPOSED PLACE OF THE WOMAN IN THE WORLD

Women, especially African women have suffered severely for so many centuries because of the 'master-servant' relationship certain unfair cultural customs and traditions have thrust on them. Some of these African cultural practices and customs include the widowhood rites (where a widow is made to suffer immensely after the death of her husband), the 'trokosi' or the vestal virgin (where a young virgin girl is sent into servitude at a shrine to pay for ageold sins), female circumcision (the cutting of the clitoris of the girl child with the hope of making

her chaste) among others. In all these African cultural practices, the woman or girl child is treated as an object of ridicule and disgust making her believe she is sub-human. Apart from all these, there is the major issue of education. Women, especially in Africa are denied the opportunity of formal education because it is believed that the woman's place is in the kitchen and so she is tutored to be a home maker and keeper from the day of birth. As

Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch says, 'it is widely believed that a woman's place is in the kitchen and not in public life, hence females are not encouraged to attain higher levels of education'.¹ Chief among all these cultural traditions and practices that have subjugated women over the years is the age-old and still existent patriarchy. The practice of patriarchy refers to the system where men are unfairly elevated above the female sex. That is to say, there is the notion that man is on top of and better than woman in all things. This results in placing women at secondary, marginalized positions as the servants of men.

As Mercy Oduyoye puts it in her book *African Women and Patriarchy*, 'Patriarchy exists wherever one finds systematic and normative inequalities and subordination.'² Patriarchy is thus an institutionalized ideology. Women living in areas where patriarchy rules therefore have been condemned to suffer in silence. They have been made to accept as true the idea that the good woman is the one who plays these traditional subservient responsibilities without complaint.

A REVIEW OF SOME MAJOR LITERARY WORKS CONCERNING THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Historically, feminists declare that the idea of gender discrimination began with the Biblical narration that blamed the fall of man on Eve and not Adam. Then, gender discrimination was

also linked with the ancient Greeks like Aristotle, who it is said, asserted in his *Politics* that ‘the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled.’³ With the passage of time, poets and other influential people and teachers also took up this issue of gender discrimination. Charles Darwin, one of the world’s most famous historians, is said to have supported the claim that physically, intellectually and artistically, women are known to be inferior to men and therefore, women are a ‘characteristic of ...a past and lower state of civilization.’ Tertullian is also known to have asserted that women ‘are the devil’s gateways: you are the unsealer of that forbidden tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law...you destroyed so easily God’s image, man.’⁴

According to feminists, history was written mainly by men and about men’s activities in the public sphere – war, politics, education and administration. Women were usually excluded and when mentioned, they were usually portrayed in stereotypical roles such as wives, daughters, mothers and mistresses.

Otherwise, they were given the unpleasant roles as the ‘trouble causers’ in the plots of literary and other works. Annette Kolodny, an American feminist, argues that, history itself is patriarchal in nature because it narrates the story of men, ‘his story’ and totally rejects the achievements of women. Therefore, women should be given the chance to write their story that they can christen ‘her story.’

In order to write ‘herstory’, however, women must first find a means to gain their voice in the midst of numerous voices – particularly male voices – clamoring for attention in society.⁵

As acknowledged by Miriam Schneir, Simone de Beauvoir wrote that Christine de Pizan, who wrote *Epître au Dieu d'Amour* (Epistle to the God of Love), was the first woman to

‘take up her pen in defense of her sex’ in the 15th century. In her work, she furiously challenged misogyny (negative attitudes towards women) and the stereotypes prevalent in the male-dominated realm of art. She argued that women are far better than what men portray in their works and said that, given the chance, women would prove equally capable as men. Though her work was good, it was not paid enough attention by the maledominated society.

Then, Mary Wollstonecraft published one of the first feminist treatises, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in the 18th century. In the treatise, she advocated the social and moral equality of the sexes and argued that, women should not allow a male dominated society to intimidate them but that they should stand up for their rights and take the lead in rejecting the idea of their inferiority. Wollstonecraft’s treatise sparked off the idea of feminism.

However World War I and its attendant problems slowed down the work of the early feminists. It was not till the progressive era of the early 1900s that the major roots of feminism began to flourish.

In 1929, Virginia Woolf published her *A Room of One’s Own*, another treatise that echoed feminist tenets. In her work, she asked why women seldom appear in history. She said that, women are often depicted in poems and other works but are actually missing in real life. She questioned why men treated women as inferiors and therefore forced them to hide their artistic talents. Woolf argued that, women must reject this social construct and find their own identity. Like de Pizan, Wollstonecraft, Woolf, and de Beauvoir, Judith Viorst a well known author of children’s literature, published a revised version of the fairy tale

Cinderella. In her version entitled *And then the Prince Knelt down and Tried the Glass*

Slipper on Cinderella's Foot, she presents another Cinderella that is entirely unlike the traditional fairy tale 'Cinderella'. The well known Cinderella of the fairy tale is

beautiful but poor. Treated cruelly by her ugly stepsisters and her arrogant, scheming, self assertive stepmother, Cinderella dutifully cleans the family home while she quietly weeps... bearing with patience her trials.⁶

This Cinderella is the very embodiment of goodness; being so kind that her kindness extends to animals. She is loved fiercely by the mice and the birds in and around the house she lives in. She is the one who feeds the animals and cares for them whenever any of them gets hurt or falls sick.

And whenever someone offends her she bears the pain and refuses to hurt the person back.

This stereotype is the woman Molara Ogundipe-Leslie labels as the 'Earth Mother.' That kind of woman is

the figure of the sweet mother , the all-accepting creature of fecundity and self-sacrifice. This figure is often conflated with mother Africa, with eternal and abstract beauty and with inspiration, artistic or otherwise as in much Francophone poetry ⁷

The nature of the traditional Cinderella is very well depicted in literary works across the globe.

For example in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Nora the wife of Helmer is 'a doll, a skylark, a fine pampered lady' who would not do anything without her husband's approval or help. She is the submissive lady willing to suffer in silence in order to keep her marriage intact and peaceful. She confesses

If you say so Torvald...I wouldn't do anything that you don't like...Torvald I can't do anything without you to help me... but I can't do anything unless you help me Torvald...criticize me, and show me where I'm wrong, the way you always do.⁸

Mara, Akobi's wife in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* is no different. She is the docile wife who would not even raise a protest about how she is badly treated. She bears all her suffering in silence because she does not want to shame her father who gave her out in marriage and her whole purpose in life is to make sure her husband is happy. She says for example;

...I slept on the concrete floor on just my thin mat while he slept all alone on the large grass mattress since, after all, mother had taught me that a wife was there for a man for one thing, and that was to ensure his well-being which included his pleasure. And if demands like that would give him pleasure, even if just momentarily, then it was my duty as his wife to fulfill them... I still regarded my suffering as part of being a wife, and endured it just like I would menstrual pain.⁹

The same applies to women like Mrs. Ife who is so content with the dominated position that she totally rejects the idea of feminism in Bode Osayin's *Woman* when she objects that Ogbeni, a male character in the play, should help her out in the kitchen: 'Kitchen is a woman's world', she said, 'Forget about women emancipation, which I do not share. As battle ground is for men, so is kitchen for women'.¹⁰ Ma Shingayi in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* is another example of the African 'Earth Mother.'

Ma Shingayi is a woman who believes that her condition is as a result of her gender and her race. She even prepares the mind of her daughter to suffer in the future because she is female and she is black. She tells Tambudzai,

this business of womanhood is a heavy burden, she said. How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it's like that you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated. When there are sacrifices to be

made, you are the one who has to make them....these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa! What will help you my child, is to learn carry your burdens with strength.¹¹

The final docile female worth mentioning is Emecheta's heroine, Nnu Ego in *The Joys Of Motherhood*. She is denied the love of her life, Amatokuwu, because she fails to give him a child. She is thus made to settle for Nnaife, a man she deeply resents, but is indebted to because he is able to make her pregnant. Consequently, she submits to him for making her 'a woman and a mother.' Nnaife takes advantage of his ability to make her pregnant to humble and rule her.

What did you say? Did I not pay your bride price? Am I not your owner? You know the airs you put on are getting rather boring...if you are going to be my wife, you must accept my work, my way of life. I will not have it any other way. You must understand that.¹²

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, authors of *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) call all these compliant women 'the angel in the house' women. According to Gilbert and Gubar,

if a woman is depicted as the angel in the house, she supposedly realizes that her physical and material comforts are gifts from her husband. Knowing this fact, her goal in life is to please her husband, to attend to his every comfort and to obey him.¹³

That is to say the kind of woman who lives to care for her husband and children like society expects of her. In patriarchal terms, she is the best type of woman because she does not rise up against patriarchy or the societal expectations of her.

She will not speak unless spoken to, she is supposed to act frail and fragile and she should not (under any circumstances) display her brilliant ideas especially in front of the male species because it is not her duty to do so. She is just required by society to sit around and ‘look pretty’ and kind like the traditional Cinderella of the fairy tale. Opposed to the traditional Cinderella is Viorst’s Cinderella, a woman who has views of her own.

In the light of day, she observes that the prince does not seem to be as attractive as he was the other night at the ball. Asserting her own independence she pretends the glass slipper does not fit. Accordingly, there will be no marriage, for Cinderella herself has decided she does not want to marry the prince.¹⁴

Shockingly, Viorst’s Cinderella rejects the handsome, wealthy prince who is supposed to rescue her from her troubles and give her life the ‘happily ever after end.’ She refuses to be chosen by the prince because she wants to do the choosing. She refuses to be the ‘nonsignificant other’. She does not want to comply with the dictates of society that an ‘angel’ should be rescued by a handsome and wealthy man who will make all her suffering worthwhile.

Viorst’s Cinderella blandly rejects the cultural stereotypes that society has so often imposed on her. She rejects the notion that ‘a woman may gain the whole world but she would have lost her soul if she doesn’t become a male’s extension or somebody’s mother.’¹⁵ Women like Viorst’s Cinderella are the women patriarchy labels ‘the mad woman in the attic, the monster,’ or ‘the great American bitch.’ That is to say, she is the woman who has refused to serve her husband and children, as well as go along with the stipulations that society has laid out for her. Such a woman is considered a freakish irregularity who is visibly sexually fallen. In principle then, Viorst’s recreated Cinderella proves that

the new woman represents a theory of personhood where the individual exists as an independent entity rather than her kinship relations, where she has a responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than accept her role, where she has indefinable value rather than quantitative financial worth, and where she must reason about her own values rather than fit into a stereotyped tradition.¹⁶

Just as the traditional fairy tale Cinderella occurs in literature, there are also strong women like Viorst's Cinderella in literary texts across the world. These are women who are willing to reject the confines that society has placed them in, women with opinions of their own, women who refuse to be the "non significant other." These women have a high esteem for their sex and work hard for people, especially the male sex to recognize them. Through these strong women portrayed in literary texts,

the picture of the cheerful contented female complacently accepting her lot is replaced by that of a woman who is powerfully aware of the unfairness of the system and who longs to be fulfilled in herself, to be a full human being, not merely somebody else's appendage.¹⁷

For example in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Kristina Linde is a woman who is a typical Viorst Cinderella. She is very good at office work (a typically male dominated field), iron willed and independent. When Nora has a problem, she is the one who confronts Krogstad on Nora's behalf and even when she falls in love, she wants marriage on her terms. She prefers loneliness to a marriage of perpetual servitude.

Another writer who presents the strong woman in her works is Ama Ata Aidoo. She seems to re-echo her convictions about women through her strong female characters. When she is questioned about why she always presents strong female characters, she tells Adeola James:

I am definitely committed in my own way to the development of women. On the other hand, I wouldn't want to go boasting that I was flag – waving. It seems to me natural that one should see women as they are operating in their lives. I've never believed that women are soft at all. I think this basic notion of women as just human beings, some weak and some strong.¹⁸

Hence she creates women who will not allow men or their society to subjugate them. For example, in *Changes*, Esi Sekyi leaves her husband Oko and marries Ali because she feels Oko demands too much of her. In a society where patriarchy rules, this is considered sacrilege (for a woman to divorce a man) but she does not care and places her happiness above pleasing society.

Amaka, the heroine of Flora Nwapa's *One Is Enough* is another strong female character. Though she is thrown out of her husband Obiora's house for failing to give birth, she does not allow that to hinder her progress in life. She reflects on her fate: 'God had deprived her of the greatest blessing bestowed on a woman, the joy of being a mother.' But she further questions herself 'was that really the end of the world? Was she useless to the world if she were unmarried?'

Amaka realizes that the route to her independence is economic power; using her 'bottom power' to amass wealth. In the end, not only does Amaka enjoy life fully, she also gets twin boys by a catholic priest. But when he proposes marriage, Amaka wants none of it. She tells Father Mclaid,

I don't want to be a wife...a mistress, yes, with a lover, yes of course, but not a wife. There is something in that word that does not suit me. As a wife, I am never free. I am a shadow of myself. As a wife I am almost impotent. I am in prison, unable to advance in body or soul. Something gets hold of me as a wife and destroys me.

When I rid myself of Obiora things started working for me. I don't want to go back to my wife days. No I am through with husbands. I said farewell to husbands the first day I came to Lagos.¹⁹

Thus by rejecting Mclaid's proposal of marriage, Amaka has moved out of the shadows and in so doing has lost the impotence or powerlessness of the traditional African woman she was at the start of the book. The final strong female character worth mentioning is the heroine of Emecheta's *Double Yoke*, Nko. Nko is a Nigerian student at one of the universities in Nigeria hence she is formally educated.

Nko labours under the double yoke of tradition and liberation unlike Ba's Ramatoulaye and Nwapa's Amaka who move from a traditional existence to a new liberated life. She discloses her feelings to her mother

Oh mother, I want to have both worlds. I want to be an academician and I want to be a quiet, nice and obedient wife. [But later on she realizes that] she must either have her degree and be a bad, loose, feminist, shameless career woman who would fight men all her life; or do without her degree and be a good loving wife and Christian woman...oh blast it all she was going to have both. She was going to manoeuvre these men to give her both.²⁰

There are a number of noteworthy things about the heroines in the above mentioned texts. They are women who are willing to stand up for their rights against all odds. Their determination is unabated and they are willing to manipulate or influence the men they meet to give them what they want.

Sometimes these women even go as far as sleeping with men like Amaka does. The women seem to have the same opinion that men wield all the power in the African society, hence they can only get what they want by consorting with the powerful enemy. The point that man is the

enemy is clearly shown in the way the men control the women in the various texts. The men consider the women their properties because they paid their bride price and therefore they do with them whatever they deem fit.

However, from the 1960's to date the practice of assigning the basic roles of housekeeping and childbearing to women in literature, especially African literature, has changed and is still changing. Women are now being presented as people with formal education who are able to, in their own ways, contribute towards the development of their individual communities and their countries as a whole. They are now not isolated from the social, political and economic lives of their countries because they are focused and determined.

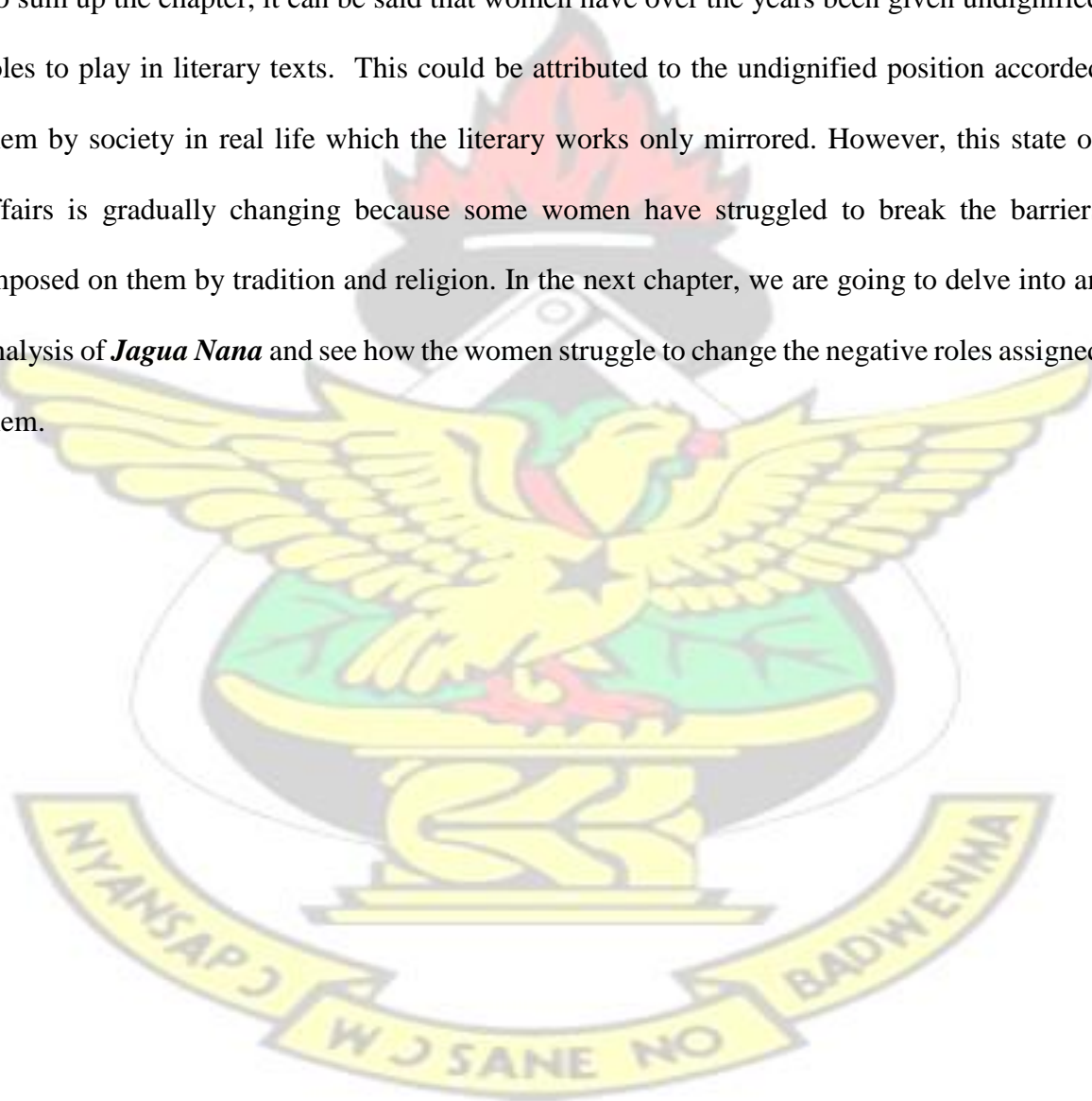
With education and financial independence as the key to empowerment, the women in the literary texts have managed to free themselves from male domination. The few who are still trapped in the confines of tradition and culture are being helped by those who have surmounted the challenge of patriarchy.

Cyprian Ekwensi is one male writer who has through his works struggled to give power [no matter how small] to the African woman. Though people have criticized him for pushing women into disgusting roles [prostitution in *Jagua Nana* and *People of the City*] he is one African writer who allows his female characters to be progressive and hopeful of changing the demeaning opinions society may have about them. Ekwensi's women are even allowed to choose the men they want to move with unlike the women already mentioned who did not have that opportunity.

Hence, Ekwensi's women in the selected novels [who are going to be intensively looked at in the succeeding chapters] prove that women can change their roles from the traditional subservient women that have existed in past times, to women who are aware of the unfairness

of the system and are willing to work hard to change it. These are women who do not accept the roles carved for them by men, society and some outdated customs and traditions. There is no doubt that by the time one finishes reading this thesis, one will realize that, roles played by female characters have changed and are continually changing positively very much as happens in real life situations.

To sum up the chapter, it can be said that women have over the years been given undignified roles to play in literary texts. This could be attributed to the undignified position accorded them by society in real life which the literary works only mirrored. However, this state of affairs is gradually changing because some women have struggled to break the barriers imposed on them by tradition and religion. In the next chapter, we are going to delve into an analysis of *Jagua Nana* and see how the women struggle to change the negative roles assigned them.



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CHAPTER TWO JAGUA NANA: WOMEN IN SEARCH OF ECONOMIC AND SEXUAL INDEPENDENCE

As mentioned in the previous chapter, women have been roughly treated throughout a greater part of history. It was also established in the previous chapter that women suffered greatly because most of them lacked the educational and economic resources that would enable them challenge their inferior position and alter it to a more dignified position. My interest in this

chapter is to look out for female characters in *Jagua Nana* who have dared to resist male domination and attempted to bring positive changes in the hitherto restricted roles female characters played in some African novels.

Generally, women have made a conscious effort to infiltrate into more male dominated fields like law, banking, business and construction among others in real life. Some have even gone a step further to enter into the very “male guarded” field of politics. By entering into politics, these women have got the opportunity to actively contribute to discussions pertaining to national development.

In 2005 there were 12 female national leaders in the world, including 8 heads of state (3 monarchs and 5 presidents) and 24 heads of government (prime ministers). In 2005 women made up almost 16 percent of legislative bodies worldwide, compared to 11 percent in 1999 and 9 percent in 1987.¹

Examples of such women still in active politics include President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Hilary Clinton of the USA.

These few women have not only ventured into an otherwise hostile field but through education and strength of mind they have not only survived but have also gone ahead to make their marks. Though these women have done extremely well in their individual fields most people have criticized them saying

that a woman acting in a powerful way is behaving like a man...femininity has been associated with such qualities as weakness, passivity, dependence, emotionality, irrationality, subservience, the body and temptation, while masculinity is associated with potency, action, independence, rationality, domination, the mind, and moral purpose, men who exercise power typically risk no reduction of their manliness in the eyes of others. Women with power risk being viewed as unwomanly or unfeminine.²

Just as literature mirrors society, women's roles in literature have been revised (if not entirely changed). This is so because, what used to be written about them during the colonial era and the early part of the post colonial era has been greatly condemned as a narrow way of looking at women and therefore writers have gradually altered their characterization (especially of women) to a very great extent to mirror what pertains in real life.

This especially refers to novels and other literary materials written from the 1970's and beyond. One realizes that female characters are given more dignified roles in the works written in these years. Female characters are no more given the blanket roles of the 'Earth Mother' (otherwise known as 'the angel in the house') or the 'great American bitch' (also known as the 'incorrigible witch or shrew'). On the other hand, they are portrayed just as they occur in real life, some weak and some strong; some willing to be liberal and openminded in order to change their situations and some not so progressive quietly accepting their lot.

There are women in *Jagua Nana*, *Iska* and *Jagua Nana's Daughter* who have been able to resist male subjugation and perpetual control by gaining education and financial independence.

They are progressive women who assert themselves through hard work and resolution. These women work to change their destinies and those of women in general.

Nevertheless, there are also a few of the women in the selected texts who are contented with the roles assigned them by society and are not willing to stand up and call for a change in their lifestyles. In the discussion of the writer's presentation of the females in the texts, there will first be a brief summary of the novel *Jagua Nana* and an examination of the different women within the text. From there, there will be a synopsis of *Iska* and the presentation of the women

in the text tackled. Finally, the synopsis of *Jagua Nana's Daughter* will also be given and the presentation of the women examined. In the assessment of the role of the women in the individual texts, there will be an examination of the heroines first before other women with sterling characters worth noticing will be assessed. To conclude the chapter, the author's purpose for his characterization and whether or not he achieves his purpose will be mentioned. To begin with *Jagua Nana*, it is very clear that the action is centered mainly on night street activities in Lagos, and especially at the Tropicana discotheque. *Jagua Nana* recounts the quest of an ageing Nigerian woman to find adventure and economic independence. The book is an eponymous novel, that is to say, it is a novel in which the protagonist's name is the title of the book. So, it is obvious that it is Jagua Nana's actions and inactions that are going to move the plot of the story. As John Povey puts it,

...the plot centers firmly round the coordinating force of this woman's character. *People of the City* only appeared to centre around Sango; in fact it did so in a merely picaresque way – things happened to him and he was often the mere spectator. Jagua causes the situations to happen.³

According to him, 'the spelling of the heroine's name is important. She is *Jagua*. When she is really girded up she is *Jagwa*, and *in extremis* may even be called *Jaagwa*.'⁴ The heroine's real name is Nana, but she acquires the nickname Jagua sometimes pronounced Jagwa due to her fierce and sophisticated nature.

...they called her Jagua because of her good looks and stunning fashions. They said she was Ja-gwa after the famous British prestige car...you know de fashion,das why dem call you Jag-wa.⁴

In a way Jagua's exceptional beauty (even at her age) reduces her to a sexual symbol. Whenever men see her, their craving for her is almost insane and they can do nothing until they have slept with her. Though one may view this portrayal of Jagua as a sex symbol as a negative method of portraying women, Jagua uses this tool to her advantage in the novel. Jagua also has commendable characteristics as a woman struggling to assert herself despite all the odds against her.

To begin with Jagua is a strong, progressive woman. By a personal decision, she leaves her husband (a Coal City man) and subsequently her marital home. What prompts Jagua to leave her husband is something that a 'traditional woman' will describe as flimsy. Jagua feels the man is not up to her daring standard. According to her,

God knows, she wanted to settle down and become the good wife.
But she was bored. She was *Jagwa*, and the man was not *Jagwa-Ful*.
His main interest was his petrol-filling station and garage...but he never
took her to parties, and would not dress well, for fear the money would
leak away. In no way did his ideas for living attract her. (p.167)

Jagua decides that her happiness is more important than pleasing societal expectations of her.

For that reason, she leaves the boring life laid down for her as a married woman for the bright lights of the city and the fast life it offers.

She found that she had obeyed her parents but now they were not there to see her misery and they would never understand her longing, the hot thirst for adventure in her blood. She refused to adapt herself to his humdrum life and she wondered how she had been able to remain with him as she did for over three years. (p. 167)

For a woman, to leave a respectable position as a married woman for an undesirable single status was and is still considered sacrilege according to traditional values. Hence, Jagua is really tough to consider her happiness above that of societal expectations of her.

As Maria Rosa Cutrefelli puts it in *Women of Africa: The Roots of Oppression*:

the new characteristically urban figure of the maleunprotected, husbandless single woman has significantly taken shape: and in the light of the traditional view of celibacy as a social failure, even a crime against society, the consciously deliberate rejection of marriage on the part of an increasing number of urban women appears to be a courageous indeed a daring deed.⁵

So for Jagua to consider her happiness as more important than her position as a disgruntled married woman is considered commendable by feminist standards. It is seen as resistance to male domination. An additional justification that prompts Jagua to leave her husband is that she cannot tolerate the idea of a rival in her marriage.

Having failed in her primary duty as a wife to deliver a baby (preferably a baby boy) for her husband, she could not stand by and watch another woman succeed in doing what she could not do. Unlike traditionally devout and docile women who are willing to stay and use terms like 'our husband' and 'our lord' just so they can still bear the title of married women Jagua feels too dignified to share her husband with another woman. Perhaps it is the same reason for her refusal to marry Chief Ofubara later in the novel.

Just like Nnu Ego of Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* who prefers to silently suffer the scorn of being labeled a 'childless woman', by her first husband Amatokuwu and silently endures the maltreatment of her second husband Nnaife because he has brought her fulfillment and removed her shame as a 'barren witch,' Jagua could not stand the shame and subsequent ill-treatment from her husband because she could not give birth for him. Neither could Jagua stand the insults and abuses rained on barren wives by their mothers and sisters-in-law as happens in the case of Flora Nwapa's Amaka in *One Is Enough* who grovels before her mother-in-law (at the start of the novel) in total feminine submission and dependence begging

not to be thrown out of her marital home for failing to produce a child after six years of marriage to her husband Obiora.

However unlike Amaka (*One is Enough*), Jagua feels she is worth more than the primary motherhood and caregiver role assigned to her. She feels she could do better with her life than just marriage and childbearing. She confesses;

What grieved her most was that no child came. His mother and father and brothers and sisters came and made a fuss about it, and told him to take a younger wife as Jagua is too old...Jagua knew that he took periodical leaves to his hometown to look at some maiden who has been procured for him; she also heard that they brought him brides to the petrol-filling station. She took the blame for her sterility, and it was becoming a thing between them...She caught the train and it was too slow for her mood, taking three days to drop her in Lagos. (p. 167-8)

Lagos here is a safe haven for women who just do not fit into the traditional setting in their villages where societal expectations of them are great. These are women who think they cannot survive the patriarchy that reigns in their individual villages. Having left their husbands, these women want to move on with their lives and so they move to more westernized and socially neutral grounds to be able to survive.

For women like Jagua and Amaka, Lagos is a city 'where girls were glassy, worked in offices like men, danced, smoked, wore high-heeled shoes and narrow slacks and were free and fast with their favours'(pg 103) and a place where their non-conformist lives could fit in. So eventually the two heroines move from Ogbu and Onitsha respectively to Lagos in their respective novels.

It is easily seen that Jagua craves sexual independence. That is to say though she is a prostitute she wants to sleep with men whenever she wants to and not when the men want it. Also, because of her exceptional skills in bed, men always want her and Jagua uses this to control the men she sleeps with. The men eventually become her slaves and they do exactly what she tells them to do. Even in situations where the tasks she assigns them are against their better judgments, they carry out these tasks for her hoping she would reward them with the delights of her body.

For example when Jagua offends Freddie Namme and realizes he is angry with her, she

combed out her hair and took him to bed and whispered to him...She cuddled him and kissed him, and mothered him, bubbling over with love as she always did whenever she knew she was in the wrong and wanted to be restored to his favour.(pg 24)

She uses good sex to pay off her mistakes. In the same way she controls Freddie, Chief Ofubara of Krinameh is also subdued. And she does it so subtly that, the men hardly know they are being controlled by a woman. And when she does not control them, she makes them feel she is their coequal. For instance, after being treated to a bout of Jagua's sex, Chief Ofubara frees Nancy Oll who is supposed to be killed for trespassing into Krinameh waters. Moreover, he makes peace with Uncle Namme because Jagua wants him to do just that and make her famous for that feat. She talks to Chief Ofubara in a way none of his other wives dares talk to him once she realizes he has become a slave to her sophisticated ways.

She observes,

he had never really experienced the sensation of African woman as equal. Jagua treated him as she would treat a brother or a precocious lover in modern Lagos. Her

glance stripped him of his title, and he became a man
lusting after her; her temper made him her slave, willing
to obey her maddest whims merely to restore the smile
on her lips. (pg 101)

Another thing worth mentioning about the heroine of *Jagua Nana* is that she refuses marriage from the men who offer to gladly make her their wife because she cannot bear to be a wife. For her, marriage is an entrance into some sort of prison. She feels she may not be able to assert herself once she is married. She only marries the coal man to please her parents but when she feels they are too far away to be hurt she leaves him. In a nutshell she is a woman who detests male domination that is especially present in matrimony.

What is most commendable about the character of Jagua is that after the death of her son she decides to move on in life after a few months of mourning. She refuses to be the ever tearful mother mourning for the loss of her son. And when she recovers, she decides that once she is financially independent, she can make something out of her life. So instead of going in for a rosy life as Chief Ofubara's wife in Krinameh, she chooses to become a merchant princess. She chooses to struggle to gain economic independence over the life of luxury that Chief Ofubara of Krinameh promises her should she become his wife and queen.

On the whole, Jagua as a personality can be analysed in two major roles, Jagua 'the whore' and Jagua 'the woman'. As Ernest Emenyonu puts it,

The former is a character controlled by raw emotions – lust, greed, power and hatred. When these feelings are in control, Jagua is like a wild animal. She is unpredictable, cunning and dangerous...then, there is the other entity of Jagua that is Jagua the woman with motherly disposition. In this role she is nothing like her other ego. By turns she plays the part of the aging almost maternal lover of youth; the woman who loves children and has feeling for others...Jagua the whore and Jagua the mother are constantly fighting to gain control

throughout the novel. In the end Jagua the mother emerges the victor, and this can be seen as the triumph of good over evil.⁶

To conclude on Jagua as a female character one can say that Jagua herself is that cliché of all clichés, the prostitute with the heart of gold dogged by misfortune; a Nigerian Sadie Thompson. She is more sinned against than sinning, and the siren voice of Lagos must take much of the blame for bringing her to this position.⁷

This is because she is the classic village girl who comes to the city in search of adventure and to achieve this feat, she uses man (the enemy) as the springboard to achieving her dreams.

The next female character in *Jagua Nana* worth looking at is Rosa. She is another girl from the village who also seeks a fast life in the city. And like Jagua she also patronizes the *Tropicana Discotheque* for the money and fun that comes with it. But unlike Jagua, Rosa is able to find love and stability with a man. However this does not prevent her from living in a degrading atmosphere in the city instead of the sanitary and wholesome atmosphere she could have had had she continued living in the village.

Rosa lived in a room of her own where she paid two pounds a month rent. Filth was scattered everywhere in the surroundings...Jagua looked at the degradation. Bare floor which came off in powdery puffs if you rubbed your foot too hard. The bed was in the same room, wooden, with a mattress stuffed with the kind of grass cut by prisoners. (p.165)

Rosa's character is that of a woman who wants to live the life of her choice at all costs. Therefore, she would not live in the village and ignore the bright lights of the city where she feels she can easily make it.

The narrator reflects on her condition;

Rosa had become like many women who came to Lagos. Like Jagua herself-imprisoned, entangled in the city unable to extricate herself from its clutches. The lowest and most degraded standard of living is preferable to a quiet and dignified life in her own home where she would be free. (p. 165)

Rosa realizes that she cannot go back to her village because village life is too dull and unproductive. So, she prefers the life in the slums of the city (without light or good water) to living in a healthy village where her lifestyle would be unacceptable and therefore criticized by all and sundry. Hence, she makes excuses for living there.

Gunle is a fine place. Rosa was making lame excuses for her depraved surroundings. No one kin disturb you. My man use to come here an' spen' time. He done go back to the de College. He's passin out dis year...dis place is not like Central Lagos where everybody poke nose in your business. I go an' come as I like. (p. 166)

Sabina, the young girl who is infatuated with the armed robber Dennis, can also be seen as a girl who seeks to have an easy life in the city. Though not a prostitute like Jagua and the other girls, she is equally careless. Having experienced life in the city at a tender age, she has bloomed into a strong and fearless young girl evident in the kind of crowd she moves with. She is much aware of Dennis's night-time activities and even acts as his assistant most of the time. But because of the love she has for him she does not go away but rather chooses to stay on and take part in the crimes he is committing.

According to Dennis,

Before I meet her she never know man. I disvirgin her. She don' believe any odder man live in dis worl' only me. She love me...she know everythin' and she like the fas' life...Sabina love me because of my 'business'. She love me because I young and wild and I got no fear of

anythin'. She too she got no fear in her blood. She fear nobody; and she strong like leopard! (p. 124)

Because of her reckless lifestyle, readers are not surprised when she takes a revolver and kills Bintu, the taxi driver's wife, when she hears of her husband's arrest. After killing Bintu, she shoots herself not wanting to be handed over to the police. It is obvious that the women like Sabina are victims of the ills that pertain in the city. Having fallen into the wrong hands at a very tender age, she grows up into a social menace not knowing anything different. Incidentally Bintu, the taxi driver's wife, is an example of women who are unconcerned about the means through which money comes into their hands. Her main reason for entering into marriage is to amass wealth. Hence, in the process of amassing wealth, she pesters her husband to get her the expensive jewellery and clothing she desires at any cost, just so that she can show off at a funeral because she is the most important relation of the dead man. And because the driver himself 'was so weak where she was concerned' he agrees to steal for her.

In fact, Ekwensi portrays Bintu as a kind of she-devil. She is the extreme version of the city woman who will tread on sacred cultural practices (like marriage) in order that she can have money and the prestige that comes with having it and showing it off. These are the type of women who usually drive young and naive village girls to come to the city in search of quick money. However, because this kind of quick money does not exist anywhere in the city, these village girls eventually end up becoming prostitutes and thieves.

According to Dennis when the taxi driver's wife realizes her husband has been killed,

She pack her thin' and run, quick-quick...she no care for her pickin', only to dress herself. Anywhere she sees clothes, money, and chop, she don' mind. She will leave there. When she an' de taxi-driver begin, de man use to make about £10 a day. She chop all him money finish and

begin talk rot...dat gal! She don' care at all for anythin'.
Just to dress herself, fine! And to look man face. (p. 123)

It is a fact that Ekwensi uses Jagua, Rosa, Sabina and other women in the novel to depict the kind of life women in the city experience. However, he uses Mrs. Obi, Jagua's mother, to contrast these city women. She is the kind of woman who is oblivious to the change going on around her. When other women are leaving the slow life of the village for the fast life of the city, she continues to live in the village. When other women stand up against certain debasing cultural practices (like widowhood rites), she embraces them. As a result, when her husband dies;

Her mother's eyes were yellow. She had shaved off the hair on her head and the clothes she wore, ragged and dull, were in keeping with custom. [Jagua observes]...that's the custom. You know mama must not leave Ogabu, she must not dress her hair or wear fine cloth for at least six months. (p. 177)

This extract shows that Mrs. Obi represents the traditional woman who is bound by the stipulations of the traditions she belongs to. She is a typical example of the African woman who 'stays home all day' cooking, cleaning and doing other things to keep the house in order. She is not ready to stand up against the age old cultural practices that subjugate and demean her. She is very contented where she is and seeks no change. She feels the old system is always the best and tries to teach her daughter to follow suit. It is obvious that Ekwensi's description of women in *Jagua Nana* is a mirror image of what goes on in society. In that, women are depicted just as they occur in real life, some weak, some strong, some fighting for control, some willing to be controlled and some wanting an easy life at all costs, while some prefer a quiet life without the problems that come with a fast life.

So far, we have been looking at Ekwensi's presentation of women in *Jagua Nana*. We have observed that whereas the women who migrate to the city embrace the fast 'modern' life of the city, there are still a few like Mrs. Obi who maintain the traditional lifestyle in the village. We shall now proceed to look at the style of the writer and how he uses the elements of style to bring out the role of the women in the novel *Jagua Nana*.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that because these novels under study are generally about women, they may qualify to be read in sociological circles probably under feminist studies. This is because the issues raised are basically problems generally confronting women in real life. For example, *Jagua Nana* deals with the issue of an aged prostitute trying to survive in the fast life of the city, *Iska* deals with inter-tribal marriages and a young girl trying to find her niche in the world while *Jagua Nana's Daughter* deals with the quest of a lost child trying to find her mother and subsequently a sense of belonging. All these themes are somewhat social in nature. However, it is the style used by Ekwensi in the rendition of the texts that makes the work more literary than social. Therefore it is necessary to look at the style the writer employs to present his themes. In looking at the style, concentration will be on the elements of style; the language, diction, and literary devices that are peculiar to the individual books. They will be discussed and how this style employed by the author affects the presentation of the writer's themes.

In literature, style is usually defined as the writer's choice of diction, sentence structure, literary techniques, and use of rhythm. It is usually defined by the writer's choice of words, figures of speech, literary devices and the shaping of the sentences and paragraphs. Sometimes, styles are also classified according to time period or individual writers. For

example the period of the late 18th century and the early 19th century had a specific style for the novel genre known as the gothic style.

In a 1972 interview by Lewis Nkosi published in *African Writers Talking*, Ekwensi explains his role as a popular novelist. He tells Nkosi:

I think I am a writer who regards himself as a writer for the masses. I don't think of myself as a literary stylist: if my style comes, that is just incidental, but I am more interested in getting at the heart of the truth which the man in the street can recognize than in just spinning words.⁸

Ekwensi claims that as a writer, he is not really 'a literary stylist' and so he does not write primarily for his school audience. Rather, he writes for 'readers of Nigerian writing – Nigerian creative writing - those who are willing to read simply for pleasure and entertainment first, and for education and knowledge incidentally.' He is therefore someone who writes for entertainment. Even though Ekwensi claims he is not a literary stylist, it is obvious that he is influenced by his previous engagement as an Onitsha pamphleteer. The

Onitsha market literature were the 'works aimed at the new literate class of Nigerians such as taxi drivers, mechanics, white-collar clerks, primary school teachers, small-scale entrepreneurs and traders.'⁹ Emmanuel Obiechina, a prominent scholar of Onitsha market literature, argues that this African popular literature is 'an integral, if unique and startling, part of the West African creative scene.'¹⁰

Incidentally Ekwensi, who started his writing career mainly as an Onitsha pamphleteer is to a great extent influenced by this kind of writing. The Onitsha pamphlet had among other characteristics 'moralism and its demonstration in the characters' live [as] its criteria, a popular, readymade language its medium.'¹¹ Ekwensi's book *When Love Whispers* had

these features so it was not surprising when his later works like *Jagua Nana* followed the same trend. It is this kind of style that is going to be discussed in the subsequent pages. In the study of his style, particular attention would be paid to his language, diction, figures of speech and character development among others.

I shall begin the study of Ekwensi's literary style in *Jagua Nana* from this point onwards by looking at the plot, the language and diction, figures of speech and finally characterization in the text.

Apparently, Ekwensi uses episodic plots in *Jagua Nana*. The episodic plot structure is made up of a series of chapters or stories linked together by the same character, place or theme but held apart by their individual plot, purpose, and subtext.

The novel contains three subplots firmly linked by the character Jagua present in all three plots. That is to say, there is the episode of Jagua in the city with Freddie Namme and other characters enjoying life at the Tropicana Discotheque, the episode of Jagua going to Bagana to visit the family of Freddie and finally the episode of Jagua going back to Ogabu village to mourn her father and keep her mother company. It seems Ekwensi uses these episodic plots in his work to show the stages of Jagua's development. Life with Freddie Namme and other characters in the Tropicana is when Jagua is the real prostitute; trading her body to cater for the education of Freddie as a kind of insurance against poverty in her old age when she can no longer function as a prostitute.

This is the untamed Jagua who is oblivious of her role as a mother aborting all pregnancies and enjoying the fast life of the city and the fame that comes with her position. The second plot, life in Bagana, arouses Jagua's mothering instincts where she saves Nancy Oll from imminent death by forfeiting her life to go and see Chief Ofubara of Krinameh to free Nancy.

Over there, Jagua uses her sexual prowess to convince Chief Ofubara to unite with Uncle Namme. This is the time of Jagua's life when she realizes that something good can come out of her. And even though she uses the wrong means, she is applauded for bringing peace between two very bitter enemies.

The third and final episode with Jagua back in Ogabu completes the character's development.

Over there in Ogabu, Jagua realizes she has missed her primary role as mother and care giver and so begins to regret the kind of life she has lived in Lagos.

Jagua started to cry. When she was small like this... how could she know her life would run into these cross currents of shame, bitterness and degradation? When she was small like this...she had lived free and simple in Ogabu. But now she was chained down. She let the woman speak, nodding grimly, biting her lips, pointing with her gnarled fingers. Then she walked home to her mother, crying (pg 178)

This is the time when Jagua becomes tame and calm and struggles to make something worthwhile and more dignified out of her life. In a nutshell, the episodic plots present the development of Jagua from the fierce prostitute in Lagos to a calm and dutiful woman in Ogabu at the end of the novel.

Having discussed the plot of *Jagua Nana* so far, we shall proceed to look at the language and the diction used in the novel and how appropriate the language is to the rendition of the theme. The language used in *Jagua Nana* is basically pidgin or broken English interlaced with Standard English. The Standard English is generally used by the narrator or author and most of the highly educated characters in the novel. For example, Freddie Namme uses Standard English in his communication and uses pidgin only when he is talking to Jagua. Jagua and the other uneducated and semi educated characters use Pidgin English throughout the text. But on

the whole all the major characters communicate in pidgin. On the other hand, the use of pidgin by Jagua and others emphasizes their lack of or low standard of formal education. Otherwise, it may be a symbol representing the rejection of anything originally foreign. This can be inferred because Jagua, though a prostitute refuses to offer her services to any white man no matter the amount of money he is willing to pay for her services as a prostitute.

Also, there are no white characters in the text unlike the presence of Grunnings in *People of the City*. Also Jagua claims she did not want too many embarrassing reminders of her clan or custom. Hence Jagua uses pidgin as a veil behind which she hides from the expectations of her tribe and clan. This was an era when tribal clashes were common in Nigeria. Because of this, many fled to Lagos in order to be on neutral tribal grounds. So pidgin acted as a unifying factor between the various tribes that needed a neutral ground to flourish. On the contrary, John Povey sees the use of pidgin as a

Device [that] allows Ekwensi to escape from the worst examples of stilted English conversation, he substitutes a no less awkward effect... it rather expresses the desperate search of an African writer for some diction to render the local idiom more effectively into English. [For him] This is a valid and necessary task that preoccupies all African writers: in Ekwensi's case with only irregular success.¹²

All the same, the use of the pidgin language is relevant because it allows all the characters, both educated, semi educated and uneducated to communicate successfully. Also, it breaks the barriers that exist between the various ethnic groups represented in the novel allowing the characters to flow easily into each other. Finally, the use of pidgin language represents the 'rejection of any expatriate influence and helps to establish the complete Africaness of the novel.'¹³

Ekwensi also uses a detailed and expansive diction in *Jagua Nana* characterized generally by long sentences. Because Ekwensi seeks to portray life in the city to the reader, he uses heavily descriptive sentences that emphasize the setting and atmosphere of events. For example, in describing the atmosphere at the Tropicana Discotheque, Ekwensi writes

All the women wore dresses which were definitely undersize, so that buttocks and breasts jutted grotesquely above the general contours of the bodies. At the same time midriffs shrunk to suffocation. A dress succeeded if it made man's eyes ogle hungrily in this modern super sex market. (p 13)

This highly descriptive paragraph goes to show that, Ekwensi's diction is appropriate to his theme. All the adjectives used in the paragraph are used to create images in the mind's eye about the kind of lewd lifestyle the women at the Tropicana live in their quest to find men to sleep with them for money. In other instances too, the descriptive language seems to focus on the action of the novel and the development of the plot.

For example when Jagua discovers that Freddie has an affair with Nancy a few days before his departure abroad a fierce fight ensues and Ekwensi describes it.

...but the maddened woman only turned on him and he felt himself torn asunder by a lioness. Jagua kicked open the suitcase, rummaged among the clothes till she found the precious document. She took it in her strong hand and tore it to shreds. The document that had cost more than six months of forgery and bribery. Freddie felt the tears tingling under his eyelids. He tried to intervene but she sprang at him, all claws and teeth. A Jagwa woman could be fire. He felt the scarification from the flames. She lifted the suitcase and threw it outside. It fell and split open and his things scattered...she took an axe and ran outside. She could wield it with dexterity. Nancy clung to Freddie while Jagua split the boxes open. (pg 42)

Unlike the previous quotation, this paragraph focuses more on the action of the fight between Jagua and Freddie when the former catches the latter cheating. Also it contributes to the plot of the story in that, it explains why Freddie leaves Nigeria for England without informing Jagua. So it can be inferred that, Ekwensi uses the descriptive language to achieve two main ends. Firstly, he uses the graphic language to emphasize the setting and atmosphere of a particular outlook when the need arises. Also, he uses the descriptive language to draw the reader's focus to the action at every point and also to draw attention to the development of plot.

At other times, Ekwensi uses the descriptive language to vividly portray the filth and squalor of the life people in the city are exposed to:

She stored away the food, then took out her towel and went to the bathroom, but when she knocked a man answered her from inside and she went instead to the lavatory. The same old bucket piled high, the floor messed about, so she could see nowhere to put her silver sandals. It was all done by those wretched children upstairs. Why blame them when their mothers did not know any better. Where was the landlord? Where was the Town Council Health Inspector? This Inspector was supposed to come here once in a while and whenever he came he made notes in his black book but nothing ever happened. She would talk seriously to him the next time. The unpleasant side of Lagos life: the flies in the lavatory--big and blue and stubborn--settled on breakfast yam and lunch-time stew (they were invisible in a stew with greens). But Jagua closed her eyes and shut her nostrils with her towel. (p 107)

In relation to figures of speech, Ekwensi uses a few to enrich his language. For example, the name of the heroine in itself is symbolic. 'Jagua' is not a reference to the sleek jungle cat. The

metaphor here is money-oriented. 'Because of her good looks and stunning jungle fashions they said she was Jagua after the famous British car.' Nana is the ultimate European prostitute from Zola. As John Povey puts it;

The very name Jagua Nana makes a significant hybrid...that unexpected comparison gives considerable power to one of the extraordinarily revealing perceptions of Nigerian life that Ekwensi can at times so casually and yet so skillfully capture. In a single simile he has indicated much about the essential values of this society. Its materialism is more marked than its somewhat haphazard sexual depravity.¹⁴

Moreover, Ekwensi uses a lot of dialogue to tell the story. Thus, he allows a lot of the characters to talk so readers can experience the characters instead of reading about them. It seems Ekwensi uses the dialogue between the characters to limit the narration in the novel. Dialogue is also used to move the plot of the story. That is to say Ekwensi allows the characters' conversations to provide readers with what is going to happen next in the plot of the story.

For example in the passage below, readers get to know how Jagua intends to save Nancy from an imminent death at the hands of the people of Krinameh.

Uncle Namme looked haughtily beyond her. 'Don't come near me! You started all this nonsense! I should take you up now and lock you inside. Yes we have a prison. Better still, I should take you and fling you into the waters of Krinameh. Then you'll know what it's like.' Jagua began to cry aloud. 'Pardon your highness. I want to go there. I want to go for dis Krinameh..... 'Uncle Namme, I beg you for allow me. Ah will go dere an' ask Chief Ofubara to take me instead of Nancy. I prepare to make de sacrifice. I prepare for take the risk.
(p 87)

This dialogue between Jagua and Uncle Namme contributes two main things to the plot of the novel. First it provides information on the intensity of the hatred between the people of Bagana and Krinameh. Also, this dialogue is used to develop the character of Jagua. In this passage, readers see the transition from an 'untamed bitchy Jagua' to a 'motherly Jagua' who is willing to trade her life for the young Nancy.

Ekwensi also uses dialogue in his work to promote verisimilitude. Because Ekwensi wants Jagua to be a representation of the post independent woman, he tries to be very close to reality. It is therefore no wonder that he allows her to do a lot of talking in the text since this ability of speech draws her closer to being lifelike. It is a fact that the modern novel tends to 'show' more than 'tell'. The 'showing' in this sense is the same as 'dramatization' or 'rendering' and this can be achieved through dialogue, interior monologue and stream of consciousness among others and Ekwensi uses these techniques effectively to put his work across. One only sees Ekwensi's narrative intrusion when he needs to explain some goings on to readers. For example, in order to recount the short life of Nnoch, Jagua's son, Ekwensi uses the paragraph

For two days the child lived. Jagua handling Nnoch in his wetness and elastic gambols drew the maternal satisfaction she had long craved. On the third day, Jagua put Nnoch to the breast. It was early evening and her mother and Rosa had not come in from the farm. Jagua felt a sudden slackening of the lips on her nipple. She looked at the face of her new born infant. It was turning ashen in colour. She gazed, not understanding. The life was draining out of Nnoch. Dumbfounded Jagua watched him stiffen, and then all movement ceased. Jagua opened her mouth to scream, but could not. (p 191)

It seems Ekwensi's account of the life of Jagua's son in the text is brief because Nnoch is not supposed to be the centre of attention in that circumstance. The baby born to Jagua is only

used as a momentary compensation for the life she left in the city. Therefore readers are not even told what causes his death. The crux of the matter is that, the brief life of Nnochii allows Jagua to reorganize her life and choose trading as a source of survival instead of going back to the city as a prostitute. It may also be that Ekwensi knew he had a sequel to the novel in mind and so he wanted Jagua to have a very good reason to track her daughter Liza because apart from her, she would be considered childless.

Concerning the characterization, Ernest Emenyonu sums up the characterization in this extract

The novel is written from a woman's point of view. It tells the story of the agony and ecstasy, of hope and despair, of dream and reality and of inner innocence and outward sinfulness of a Nigerian fallen woman...it seems too that in choosing Jagua as the chief character, Ekwensi intended to emphasize the influence which women wield in Nigeria, and, in this light, Jagua can be seen as the symbol of women's power and versatility.¹⁵

This passage clearly identifies Jagua as the main influence on all events in the novel. That is to say, she is so powerful a character that no event in the novel can escape her touch. Therefore everything in the novel – the Tropicana club, Lagos politics and even British Council lectures is portrayed in relation to Jagua. In short, all the events are important because they help us to understand Jagua better.

One can say that though people have criticized the novel, describing it as immoral and uncensored because of Ekwensi's highly descriptive diction and vivid imagery, it is obvious he uses a style that is appropriate to the treatment of a social menace like prostitution in the society. **To sum it all up, *Jagua Nana*** made Ekwensi famous and it has been one of the most read African novels. No extensive discussion of the image of the urban woman in African Literature will be complete without a reference to Ekwensi's ***Jagua Nana*** or any of

his other 'people of the city' novels.

In *The Sociology of Urban Women's Image in African Literature*, Kenneth Little offers his verdict: 'it goes without saying that in the literature, Jagua in Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* is the courtesan par excellence.' Concerning Ekwensi's accomplishment in *Jagua Nana*, Juliet Okonkwo, who has done no less than five essays on Ekwensi, notes that

Ekwensi delves into the complex nature of his heroine, so that the reader is finally made to contemplate her in her own right, as an individual. Jagua is presented in greater depth than Sango, as she is seen in her varying roles of prostitute, woman, lover, and mother.¹⁶

Okonkwo believes that 'Ekwensi's greater success in *Jagua Nana* lies also in his control of language; particularly impressive is his ability to handle various levels of English expression, allotting the appropriate level to each character.'¹⁷ One can say that because of lack of formal education, the desire for recognition and economic hardships can force women into less desirable jobs like prostitution and even armed robbery.

However, through education, feminine alliance and positive hard work these same women can change to more dignified roles as happens to Jagua and Rosa. In the next chapter, we are going to consider how the female characters also rise up to change their roles or better their situations without necessarily changing roles in *Iska*.

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CHAPTER THREE

ISKA: THE AMBITIOUS MODERN WOMAN USING WHAT SHE HAS TO GET WHAT SHE WANTS.

So far we have been examining Ekwensi's presentation of women in *Jagua Nana* and how he uses elements of style to make his portrayal of the women vivid. We have observed through the study so far that in *Jagua Nana*, Ekwensi uses a highly descriptive diction and vivid imagery to present the issue of prostitution as a tool of empowerment for women. We shall now proceed to look at the presentation of women in *Iska* and how Ekwensi uses his style to make the portrayal of the women clearer.

In looking at the presentation of the women in *Iska*, we shall first give a brief summary of the plot of the novel followed by a look at the individual female characters that Ekwensi uses to portray his theme. In looking at the women, we shall examine the four main female characters whose actions and inactions really move the plot of the novel and bring out Ekwensi's theme. So we would look first at Filia, then Remi, followed by Abigel Salifas and finally Illoma Enu in that order.

Fundamentally, *Iska* is the tale of Filia Enu, a beautiful young Nigerian girl struggling to find her niche in the world. The story itself is a narration of her tragedy. Filia is a young talented girl, who is enthusiastic about education so that she can be of service to her nation. She is a very sensitive girl, and for this reason, she is not satisfied with just anything or anyone. She settles only for involvements which have essence. She is literally tossed from one place to another, never being understood or appreciated for what she does or stands for until it is too late.

Also Filia remains unsettled in life until her early demise. In her short life that blew past like the wind (*Iska*), the girl had attracted to herself undeserved envy. She is

a light – skin Nigerian girl with slim ankles [who drew attention to herself] by the fluid language of her movement. Her tall carriage, the rhythmic and feminine sound of high-heeled shoes on springy pavement, the proud bosom thrust ahead, the complete isolation from the world about her, provoked in the onlookers a sense of wonder. Kaduna looked – as if they who lived in the capital city of northern Nigeria had never before seen a light-skin girl of such beauty...¹

Filia Enu is as beautiful as Jagua, different only in the sense that Filia has had some form of formal education in the St. Monica's Convent. It is the college education that makes Filia difficult to control. It seems Ekwensi uses the education of Filia to point out that women can

be empowered through formal education. For this reason, Filia is able to take control of her own life and make constructive decisions especially concerning her own life. For example, she refuses to abandon her education and go home to get married as her parents had wanted her to. So she delays the marriage till she had obtained a better prospect.

Soon after her parents returned to the East they wrote to her to come home to Ogabu and get married; that her education was enough and that her place was in the home. But like the heroine in the folk-tale, she chose not to heed her father and mother but to listen instead to the beautiful stranger with the deceitful tongue. That stranger was Dan Kaybi. (p.15)

On the other hand, she realizes that if she goes to Ogabu for her father's funeral, she will never come back single (since her formal education had ended with the death of her father). So she chooses to marry the man she loves instead of the one that would be selected for her.

She was thinking of her life, of him. She knew that unless something definite was done now about their affair she might never have him as her man. She was sure that if she went back home to Ogabu they would make a match for her; a rich man of good family, good looks, good character... [But to her] whatever his riches, his looks, his family connections, he would never be Dan Kaybi. (p.14)

Unlike Jagua, Filia is not a victim of rural –urban migration. That is to say that she does not come to Lagos from Jos in search of a 'fast' life like most of the women in *Jagua Nana* did. Rather, she comes to Lagos to discover herself after the death of her husband. It seems she realizes that the route to discovering oneself is through economic independence. For this reason, she struggles to become self-supporting. And because she eventually becomes financially independent, the pressures of the city do not have a very great influence on her. In

this respect of having seen her route to self discovery through financial independence, she is akin to Virginia Woolf's narrator in the popular feminist text *A Room of One's Own*. This is so because, for the speaker of *A Room of One's Own*, money is the primary element that prevents women from having a room of their own, and thus, having money or financial independence is of the utmost importance. Because women do not have especially financial power, their creativity has been systematically stifled throughout the ages. The narrator writes, 'Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time...' ² Woolf uses this quotation to explain why so few women have written successful poetry. She believes that the writing of novels lends itself more easily to frequent starts and stops, so women are more likely to write novels than poetry: women must contend with frequent interruptions because they are so often deprived of a room of their own in which to write.

Without money, the narrator implies, women will remain in second place to their creative male counterparts. The financial discrepancy between men and women at the time of Woolf's writing perpetuated the myth that women were less successful writers.

So because Filia is able to identify the route to her liberation, she does not fall a victim to most of the things women who come to the city fall victim to. Even when she gives out her body, she does so only when she is sure she can attain her goal of financial autonomy. For example, she does not 'sell herself' in order to get money. She tells Remi that she would rather die than give out herself to men to survive in Lagos. Instead, she gets her sister's husband to arrange for a job for her with the help of his friend, Gadson Salifas at the

Ministry of Consolation. She tells Remi,

I'm not interested. For me to give myself to a man I must love him – for his own sake. I must see his face in all I do. I must think of him the whole time. His smile must mean my happiness; his frown must be like – like hell fire. I must be sad, miserable, lonely if I do not see him for twenty -four hours. I must love him. Then giving myself would be right. (p. 96)

Even though she does not get the job at the ministry until later, her education and strength of mind help her to get a job selling cosmetics around Lagos which allows her to earn some money until she eventually gets a better job. Incidentally, Filia likes men with class. She tells Remi 'I like men to be interesting, that's all. Interesting. I like a man to have strong views. Views which are his own.' With this description of the kind of men she likes, readers are not surprised when she falls in love with Dan Kaybi, Rayimi and subsequently Dapo Ladele. She could not be made to marry Nafotim because he did not fall into the category of men she wanted.

...Filia was thinking about Dan Kaybi in his hospital bed, of their honeymoon in Zaria, short and full of pain and sweetness. With Dan Kaybi there was some common bond. With Nafotim it would be just a business arrangement, devoid of feeling. (p. 63)

Eventually, when her mother pushes her to the wall, she stands firm and tells her blatantly that she would not marry Nafotim because he is not her type of man. She tells her mother,

I like men who are modern. I like men who do things. I like men who are elegant and civilized, not just those who think their money can buy me...he is uncouth and ignorant but he thinks he is the cleverest man on earth. Please mama let us stop talking about this matter. It gives me headache. (p. 65)

By this statement, Filia wants to point out that the old system of parents choosing husbands for their daughters is over because parents do not always make the best choices. She feels the daughters should be allowed to make the choices themselves; preferably men who are modern and open minded. These are men who would not overpower their women but treat them as equals. Nida Kaybi describes Dan to Filia,

You mean if you marry Dan, my brother will lock you up in purdah?... You don't know Dan. You think he has time for all that nonsense? He's a very modern and simple man. His work, his drink, his play. That's all he cares for. He has no time to lock up anybody....Dan is the sort of man who wants an educated wife, a beautiful one like you, from a good family, well mannered and all. He will take you to dances and show you off. That's my brother and I know him. (p. 26)

Being a very beautiful girl, men who come close to her tend to see her as a sexual object. This includes men like Gadson Salifas, Rayimi, Piska Dabra and even Nafotim who tended to sexualize her. But because she is a brilliant girl, she is able to manipulate the men to do what she wants. She is a woman who chooses when to have sex with the men who come her way. She is the one who sets the pace if she wants sex. And if she does not, nothing a man says will change her mind. For example, in the case of Rayimi

He held her hands. She drew back. [He tells her] Come on baby. [And she responds,] Not now ...I don't feel like anything. [He tries to convince her] you're a lady. [She insists] not that ...I don' feel like anything. Les go back (p. 101)

Nevertheless when she feels she wants Rayimi, she allows herself to be used by the same man she refused previously. The crux of the matter is that even when things must be done, she must decide or there will be nothing done at all. This is shown in the way she goes straight to undressing before Gadson Salifas when she wants him to make love to her.

This act of hers is so forthright that Gadson is unable ‘to rise to meet the occasion.’

There she was on offer, the flesh of black woman, pale and bleached by a thousand cosmetic creams, completely devastating. He came near her and suddenly he ceased to be a man...he could not rise to meet the occasion. He was like a hungry man who is offered the choicest dish and suddenly his appetite vanishes. This was roast turkey; it was time to feast but he was man no longer. (p.124)

To conclude on the nature of Filia as the heroine of *Iska*, one can say that Filia is a very ambitious young girl. Apparently, it is this ambition that acts as the driving force in her short life. For example after the death of her husband she tells her mother her plans,

I cannot stay in the north...I’m too young to remain here doing nothing. I want to go to Lagos, to find work and live there for a time. Maybe from there I can go to the United States for further education...mama I want to be famous...I want to appear on the stage, in newspapers, on television...and when I marry it must be a man who is known, a man with something..Lagos is the place I’ll go. (p. 71)

And with this ambition to be famous as her guide, she actually succeeds in Lagos. She is employed by Mrs. Jolomi to showcase her clothes. Through the hard work she attaches to her ambition, she is able to rise to the apex of her modeling career. Once there, she is introduced to the media – television and the papers where she shoots commercials for companies.

A producer-director who had seen the fashion show wanted her to appear on the late TV show. A magazine photographer would like to pick her up and take her to lunch...Filia’s face was seen behind soft drinks, sewing machines, toilet soaps, special fabrics. She found the money useful... (p.113)

Filia's success in the field is attributed to her fierce determination to succeed and no man can be credited with helping her succeed. It is quite clear that, Filia is a typical modern woman who hardly needs the help of a man to succeed. She believes she is capable of making it on her own. At this moment, it seems Ekwensi points out through Filia that women can succeed in every field once they put their minds to it. They do not necessarily need the help of men to succeed.

The next female character in the novel worth examining is Remi. It seems Remi is a recollection of Ekwensi's past stereotyped women of the city. In that sense, she is so much like Jagua and Beatrice's one and two of *Jagua Nana* and *People of the City* respectively.

Remi is a rural girl who migrates to the city in search of a fast life. Consequently, she is trapped by the pressures of the city hence she has to live like a prostitute in order to survive. This is because she wants to live a glamorous life and the money from her job as a sales girl in the department store cannot support that kind of life. She tells Filia:

You will see...you're just beginning. You think your problems are solved? Because you have a job? You're just beginning. That is why I say, I shall enjoy when I can enjoy...you're too young and provincial. It's the smart thing to do, my girl. (p.92)

It is worthy of mention at this point that though Remi gives herself out to men, she does this as a means to an end and not an end in itself. Wanting to succeed in the city, she looks out for people who can help her stand on her feet and survive. And the best people to help are men of power. Therefore she gives what she has (her femininity) to get what she wants (money and other things to support her refined lifestyle).

She recounts her difficult life in the city to Filia

You know how weak men are and how vain. When they see you, alone, in need ...but there was a time I was forced to; I mean really forced to. I could not get on without – that... When I came here I had nobody. I walked from one office to the other, searching for work. I never even got the jobs. Sometimes a man made promises but I could see what they were after. I lived with one pick-up after the other...a girl must have a boy here in Lagos. A strong one. It helps a lot to have someone. (p. 96)

After this experience, she learns one thing out of the life in Lagos and she shares it with Filia. She controls the men and does not allow them to control her. As she puts it ‘...he made me so secure that I can now pick and choose...men are inferior beings. Once they see you’re efficient they are afraid. They cannot even get an erection.’

Having experienced rural life, Remi thinks that the customs and traditions in the village overpower women and place a yoke on them. Hence, she wants to enjoy the ‘modern’ life the city offers and wants none of the traditions and customs in the village especially marriage.

She confides in Filia,

In modern Africa marriage is no longer easy. The control by the elders, the control by taboos and society, all these have been lifted. Young couples are looking for roots. There are none. So what do we do? I don’t think I shall marry. The more I think of it, the surer I am. I don’t think I shall ever marry. It’s too difficult. (p.92)

And so she continues to live the life of the good time girl till she falls ill and realizes that death could come at anytime for her. According to her, the illness was ‘God’s way of reminding single girls that they are not as independent as they think’ thus she needs to change her life. In the process of recuperation she turns to her creator through ‘the prayer people.’ After she recovers from the illness, she relies more on the prayer people because she believes they saved

her life. She even changes her perception about life altogether ‘...the world is nothing, you hear me. The world is nothing.’

However, even in the worshipping of God, she does not want to do it for free. She considers the benefits she can get from it. She tells Filia,

Everybody in this chapel is there for something. The women – some have not had husband. Some want children and cannot get. The men – some are traders and business is bad; some are civil servants: they want promotion. And so on...that’s what we want in Nigeria of today. A religion for the needy. What am I doing with a religion for my soul? (pg 134)

In this passage, the writer’s emphasis is on materialism. That is to say, the people at Pisca Dabra’s church site are more devoted to material wealth and possessions at the expense of their spiritual or intellectual values. This shows that, most of the people in the city are more interested in amassing wealth than any other thing including even the salvation of their own souls.

To conclude on Remi, it can be said that she is the one who leads Filia through a life in Lagos. Most of the decisions Filia takes are influenced by her and eventually when Filia dies, she is there with her husband to pay tribute to her. After studying Remi, Abigel Salifas is the next woman to be studied in the novel *Iska*. She is the wife of Gadson Salifas, a senior officer at the Ministry of Consolation. Readers first meet her when she barges into Gadson’s office with her ‘ragged and unkempt’ children to rain insults on Gadson for being an irresponsible husband.

Readers are almost tempted to judge her husband after her outburst but upon reading further, readers get to know that Abigel Salifas ‘had never understood his position nor did she care to,

especially when matters concerned the wig-wearing young women who fluttered round the offices.’ Abigel is the kind of woman who is portrayed as a careless and gullible person.

Because of this character trait, she easily falls prey to Piska Dabra’s religion.

Her husband explains,

...ever since I let her take a job she just let the children suffer and I had to do my own work at the office...then I found out that she was always coming home late from work; and when I asked her she would give some excuse....she took fire with this religion. In the middle of the night she would say she had seen a vision, in the morning she would explain what the stars foretold and so on. Then she began going with them to meetings in the night and would not come back. Her old loyalty and obedience just faded. She thought of nothing else but this new religion...I told her she must quit the religion. She refused...there was a big quarrel. She packed her things and left. (pg 125-6)

She becomes Piska Dabra’s wife and as a result becomes the mother of the prayer people.

Even when her husband pleads with her to come back and take care of the children she refuses.

She is the typical simple minded woman who is easily led away by a man who can be breathtaking and not care about the consequences of her actions on others. Her husband complains to Filia

They told me Abigel comes here every night, so I brought the children to see their mother. Since she ran away they have worried to see her...the children are in the car. If I can find her – oh there she is...Gadson talked and begged – a pathetic figure. Abigel continued singing. (pg 145)

Filia summarizes the life of Abigel as a mother of the prayer people in the passage below.

Piska Dabra has driven Abigel Salifas out of her house while he himself remains in the house. She cooks for him and mends for him and abandons her own family, her own children after so many years marriage. Why? There must

be something else more material than just religion. (pg 145)

Because of her immense dependence on Piska Dabra, her life is almost shattered when he drowns. However when she recovers, she finds an apartment and eventually a job. Her life after the death of Piska Dabra is reviewed in the passage below;

from Mrs. Salifas to the ex-mistress of Piska Dabra was a long hop but all she thought of was starting again. She set about searching for a job and eventually found one...out of twenty pounds a month she must furnish this room, buy clothes, feed herself and send a little to the children. She thought more of the children now. (pg 156)

But instead of trying to stand on her own two feet after the death of the priest, Abigel seeks a man to bear her burden of survival for her. She is the typical woman who prefers to be used by men who are willing to shoulder her burdens in life. Readers get to know that

Her most pressing need was to find herself some man who would take away some of the burden. As far as going back to Salifas was concerned, that was out of the question...not long after this Abigel found herself a lover. They met in the chapel and soon she found that like Piska Dabra he imagined himself to be a kind of saviour. Her present depression and degradation had driven her again in search of a new faith in life and she met this new man who – as he talked reopened in her the same response that Piska Dabra had evoked...in no time at all Abigel had merged with the anonymous hordes, the hundreds of thousands of women who have left their husbands, following the unattainable promises made by men outside their marital homes. (pg 158)

To conclude on Abigel Salifas as an individual, one can say that she is a woman who is not interested in independence. She prefers to be a slave to a spiritual man instead of being a wife to a normal working class man.

It seems she does not know what she wants in life and yet she seeks celestial joy and fulfillment. Because of this craze for celestial joy, she easily falls prey to deceitful men who use religion as a veil to hide their innate weaknesses like Piska Dabra.

The last woman chosen for study in *Iska* is Iloma Enu, Filia's mother. Right from the start Iloma is portrayed as a mother who loves her children. This is typical of the traditional African woman. Having suffered at the hands of patriarchy, such women seem to draw strength from the fact that the children they mother are doing well and are going to come out right eventually. Filia observes that 'her mother loved her and never saw anything wrong in whatever she did. Whenever there was a fight in the Enu family the girls grouped around Mama and the boys around Papa. Filia drew comfort from her mother's understanding of her.' (pg 21)

Moreover, Iloma is the one who provides Filia the amount of money to start life in Lagos after the death of her husband. She shows Filia so much support during these difficult times that her daughter never forgets her.

Her mother took her into the far bedroom where she slept. Under the pillow she produced a leather bag and from it counted fifty pounds. She brought out her trunk box and gave Filia some of her best clothes on the morning of their departure and followed them both to the motor station. Filia remembered her mother's pretended gaiety on that day, a gaiety calculated to ease her own anxieties and to make her feel that everything at home was all right. (pg 71)

Another obvious character trait is that Iloma is a woman who succumbs to the dictates of societal traditions and norms. She does not go according to the dictates of the modern environment that surrounds her even in the city. And so when her husband dies, she lives according to the demands of the widowhood rites of her society.

Iloma Enu had a quiet beauty of her own and tender; but in her grief she had chosen deliberately to make herself

unattractive, even repulsive. So custom required. Her hair was shaven. She wore a most shapeless top garment and the cloth about her was black and tied with black string. What had happened to this fashion-conscious woman? (pg 52)

Being a stickler for the old system, she is the one who encourages Filia to dance the traditional dance that is required of a daughter whose father is dead. When Filia replies that she knows nothing about this dance, she educates her accordingly. This proves that she is well versed in the tradition of her people. Again, being a typical traditional woman, she believes that a woman is most fulfilled when she is married and not when she is successful and single. So she constantly encourages her daughters to stay chaste till they get married and give birth. She believes that when daughters do that, they bring happiness to their parents. As a result of this belief, she constantly warns Filia against pre-marital sex and its consequent unwanted pregnancy.

She advises Filia,

You understand your father...he is only trying to protect you. If you go now and get pregnant...we do not want you to be pregnant at all without having a husband. It's not right. We do not want a bastard child...you must marry and have a father for your children. Have you not been visiting him at Kaduna – in his room? And alone? You know the dangers. Try and save your father's face. (pg 21)

So in order to curb this problem of Filia staying single and getting pregnant or marrying an undesirable man, Iloma is the one who arranges a marriage for Filia. Iloma believes that marriage is a 'family affair' and so she should be able to find a suitable man from 'home' for her daughter in the absence of her father. According to Uzodike Enu, during his marriage to Iloma, their fathers were instrumental in the union so the same should be done in Filia's day.

So even though Filia persistently reiterates the fact that she is married to Dan, her mother refuses to accept the marriage contracted without her influence.

Her mother told her that everything had been planned so that after the burial of her father ceremonies of the engagement would be announced...Nafotim is from Ogabu. He is Ibo. Whatever happens, you and he will come back home here to the same soil. You will understand each other from the start. We know the history of his family...he is a man a clean man through and through. (pg 65)

It is important to state that Iloma is a woman who believes that her husband is the head of the family and therefore whatever he does is right and she as a dutiful wife lends her support to him. For this reason, whenever he does anything that she does not think is proper she does not speak up against it. However, in the case where she feels her husband is too harsh in the handling of issues, she makes excuses for him so that it does not appear she is questioning her husband's authority.

For example, when Uzodike Enu (Filia's father) manhandles Dan Kaybi, she calls her daughter aside and tells her, 'You understand your father, he shouts and makes a lot of noise, but he loves you. He is only trying to protect you...he is very proud of you – although you may not know it.' (pg 22) It can be said that she is the patient African woman who is willing to lay down her life for her children. She is not worried about society's expectations of her because she is content with the old system. She is submissive to the whims and caprices of her husband and therefore she does nothing to oppose her husband's decision. She even tries to convince her children to tow the same line. In short she is portrayed as 'the figure of the sweet mother, the all accepting creature of fecundity and self sacrifice.' Having discussed the depiction of the various females who stand out in *Iska*, we would proceed to look at the style Ekwensi

employs to put out his theme. That is to say, we are going to study Ekwensi's literary style as he uses female characters to present his themes in *Iska*. In studying Ekwensi's style in *Iska*, we shall begin by looking at the language used, and then look briefly at the plot and then finally the characterization.

According to Virginia U. Ola,

What sets *Iska* apart from Ekwensi's other works is that in a way it is a tragedy in more subtle ways than just the inability of the heroine to find peace, and her eventual death. Filia is situated in the middle of the story, acting as a central consciousness through whose eyes and with whose point of view we see all the events. The story is that of her tragedy. Her disappointments, grief, occasional agony are the themes of this work which is structured in the form of a quest, the search for happiness and meaning in life. The dominating theme of tribalism is also worked out through her and her fate.³

The heroine of *Iska* unlike that of *Jagua Nana* is educated therefore the language used throughout the text is Standard English. It seems also that Ekwensi uses the Standard English as a unifying language among the various warring tribes in Nigeria at that time. There are generally short sentences with a relatively simple vocabulary used in the narration except in occasional situations when there is the need to use adjectives to effectively capture the setting and atmosphere. For example, Ekwensi uses this passage to portray the kind of situation the people in the city find themselves in. According to him,

Life itself was one big joke. This was a place as artificial as plastic dishes, as treacherous as the eroding hillsides of the Millikan Hill. This was what they call Lagos; a circus a cinema show put on by some ambitious ass

simply to have pages of history written for him by clowns. A home of bastards... and phony characters all searching for their own identity.

This descriptive paragraph is one of many in the novel that highlight the atmosphere at various points. For example Ekwensi's use of a metaphor to describe Lagos as 'a circus, a cinema' shows that Lagos is a place for a mixture of confused people with shattered dreams facing different degrees of failure. These people find the fun in the city as a cover-up for deep seated pain and suffering.

Concerning the structure of *Iska*, it is obvious that unlike the episodic plots of *Jagua Nana*, Filia's development from a young innocent girl into a classy city girl is divided into sections in the novel. These sections are named after the four major characters whom her experiences in Lagos are linked with, namely, Dan Kaybi, Remi, Pisca Dabra and Dapo Ladele. All these characters are deeply involved with the education of Filia in the city. Her encounter with Dan Kaybi gives her ideas about love and the concept of tribal marriages. Remi teaches her about surviving as a woman on the streets of Lagos. Spiritual education is well catered for by Pisca Dabra and his Prayer People. Finally, just before she dies she is introduced into active Nigerian politics and another brief love life with Dapo Ladele.

Filia, unlike many other Ekwensi heroines, goes to Lagos because she finds herself in the middle of tribal animosities which eventually result in the death of her brother and also her husband Dan Kaybi. So Filia is forced to leave her home region, Eastern Nigeria for northern Nigeria for studies and subsequently for Lagos to seek peace as well as a means of livelihood after her education had come to an abrupt end due to the death of her father. So, one can say

that Filia unlike many Ekwensi heroines does not come to Lagos to chase after a fast life but rather it is her quest for peace that lands her in the 'fast' city to which she quickly adjusts.

However, unlike most Ekwensi figures, Filia is not afforded the luxury of returning to the village when the novel comes to its conclusion. She has a more complicated problem because having stayed in the city for a greater part of her life, she cannot adjust to life in the village when she goes there briefly during the death of her father. 'She felt too sophisticated now to live in mud walls and pan roof. This was the college girl, she knew...' (p.89) And her mother promptly condemns this behavior of hers; 'you would not wear robes and sandals, only English dress. You speak English all the time. You associate with other tribes.' (p. 30).

It is evident that because *Iska* is a book that manifests Ekwensi's ever-growing concern with the African approach to politics, his diction is most of the time suited to his theme. It seems he is not very particular about the figurative use of language but rather as simply as possible, he hopes to put his message across to the reading public. Therefore (except in instances of a display of love) there is little or no use of flowery words.

As Ernest Emenyonu puts it,

Focus is on the ironies and contradictions and failures in contemporary Nigerian politics and the author is pessimistic about true Nigerian unity. His vision is of a non-tribal humanistic federalism but this remains merely a dream as politicians, far from fostering national unity fan the embers of tribal hatred and mutual conflicts.⁴

Concerning characterization, Ekwensi selects female characters from all parts of Nigeria.

This may be his own way of calling for a unification of all the tribes to foster peace in Nigeria as a whole. The rejection of Nafotim as a husband for Filia also forcefully puts across this

idea. The idea that Filia would refuse someone from her own village for a stranger shows that she is empowered intellectually to make decisions that she feels will benefit her.

Also, Ekwensi's characterization is done in such a way that, the reader discovers the personality of the male characters through the actions and inactions of the women. That is to say, Ekwensi empowers the women in the text to use their tools of empowerment (sex and education) to control the men around them. For example it is Filia who tells readers of the nature of Dan Kaybi in relation to the tribal intolerance going on. She says of him, 'Dan Kaybi does not care where you come from. To him, you are a man and he judges you by what you do, not what part of Africa you come from.' Readers also get to know that Dan Kaybi is rash in his actions by looking at how he gets married to Filia and other instances.

On the whole, one can say that

Iska bears some of the features of the author's earlier city novels. The great sadness, the extreme depression, the ever -swinging and treacherous life of the city are all there. Because of this *Iska*, too, contains three familiar traits of Ekwensi's city fiction... the similarity of theme and character...the other disconcerting characteristic is the incredible intertwining of the character's lives.⁵

Having looked at the presentation of women in *Iska* and the style adopted by Ekwensi in telling the story of, we shall now proceed to look at the last novel under study, *Jagua Nana's Daughter*.

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CHAPTER FOUR

JAGUA NANA'S DAUGHTER: EDUCATION AND FEMALE COHESION AS TOOLS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST OVERBEARING MAN.

In the previous chapter, we studied the women as they occur in the novel – some modern, others gullible and some unwilling to change their traditional subservient nature. In this chapter, we are going to examine the final novel under study and as we have been doing with the other novels, we are first going to look at a brief summary of the text, then we shall examine Ekwensi's presentation of the female characters in the story and then look at how he uses his style to portray his theme.

The sequel to Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana*, *Jagua Nana's Daughter* recounts the quest of Liza Nene Papadopoulos for her roots and Jagua's search for her daughter. Having been born in the house of Aunt Kate Nene Papadopoulos and raised by her, Liza is made to believe that Kate is her mother and Nick Papadopoulos, her father. Nevertheless at her mature age she gets a letter from Sister Heide, her childhood nurse, confirming her suspicions about her relation with Aunt Kate. Eventually, she pursues the lead given her by Sister Heide and eventually finds her mother (Jagua Nana), grandmother (Martha Obi), uncle (Brother Fonso) and other external family members who live in Ogabu, her real mother's native land.

The novel also recounts Liza's encounter with different men hoping to fall in love and settle down with one of them. Meanwhile Jagua Nana, Liza's mother, tries to pick up the pieces of her life all over again and settle down with one man. Eventually, both mother and daughter do not only find each other but they also find love and stability in life.

Incidentally, Jagua Nana's daughter, Liza, is as stunning as her mother, only prettier because of the added advantage of youth on her side.

She is tall and rangy, lissome limbed with a jutting and shapely rump that drew the males.

That trace of Greek blood gives her a rich and breath-taking complexion that is African and Mediterranean at the same time. Because of her captivating appearance, most men turn to see her as a sex object and therefore regard her with undisguised lust. But Liza does not use her body like her mother. That is to say she does not use her sexy body to consciously seduce men. They only come to her because she is attractive. However, because Liza is educated, she does not throw herself at the men but rather, she allows her instincts to guide her in the choice of men.

Despite the fact that she claims she has a weakness for beautiful men, she uses the men she chooses to sleep with to her advantage. For example, her fling with Abdul Stevens produces a baby to keep her company in the otherwise loveless London environment she finds herself in while living with the Thompsons. And not even Abdul's threats and beating change her mind about keeping the pregnancy. She keeps the baby against all odds because she wants to. Also, her affair with Saka Jojo permits her to have a guide through Nigeria in her early years at home after a long stay in London. Moreover, her association with Saka Jojo offers her a life of luxury and sophistication that she may otherwise not have had without Saka's money to support her.

For example, when Saka goes to London on a business trip she receives as a gift a suitcase that has

chain necklaces and bangles of English gold, packed in velvet lined cases. But it was the dresses that stunned her. She ran her finger tips through three exquisite silk dresses in purple, black and grey, one of them – the black one, with a jewellery -studded belt...¹

This proves that Saka catered for much of her clothing and accessories with glamorous and stylish things that startle even her. Also, her flat is rented and furnished by Saka Jojo. It is obvious that Liza has an affair with Saka Jojo, a married man, but it is commendable that she makes sure her life is made more comfortable by him. It is worth mentioning at this point that Liza is a woman who is very careful in her dealings with the men she gets involved with. Being a very intelligent lady, she is able to weigh the dangers associated with each relationship she enters into. For example she knows that her safety is threatened by being Saka's mistress because his wives could easily harm her if she is found out.

So she constantly seeks Saka's protection from his three wives. She tells him in no uncertain terms 'Saka, I am a little bit worried about your wives...they are after me. I hear they have come here to identify this place. Saka, I don't want to be assassinated. I know they are after me.' (pg 109) Saka does not take any safety measures and Liza is in the end attacked. But being an intelligent lady, she takes advantage of the situation to do away with Saka once and for all. Also in her dealings with Gerorge Nando, she refuses to give out her son Obi to be raised by his grandmother or a stepmother.

These steps taken by Liza identify her as a very daring lady. This is because she does not allow the men she associates with to intimidate or persuade her into changing her mind once she

makes it up. So she puts Saka away from her without allowing him to plead for a comeback.

She tells him categorically

Let me tell you this, Saka. Your days were numbered – by your wives. No man or woman handles Bebe Jagua that way and gets away with it, you hear me? I'm not a pauper, or a parasite, or a harlot. Just a decent, lonely Nigerian girl trying to make her way in life... his anguish made her happy. Perhaps he would learn that money does not buy love. (pg 187)

This, however, is not meant to portray Liza as a 'Great American Bitch'. Rather, one sees her as a woman who resists male subjugation in all forms. So finally when she falls in love with Judge Macros and eventually marries him, it is a marriage of equals.

Even though Liza is an educated and westernized heroine, she does not neglect her primary role as a mother and a caregiver. She does not leave her children for the men she gives birth with but rather she keeps them close to her thereby allowing the children to experience motherly love and care. Despite her busy life as a lawyer she makes time to talk to them and have fun with them. She believes that a 'maid is one thing and mummy is another' and so she does not leave their care entirely to the maid Titi. When she comes home late from work, she

Check[s] to see how the children lay. A feeling of satisfaction descended on her. She vowed to do everything she could to give them that mother-love she herself had missed. She tucked the cloth carefully under the girl Ngozi who was long limbed, a carbon copy of herself. The boy Obi could always control his limbs when asleep. (p. 9-10)

It is no wonder that she refuses to let George Nando take away Obi from her. She tells Saka;

I refused to give him custody of the tender child to take away to some unknown step-mother. He said his mother or grandmother would look after the child. I told him no more step-mothers for me or my child if I could help it. (pg 132)

She prefers to independently care for them and give them love and support instead of their fathers taking them away to be brought up by step-mothers. To conclude on Liza as a heroine, one can say that Liza

is assertive ...daring, and sometimes outright careless about how she achieves her goals. This woman is a hybrid of Africanism and Westernization. She is aware of her goals but is sometimes confused between an ideal African woman and a hard-core radical feminist. ²

Through Liza, Ekwensi shows that, the more educated a woman is, the clearer she sees through the mechanisms that oppress her and the more able she is to stand up and assert herself. Thus, education especially the formal education allows Liza to be enlightened and empowers her to speak her mind on issues that concern her in order to restore her dignity.

The next major character to be examined in *Jagua Nana's Daughter* is Jagua Nana. Being a sequel to *Jagua Nana*, the novel depicts the later life of Jagua Nana. However, the Jagua Nana encountered in this novel is a more domesticated version of the harlot Jagua Nana. Having abandoned her reckless life in the city at the Tropicana Discotheque and lost the son that was to make her fulfilled as a woman in the village, Jagua Nana becomes psychologically transformed. She chooses to be a merchant princess and a transport owner in Ogabu with the money she gains from Uncle Taiwo. It is in this state that readers meet her in *Jagua Nana's Daughter*, resigned to life in the village and not caring about herself.

Amazingly, it is the touch of Rosa's new born baby that stirs the life in Jagua after all the time spent in Ogabu with her mother. She re-examines her life after her sober life in Ogabu.

The touch of the tender baby-skin stirred in her that loneliness that had been with her since she began to live in the village. She saw now that the grief over her dead child Nnochii had killed her spirit, weakened her will and

isolated her from life. What had happened to that Jagua whom the men fought over, with whom Chief Ofubara of Krinameh had been so infatuated? The Jagua who had driven the bandit Dennis Odoma to commit daring robberies to win her favour, and made Uncle Taiwo a political partner? (p.18)

After these reflections, Jagua takes stock of her life and tries to reorganize what is left of it.

She realizes that, her life is coming to an end and there is nothing commendable to associate her name with.

...now she felt the pain of the aborted pregnancies, and remembered with regret how fertile she had once been... She asked herself how a woman could be complete without one man she can call her own, and no child that she herself had produced. (p. 19)

This is a very creditable character trait of Jagua. Having become conscious of the fact that her entire life is becoming futile, she sits down to plan what to do in order to remedy the situation. This is a bold and daring exhibition of Jagua's innate strength.

She refuses to let her mistakes weigh her down but rather she decides to pick up the pieces of the life that is available to her. So she weighs the options before her and considers which one will yield the best results when taken. The only faux pas to her plan, however, is that she resorts to receiving help from Chief Ofubara. Instead of trying to stand on her own feet to affirm her independence, Jagua chooses to become one of the many wives of the chief. Through this trivial move of hers, she succumbs to domination by the male sex.

As Jagua walked towards the palace, she noticed a strange excitement, almost a commotion ahead of her. Children stopped their play, pointed at her and ran ahead towards the palace...the palace was all clamour and bustle as they entered and greeted. In the wonder of the chatter and noise, Chief Ofubara came into the sitting room in slippers. (p.24)

Luckily for Jagua, Tamuno, the chief's youngest wife discourages her from staying on as one of the many wives of the chief. Tamuno's visible hatred for Jagua helps her to realize that marrying the chief is not the solution to her problem of finding fulfillment in life but rather, there are other options available to her worth considering and so she leaves Krinameh with the philosophy that 'every disappointment is a blessing, one door closes and another opens.' She pays a brief visit to Brother Fonso in Onitsha. It seems her visit to Brother Fonso was motivated by the fact that she wanted to seek advice on what step next to take for her failed attempt at staying married to Chief Ofubara. In the market, Jagua receives an excellent compliment from one of her brother's customers.

...oh! The woman who shake the world. I thought so! I heard about her. Very famous! He looked more closely at her jeweled neck, the sophisticated hairdo, the elegant high heels. Welcome, madam...that Jagua woman, na wah! (pg 40)

Fortunately for Jagua, Brother Fonso does not criticize her for her past mistakes. Rather, he encourages her and provides her with the information she needs to find Liza in Jos. It is at this point that readers get to know what Jagua really wants then.

She confides in her brother;

at my age, I have to be part of a family, my own. I want to settle down with some man, or live with my daughter. Time is not waiting for me. You are the only brother I have. You have married and raised your own family. Can it be that god did not make me as someone to marry and settle down? (pg 45)

Brother Fonso continually cheers her up and advises her to go to Jos and look for her daughter. He takes her to the station, buys her a ticket, ensures that she is comfortable, and reiterates his advice and leaves. This act from Alfonso is very comforting because he uplifts his sister's spirit in her time of distress. It is at the transit point of the journey, Akwanga that she meets Tobias Momah, the man she eventually marries. She leaves her bus after a brief encounter with Tobias and decides to stay on at Akwanga. The bus she leaves has 'OPPORTUNITY KNOCK ONE TIME' blazoned across the front. It seems this is a silent counsel to Jagua not to make the mistake of letting this opportunity go because she may not get the same opportunity again.

It seems Jagua grasps the opportunity because Tobias sees her as 'special and so he views Jagua as a partner and not just as any ordinary person. Though Jagua trusts Tobias, she does not rush to accept his proposal to stay. She tells him

make we try first...you see when Jagua woman stay with man, first time, everyting' sweet. Den small by small de sweet go begin sour, till 'e bitter. When dat time reach, Jagua woman mus' find anodder man. (p 57)

From this passage, one can say that the long stay in the village has broadened Jagua's view of life. So she does not rush with making commitments to men. Rather, she takes her time to ensure that her decision would pay off in the long run. So in her dealings with Tobias, she shows a great sense of maturity and level headedness unlike the fast going harlot in *Jagua Nana*.

And Tobias does everything right to prove that he respects her and does not only want her in his bed but he also needs her knowledge in managing the restaurant. He tells her she will become 'the big madam' if she stays on and helps him build the place.

He even calls her 'Madam Jagua' showing the great respect he has for her. So she stays on and it is at Akwanga that she meets Liza who happens to be coming for lunch at the same time Jagua and Tobias come there. Their meeting though a tearful one is very memorable. It seems Ekwensi intentionally unites Liza and Jagua at Akwanga to show that, all of Jagua's life is fulfilled when she decides to stay with a man who respects her and treats her as his coequal. Also, through this domesticated Jagua, Ekwensi sends out the message to women that, a woman can have a fulfilled life once she decides to make the right decisions in life and not allow other people to dictate the pattern of her life for her.

It can be deduced that this could be a reason Ekwensi wrote the sequel that is to prove to people that even women like Jagua could have a fulfilled life if they make the right choices later in life.

Having examined Liza and Jagua Nana the two major characters in the novel, we shall now move on to Auntie Kate Nene Papadopoulos, the next woman in the novel worth examining. According to Liza, she is a woman of extraordinary personality and beauty towering above the rest of them. Jagua describes her as a woman who

was usually dressed like a film star, in pale blue or bright red or jade green, and her outfit was always European. She seldom wore Accra cloth or George lace or any of the traditional attires, though it would have suited her marvelously. Her ears, throat, wrists and fingers sparkled with fourteen karat gold jewellery or imitation diamonds.
(pg 73)

With this description, there is no doubt that Ekwensi attaches a sexual tag to Kate's beauty. Because of Auntie Kate's sexuality, she is able to capture the attention of rich and powerful men like Nick Papadopoulos and Alberto Ricardo.

These men offer Auntie Kate the exciting life she craves and she in turn gives them good sex.

Because of her dealings with rich men, she does not have to work to earn a living.

Young Jagua observes;

Somewhere in the preachings of her father, she heard about sin and slothfulness. Out of the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy daily bread! It was difficult to see Auntie Kate sweating, though she did eat her daily eba, rice and salad made from the fresh tomatoes coming from the shaduf farms by the river Jantar. (pg 79)

Undoubtedly, Kate is a siren. She uses her beauty and sweet tongue to manipulate the people she comes into contact with especially if she sees that they are gullible.

For example, she gently makes friends with Jagua giving her money and shoes so that the young girl will develop confidence in her. Once the friendship is established, she convinces Jagua to accompany her to the miners' parties and eventually Jagua is trapped. She had been gently lured into smoking and sex while she was still a young girl of nineteen by Kate because of Kate's personal interest.

...Jagua felt a sharp pang of conscience. Everything inside her told her she was falling into a trap too soon after her escape the last time. But the urge to be there among the hard-drinking hot-blooded men with their coarse jokes and unconcealed lust was irresistible. Auntie Kate's pleading eyes and manner haunted her and she wanted to please her. (p.89)

Thus, Jagua's association with Kate triggers a new interest in the male sex that later leads her to become a harlot. And because of this new interest in the male sex, Jagua is not able to concentrate in class and eventually drops out of school. According to her

She went to school but her mind always wandered away from the lesson to the men and the tempting whispers in her ears...now when she saw a man she felt an immediate response. Was he handsome, or

tall, or well dressed or bearded or mustached? In her day dreams she imagined the appealing ones as her lovers. Nick Papadopoulos for instance ... (p.96)

Also because of the trust Jagua develops in Kate, she is the first person she tells about her pregnancy.

...to her surprise, Auntie Kate was very pleased and excited... [She] could hardly contain her happiness because somewhere in her innermost thoughts she had begun to hatch a diabolical plan for the coming child. She prayed it would turn out to be a boy child. (p.97)

Eventually when Liza is born, Auntie Kate takes advantage of the riots to keep her away from Jagua claiming the baby died during the riots. She even goes a step further to obtain a death certificate and a grave to fully convince Jagua.

Having got a hold of the baby, Kate uses her as a sort of vice to grip Nick so that Nick would not stop providing for her. And even though Nick suspects some sort of foul play, he has no evidence so he accepts Kate as the mother of the baby. This goes on well until Sister Heide alerts Liza that Kate is not her mother. The crux of the matter is that Kate is a kind of woman who puts other women 'down' in order to elevate herself. She does not mind exploiting her fellow women to her advantage.

Hence she 'imported' a batch of girls from the Cameroons to be married off to construction miners in the plateau. This kind of behavior is unacceptable because it is illegal to indulge in child trafficking. But Kate does not care so long as she is making a lot of money from it. This is the kind of behaviour Buchi Emecheta speaks against. She sees man as the enemy and calls for female solidarity. Like Mariama Bâ who shows through her characters Ramatoulaye and Aissatou that women can fight a common enemy (domineering man) through teaming up and helping each other to stand. Emecheta observes

if we as women don't put one another down, things should work out better. Look at the Western society, for instance, some English women tied themselves to poles at the turn of the century before they could they could have a vote.³

It is no wonder that Ekwensi awards her evil deeds with a horrible death and only a foreigner, Ricardo, is left to claim her lifeless body for burial. But so unlike Auntie Kate is

Sister Heide, Kate's friend and housemate. Compared to Kate's cruelty, Heide is a paragon of morality. It seems Ekwensi creates Heide to stick out a sore thumb to Kate. Because it seems they are so much alike in many things only extremely different in character.

According to Jagua, Heide

... too was beautiful in her own quiet way, but there was something more domesticated about her. For this reason men were always proposing marriage to her, but she never seemed to want to break her attachment to Auntie Kate. They had been known together for so long...Auntie Kate would always find fault with any man who came to engage her. (pg 74)

Sister Heide is an example of the extremely submissive woman who would even be willing to submit to her coequals. No wonder the men want to marry her. And because of her submissive and hardworking nature, she keeps house for Kate, washing, scrubbing, and going to market. Eventually when Liza is brought to stay with them she gladly becomes the nanny.

Much activity is, however, not centered on Sister Heide as a character in the novel, but the most praiseworthy thing about her personality is that, she sets the pace for the whole search of roots to begin. She does the noble deed of informing Liza about her mother and she is the very one who tells Jagua too about the existence of her child whom she considers dead. She is therefore seen as a real woman who has a lot of sympathy for a fellow woman in trouble and is willing to do everything to help. she enjoys no form of empowerment whatsoever.

She is content to serve under her fellow woman from the beginning of the novel to the end.

Tamuno, Chief Ofubara's last and favourite wife is the next woman under examination.

She marries at the tender age of twenty.

Chief Ofubara had discovered her among some dancers after the first departure of Jagua and had indicated he favoured her. Arrangements were made with her family and she became one of the chief's wives. In bed she satisfied him; but gossip was that she was barren...in two years she had produced no child. (pg 31-32)

Being young and beautiful, she uses sex to control the chief parading herself as a sex symbol in the palace. Unfortunately, Jagua's appearance in the palace breaks the monopoly she enjoys over the chief. For this reason she considers Jagua as a threat to her happiness and vows to eliminate her.

Jagua was accepted by the middle-aged wives, many of whom she found attractive and charming. Among the young wives Tamuno remained inflexible and hostile. Ah no like that Jagua woman who come tief my husband, she said to her hearing. (p.29)

Tamuno is that kind of woman who stops at nothing to get what she wants and so she employs the help of a medicine man to kill Jagua. Though Jagua does not die, she leaves Krinameh and Ofubara for Tamuno. It seems Tamuno is afraid that Jagua would take over her place as favourite wife and eventually bear children for the chief, something that she has failed to do. Evidently, her fear is motivated by the fact that the traditional African setting always lays the crime of infertility at the doorstep of the woman. So when a woman could not produce children for her husband she was shamefully sent back to her family and tagged a witch.

Fortunately for Tamuno, Jagua refuses to be the much desired wife of the chief safeguarding Tamuno's position as a favourite though barren wife. Unfortunately the death of the chief renders Tamuno homeless. She has no place in his house since she did not give birth for him. This gives Tamuno a chance to recompose her life. She looks for Jagua who allows her daughter Liza to take Tamuno to Lagos in order for her 'to see de worl.' This chance broadens Tamuno's view of life. And in the final stages of the novel, she is seen studying to be a lawyer like Liza.

It is obvious that through Tamuno's relationship with Liza, she is trained to be a better person than she was in the village. Ekwensi shows through Liza and Tamuno that through female solidarity and cohesion, many women can have a better life. That is to say some women who are ill behaved because they are uneducated can be turned the right way when given the chance through formal education. Jagua notices it and comments "de girl change too much. If you see her in Krinameh-eh? Like tiger. Now she done see de worl." Tamuno's character transformation agrees with Flora Nwapa's comment that

Marriage is not the end of this world; childlessness is not the end of everything. You must survive one way or the other, and do things to make you happy apart from marriage and children.⁴

The last woman to be examined in this chapter is Mrs. Martha Obi, Jagua's mother. From the scratch Mrs. Obi is portrayed as the traditional woman quietly accepting her lot without any desire to change or modify it. She supports every move her husband makes without question. Because of this attitude, her husband calls her 'a good woman.'

Despite all these, she is a very understanding and loving mother to Jagua. She is the one who advises her against following the male sex. She advises Jagua to get the formal education she could not have access to. She tells her

Because you are growing up now; you are opening your eyes to woman things. But you are inexperienced. Men will deceive you. That is what I'm warning you about...all you have to do is put your mind more in your schooling. (p.95)

Apparently, Martha Obi is so glued to the customs and traditions of Ogabu that she does not express any desire to leave the village. Even in Jos, she kept saying she would settle finally in Ogabu because she was so much at home there. Because she is well versed in the cultural practices of her people, she directs Liza what to do during her welcome durbar.

It is obvious that Martha is a traditional woman who is comfortable with her position as a subordinate so she does nothing to change her position. She stays married until her husband dies and when that happens, she is comfortable staying on in his house as the widow. She is content with being a widow and a mother. To her, she has fulfilled her duties assigned her by her society. She married well, had children and even has a grandchild who is a lawyer in Lagos. That is enough achievement for her and so she does not fret about a change in her role. She is satisfied with what is offered her.

So far we have been examining some selected female characters in *Jagua Nana's Daughter*. Through the study, it has become clear that most of the women like Tamuno are seeking a change in the roles assigned them. However, there are still a few women like Martha Obi who is content with the traditional roles assigned them and are playing these roles to perfection. We shall now proceed to look at the style Ekwensi employs in his presentation of the novel.

In *Jagua Nana's Daughter*, Ekwensi's choice of language for the characters is a little different from that of *Jagua Nana* and *Iska*. It seems the use of Standard English is more pronounced in this novel. The heroine, Liza Nene Papadopoulos speaks Standard English while the other female characters speak pidgin. This quality of Liza's speech can be credited to two main reasons. Firstly, she is a very educated lady and a lawyer so because of all these years of education she has an impeccable ability to speak English. Secondly, her impeccable English can be attributed to the fact that she had a greater part of her education in Britain while staying with the Thompsons.

So even in Nigeria, her accent is distinct and seen as obviously British. Her grandmother observes

Liza spoke in English. The woman listened carefully before she caught her meaning and gave her reply also in English. Pardon me, you speak like an English woman. I was brought up there... (pg 140)

Apparently, it is only the illiterate and semi-literate characters in *Jagua Nana's Daughter* who use Pidgin English. This includes women like Jagua, Rosa, Sis Heide and Auntie Kate.

There is the use of long sentences with descriptive paragraphs in the novel. And just like in *Jagua Nana*, the descriptive paragraphs lay emphasis on setting and atmosphere as well as focusing on action and plot development. For example the paragraph below centers on the atmosphere at the party attended by Jagua and Auntie Kate where Jagua lost her virginity.

By nine p.m. the guests began to arrive. They were mainly bachelors, and the girls who came were Nigerian and carefully selected...the music was screeching and screaming from an amplifier. Jagua obliged and screamed. She shook the dizziness out of her head. A man seized her by the waist and began jumping clumsily up and down in what was supposed to be a dance, but Jagua

did not mind. She yielded and clung to him. She felt his too tight grip on her hips and the pressure of his thighs on her thighs. Other men were taking women and dancing with them. Some could not wait. They took the women into rooms and bedded them without further ado. (p 90)

Judging by the sleazy atmosphere that prevailed at the party, it is not surprising that Jagua falls victim to Nick Papadopoulos's seduction without much difficulty. The diction in the novel is generally simple becoming slightly erotic in instances that love imagery is carried across. For example, whenever Liza has an encounter with Saka Jojo the imagery created is sensual through the diction. And when Liza eventually falls in love with Judge Macros, towards the end of the novel, the language turns sensual.

Ekwensi makes use of dialogue in *Jagua Nana's Daughter* extensively. Readers get to know much of the story through the interaction between the characters themselves instead of through narration by the narrator. Ekwensi uses dialogue most of the time as substitute for straightforward narration in the text probably because he wants readers to meet the characters and know them instead of him telling readers about the characters. For example the breakup between Liza and Saka Jojo is presented to readers in a dialogue between the two.

'Saka, do you hear what I am saying?...maybe you don't know this...I was ready to be your mistress, to let things remain as they were...but now its ended I am not going to be your fourth wife or take a castaway husband of three women who beat me up..'She felt no pity for him only pain. 'Liza! Bebe Jagua, think of old times...' 'I have and very carefully too, Saka. Leave me alone- its best this way...' 'And our dreams?' 'Dreams? ...does not one wake up sometime? Ha! Don't be childish!' 'Mr. I have woken up from the dream. At the time of that dream let's say I was lonesome, a stranger in my country. Didn't know anybody. I needed a guide.' (p. 194-5)

Through this dialogue for instance, readers get to see Liza as a strong willed woman who makes decisions and sticks with them especially in instances when her life and safety are threatened. Saka is also seen as a man who does not give up what he wants easily. He uses every means available to him to get what he wants and only stops when women like Liza stand up and defy him.

Concerning the structure, the individual chapters are given specific headings showing precisely what each chapter is going to entail. For example chapter eight, subtitled 'The Meeting' chronicles the meeting between Jagua Nana and Liza as mother and daughter meet for the first time since they began searching for each other.

Liza followed the waiter, stepping gingerly between the tables until she got there and stood rather awkwardly. They exchanged greetings. The woman said to Liza. 'I feel I know you, please do not be angry with me. Something inside me push me to dis. I just feel I know you.' 'Maybe,' said Liza in a distant voice. 'But I do not live here in Onitsha...' 'We too... We arrive last night from Jos.' 'Welcome' said Liza still rather suspicious. The woman made a swift pass over her face and the dark glasses came off. 'Jagua Nana das me... and dis my man- Tobias Moma ... Hotel Man of Akwanga.' 'What! ...' Liza screamed before she knew it. 'My mother!' Jagua said, 'Eheh!... I knew it! Blood smells. I smelt you my daughter. Come to me!' Liza leapt into her mother's arms scattering the well-laid table. They folded each other tight, rocking from one side to the other like playful wrestlers, to the consternation of the arriving guests. (p 157)

This extract from this chapter division for example develops the scene of the daughter and mother meeting after a long time of searching for each other. This chapter provides the climax in the novel and also advances the plot of the novel.

Moreover, Ekwensi labels each of the chapters to ensure that readers are not confused when he switches the points of view which he incidentally does quite often in the novel. Since the story is told from multiple points of view, the chapter breaks allow Ekwensi to switch perspectives without confusing the reader. Additionally, these chapter breaks allow Ekwensi to heighten the suspense in the novel. On the whole, *Jagua Nana's Daughter* is a typical Ekwensi novel, full of exciting incidents and with a dramatic ending. And it is this kind of writing that Douglas Killam in his *Introduction to Nigerian Literature* commends Ekwensi on. He opines

Popular fiction is always significant as indicating current popular interests and morality. Ekwensi's work is redeemed (although not saved as art) by his serious concern with the moral issues which inform contemporary Nigerian life. As such they will always be relevant to Nigerian literary history and Nigerian tradition.⁵

To sum up the study of the women in the various chapters, it is necessary to note that, most of the women in the selected texts (especially the heroines with the exception of Liza) are portrayed as sex-items who have to exhibit their bodies to stir up the appetite of men. However, this portrayal of the women does not hinder them from achieving whatever it is they set out to achieve. That is to say, the woman (especially the African woman) is breaking forth out of the mother-homemaker cocoon assigned her and is gradually moving towards a more dignified role. It is not as if Ekwensi practices vice through the characterization of his women (especially the heroines) but rather he seems to draw society's attention to the effects of evil through the suffering most of those who choose not to amend their lives go through. However, those who move away from the negative things are eventually rewarded with fulfilled and

happy lives at the end of the novel. Even the educated women like Liza who decide to fall in love only do so with men who consider them their equals like Judge Macros.

To conclude the study of Ekwensi's style as appears in the three selected novels, one can say that, Ekwensi usually chooses exciting and thrilling plots that generally arouse readers' interest as happens in *Jagua Nana*, *Iska* and *Jagua Nana's Daughter*. This is because he describes himself as 'a writer for the masses.' It is not surprising to note that sometimes because of his desire to write for the masses he often approaches the over-romantic, the vulgar and the sensational.

Behind his work stands a reading of American popular fiction and paperback crime stories. Yet Ekwensi's writing cannot be dismissed with such assertions. The very practice of writing, the developing professionalism of his work, makes us find in Ekwensi a new and perhaps important phenomenon in African writing. By constant productivity, his style is becoming purged of its derivative excess and his plots begin to take on a less picaresque structure. Ekwensi is interesting because he is concerned with the present, with the violence of the new Lagos slums, the dishonesty of the new native politicians.⁶

Ekwensi's plots are generally interesting because most of them chronicle real life situations either in the city or in the rural areas. However, because most of his plots are episodic (with reference to the three novels under study) in nature, critics have labeled them as 'lacking organic unity.' They argue that the looseness at the end of the various sub-plots makes his novels read like a chronicle of events in the lives of people.

In an article titled *Artistry and Social Consciousness in Cyprian Ekwensi's Novels and Stories* Arthur Smith argues that

Some incidents in the works do not come out real and convincing. All too often there is frequent recourse to melodramatics. These are most evident in the many dramatic incidents involving Amusa Sango and Jagua

Nana, those of murders, fights and suicides as well as the numerous sexual orgies involving the same characters... in addition, many characters fail to come off real and convincing. Freddie's portrayal in *Jagua Nana* is very shadowy. Many of his actions seem rather implausible. It is improbable for such an honest and idealistic young man to be suddenly transformed to a self-serving and lusty political aspirant simply because he has just returned from studying overseas. Other characters such as Uncle Namme, Uncle Ofubara, and Dennis Odoma are almost as good as pawns. Uncle Taiwo's comical presentation makes him more of a caricature than a fully developed character. He is there simply as a pawn introducing the political aspects of Lagos life.⁷

Despite all these misgivings, Ekwensi has also been lauded as the African writer who does not select his writing material from the past (as in the novels of Ngugi), the history of missionaries (as in Oyono) and British administrations (as in Achebe's books). Ekwensi faces the difficult task of catching the present tone of Africa; post- independence Africa and the various problems that confront the people. According to Martin Tucker, 'Ekwensi is the most prolific of the socially realistic Nigerian novelists...only Ekwensi has dared to approach the contemporary scene with critical satire.

For others the fact of independence seems too triumphant for the more recent changes to be recorded.'⁸ Also, Nigerian born drama Professor Kole Omotoso expressed his admiration for Ekwensi – the-struggling-artist on the Bellagio Publishing Network Website saying 'Cyprian Ekwensi is important in Nigerian writing for many reasons, but especially because he believed in himself and made us believe in ourselves.'⁹

To end it all on Ekwensi and his style in the three novels, it can be said that,

It may be that Ekwensi's very weaknesses will prove to be the source of his future promise. If his attempt to be popular and modern leads him into the trivial and shallow, it also saves him from the contrary threat that

makes pedagogic competence and mediocrity the common flaws of some African writing. His energy and liveliness may be controlled by a more serious subject and indeed there is already evidence of this. I shall expect Ekwensi's next novel to show this increasing depth and sophistication. Some critics apparently feel that his attempt at the merely popular makes his writing unworthy of serious critical consideration. I believe that they may be missing not only a new phenomenon in African writing, but a novelist who will have the potential to create books far more profound and complex than those he has so far achieved.”¹⁰

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CONCLUSION

Historical records have it that African women in the past contributed immensely to the economic, social and political life of her people. Economically, African women were known to have engaged in a great deal of farming, selling their produce to cater for the needs of their families especially their children. Socially, these women shaped the minds of their children through the rendition of African oral traditions (like riddles, short stories among others) by the fireside each evening after a tough working day. Politically, most women were made kingmakers and queen mothers to help the men run the society effectively. Most of the women given these positions were women who were thought to have immense wisdom in order to lend helping hands to the men chosen to govern.

There are also historical records of African women who even went to the extent of taking up arms to fight for the liberation of their communities during times when most men were reluctant or afraid to stand up and fight for the liberation of their communities. Examples of such women include Ghana's queen Yaa Asantewaa, Angola's Queen Ann Nzingha and Southern Africa's Helen Suzman among others. As writer Patricia McFadden rightly puts it;

African women have been an important and increasingly visible part of modern African political life. We participated in anti colonial struggles as trade unionists, political leaders, wives and mothers, often in the more traditional ways that women have entered politics. But we have also made fundamental changes to the body politics of Africa in a very significant ways.¹

Nonetheless, because we live in a very patriarchal world, these contributions and sacrifices by women do not receive their full value especially in early literary works. The few African writers who wrote on women issues generally portrayed them as objects to be used by men for their gratification.

These early literary works especially those by male writers failed to highlight the potentials and achievements of African women. Rather it was the 'master-servant' relationship where women lived a life of perpetual servitude to their husbands that these works mirrored. In most of these works, there seemed to be no hope for the African woman because she was expected to carry out her passive role without complaint. It was not until female writers took up the duty of writing about themselves that the subservient roles assigned to women began to change. These female writers like Mariama Ba, Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa among others believed that women should be given the chance to carve out dignified roles for themselves.

These female novelists make it a point to call for a radical change in the images of the African woman. Mariama Ba argues that

The nostalgic songs dedicated to African mothers which express the anxieties of men concerning mother Africa are no longer enough for us. The black woman in African literature must be given the dimension that her role in the liberation struggle next to men has proven to be hers, the dimension coincides with the proven contribution to the economic development of our country [but] women will not be given this place without their real participation.²

Ba is the author of *So Long a Letter* in which she championed the rights of the African woman.

In the quotation above, Ba reiterates the fact that women have never been dormant when it

comes to contribution towards social development. She argues that women who have been able to liberate themselves from male domination should help their fellow women to free themselves through education and economic independence. All these female novelists mentioned above argue that a woman's worth does not only lie in her biological importance as a mother and wife and so they refuse (in their works) to portray such women.

Rather, they present women who are strong, independent-minded, educated and economically independent. Their main aim is to present a change in the former roles assigned to women and produce role models for up and coming African women through their works. Through the works of such novelists, a ray of hope has been presented since the efforts of women have been appreciated and women have been gradually moved from their former shrewish roles to more dignified roles. This is seen as a subtle method aimed at encouraging women the world over to work hard and change their destinies.

At this point it is worth mentioning that, it is not only female novelists who have taken the task of change upon themselves. There are also male novelists who in former times used to give stereotypical roles to women who are now making a conscious effort to give more dignified roles to women in current novels. An example of such male novelists is Chinua Achebe. In his earlier works like *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, women are portrayed as servants to men. In *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People*, most of the female characters are depicted as prostitutes. But then in his recent novel *Anthills of the Savannah*, there is a new woman depicted who is independent and focused in her ways. This clearly shows a positive trend in the portrayal of women even by male novelists.

Cyprian Ekwensi is also one of such male novelists whose works clearly show an upward trend in the portrayal of women. It is clear that in the first two novels by Ekwensi, *People of the City* and *Jagua Nana*, most of the women are portrayed as prostitutes. Education is not really given any priority and the women have no way of gaining financial independence except through selling their bodies. However, the novel *Jagua Nana* ends with Jagua deciding to leave the life of prostitution and to establish herself as a trader. In *Iska*, Remi also leaves the life of prostitution and responsibly marries.

Jagua Nana's Daughter also ends with Tamuno leaving the life of timeless servitude as a chief's widow to move to the city and study law under Liza's tutelage. All these instances in the texts prove that, over the years, there has been a progressively upward trend in women's roles in literary works.

From the study, it has become obvious that the roles of women in literature are changing for the better. From the 1960's onwards one sees that woman's roles are positively impacting on their communities, countries and the world at large. In the first novel which I examined in chapter two, the female characters were not given any respectable roles to play. They were portrayed as prostitutes or bitches and so most of them including the heroine were used and discarded by men. Though Jagua stood out in the end, she was in the minority and just a little space was given to chronicle her change from a prostitute into a businesswoman. In the second novel analyzed in chapter three, the young and beautiful Filia refuses to sell her body to survive in the city. Rather she is interested in honest work no matter how difficult and stressful it is. And even though she occasionally gives herself to men, she does not use it as a business venture but rather she allows them to sleep with her on her terms. This means she is in control of her own body and emotions. She refuses to be subjugated by culture and tradition and so

she refuses the man chosen for her by her family. She only falls in love with men whom she thinks are intelligent. In her short life, she shows that, most women would perform better in life if they had some form of formal education. In the third and last novel studied in chapter four, Liza is a highly educated woman and a lawyer by profession. When readers meet her in the early stages of the novel, she is seriously involved with international businessman Saka Jojo.

Even though Liza is involved with Saka, she refuses to be his third wife. It seems she sees polygamy as a tool for subjugating women and so she wants no part of it. She is only involved with Saka because she wants company in her otherwise lonely world. As she puts it 'I'm not a pauper, or a parasite, or a harlot. Just a decent lonely Nigerian girl trying to make her way in life... sorry I'm not liberated. I just want to be sensible.' (p. 187) So when she becomes united with her grandmother and subsequently her mother she looks for a man who would treat her with respect and therefore she marries Judge Macros.

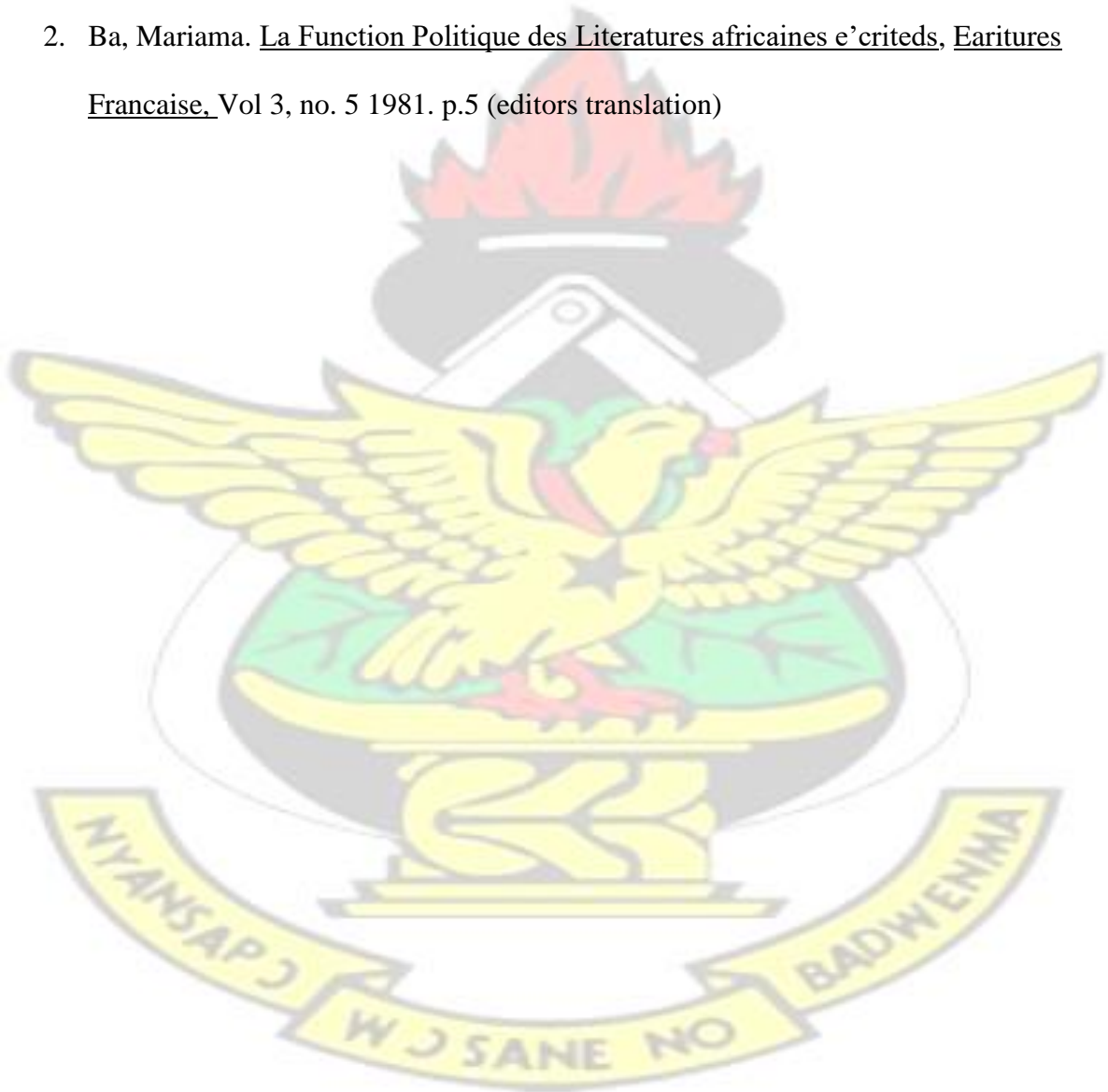
It is a widely held notion that 'Literature is a reflection of life' so whatever happens in literature is seen to be a mirror image of what is happening in real life. A closer look at the roles played by the women, especially the heroines in the three novels studied shows that even though there is a great improvement in the way women are portrayed in literature, there are still some barriers that these women need to cross to attain a greater if not total liberation. These barriers include lack of female education, negative traditional and cultural practices that subtly put women in positions of servitude, economic independence and above all patriarchy. Once women are able to gain access to formal education, they will be able to work hard in order to contribute their parts toward national growth.

To sum it all up, the above analysis proves that women can make something positive out of an otherwise negative situation given the right training and support. Just like Jagua Nana and other women studied moved from undignified positions to more dignified ones at the ends of the various novels studied.

Women should therefore not be limited to the roles of gratifying the needs of men. Rather, they should be given a chance to partake of formal education so they can also make something worthwhile out of their lives. As Wollstonecraft and Woolf have been forcefully putting forth in their *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *A Room of One's Own* respectively. These women argue that if women are given the right kind of education and financial autonomy as a form of empowerment, they will be able to come out with the best talents and abilities found within them. However, when they lack the capability that comes with being intellectually and economically competent then they should not be blamed for behaving in the less desirable stereotype roles. That is to say women should use all that they have to get all they want.

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