

CHARACTERIZATION AND THE HIM IN FADA EBO

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Abstract

This paper has attempted to discuss Fadaebo as a living character according to literary characterization. It based the discussions on one of these elements of literature called character. Generally in literature, characterization is the process of developing highlights and details about a character. The discussion is based on Plato and group's view that literary art is an imitation of existential reality. The HIM (personality) in Fadaebo is focused and discussed in relation to the meanings of his names. His pronounced character traits are also discussed as are portrayed by his words. The reader is hereby finally given the adjudicative powers to decide if Fadaebo is a round, flat, or dynamic character.

Keywords: Fada Ebo, Characterization, HIM, Literature, Personality, Plato.

Introduction

Literary works deal with literature. Though it may sound as if all works of literature are fiction, it must be acknowledged that not all literary works are fiction. Rooting from this, therefore, we say that literary work is divided into two – fiction and non-fiction. As the names imply, fiction deals with the imaginary characters and world, while the non-fiction deals with life-characters in real world. Putting-up a paper on a colossus like Rev. Fr. Professor Benedict Okwuive (Okwuife) Ebo (Eboh), henceforth Fadaebo, is really challenging and indeed a herculean task. This is so, as a colossus is known for its gigantic size, but we shall concentrate our efforts on this discussion from the literary perspective from where our competence is based.

Considering literature from a broad sense, it is an art form of intellectual value and universality with lasting merits. Some authors see it as only imaginary or creative writing, but referring to the origin of the word rooting from the Latin word "littera" (letter of the alphabet), it means the entire body of human writing. Eze (2009:2) believes that it is all about life, and adds:

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In whatever way one sees literature, the most important thing to note is that literature has a world of its own with some elements that make up the world. Such elements include characters, setting, plot, heroes, tragedy, comedy ... and many others.

The paper shall base the discussions here on one of these elements of literature called character. Generally in literature, characterization is the process of developing highlights and details about a character. There are two types of characterization. The first is direct characterization whereby the author tries to portray the character according to what he/she wants the audience to know about the character. The second type is the indirect character whereby the author shows things about the character that aids understanding of his personality and the effect of such on the other characters. In other words, a character is a human being created by man (direct character) or by God (indirect character) who lives in an environment (setting) at a particular point in time amongst other characters and all creating effects on their world. The human being created by man, as just said, can be exemplified by the Kambili in Chimamanda Adichie's (2006) *Purple Hibiscus*. Even when Kambili is a common Igbo name, it is not any Kambili in the real known world. Likewise, the settings of the novel are only fictitious imaginations based on real life.

In the same vein, the human being created by God here is Okwuive Benedict Ebo, whose real world started at the real world of Umuelom a word that means "I now have children", but as Christianized Umerum by the colonizers and their agents. This town is in Ayamelum Local Government Area of Anambra State-Nigeria. That is Fadaebo's first setting where he started his acting. He continued the acting of his life from Umuelom through Rome, back to Bigard Memorial Seminary Ikot- Ekpene in present Akwa Ibom State. The setting/scene of his acts changed variously in the academic world till he joined the teaching staff of the Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria Nsukka, where he retired as a Professor of Philosophy, in December, 2008.

By all that Kambili did in *Purple Hibiscus* we got to know the way she thinks and behaves that formed her personality. Likewise, we shall base our indirect characterization of Fadaebo on some of his actions and works to make his personality better known in relation to the meanings of his names. To pep up our arguments in the work, a brief discussion of characterization is necessary.

Characterization in Literature

For the working definition, character means the mental and ethical traits that distinguishably mark a person; while characterization is the presentation of persons, other beings or creatures (characters) in a dramatic or narrative work of art. Thus characterizing as individual simply means describing an individual convincingly. As it was said earlier, there are two types of characters painted as essentials in literary works. They are protagonists and the antagonists. A protagonist is the central character that plays the first part and the chief part of the actions. He is a leading character, hero or heroine. The second largely painted character is the antagonist. The word antagonism may be well related in the sense we mean here as it denotes negativity - to oppose and incite reactions. In literary works, an antagonist is he or she who incites opposing reactions, to the protagonist. In other words, an antagonist is a character or groups of characters or forces that stand as obstacles to the protagonist.

Literary writers employ a variety of characters to weave their stories as the parts they play add to the story, as well as to the experience of the readers. Ervin (2011) in his article titled "Seven common character types" listed other character types on which the study will hinge our discussion of the character types. They are:

- (a) **Dynamic Character:** This type describes a character that permanently changes outlook or personality. Some other authors refer to this type as a developing character - one that changes. Bather (2000:4) adds that this character is not necessarily better than the others because of its tendency to change.
- (b) **Flat Character:** A flat character is he/she who exhibits only one or two personality traits throughout the work and doesn't change any of the traits till the end. It may not stand to counter the dynamic, but may aid the display of the characters of the dynamic.
- (c) **Round Character:** This is a kind of dynamic character who exhibits a variety of traits some of which contradict themselves. In the words of Nchikogwa (2003), a round character is a character with sufficient complexity and incalculability for surprises without losing credibility.
- (d) **Foil Character:** Such a character is often developed to contradict another in order to enhance the traits of the contradicted one.
- (e) **Static Character:** This character is actually static as he/she remains with same portrayed traits throughout the story. It is a kind of flat character.

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- (f) **Stock Character:** Such a character is not focused much in the work, yet recognizable to readers.

Though these characters are distinctively listed here, there is no razor-cut difference amongst them. They are also combinable, as hardly can a personality have only one of the types, though some are not combinable. Example, a character cannot be dynamic and static at the same time or flat and round at same time.

A literary work is assessed with its character developments. In other words, the success of a literary work depends on how the characters are developed. To have a good literary work, Sobczak & Magill (2015) advise that authors pay attention to the characters' ethics. The characters' ethics and actions determine who and what they are. Suffice it to say here that these characters emanate from the real-life characters and so are the characters natural human beings exhibit. Thus, with these clear views of character and characterization we want to characterize Fadaebo as we know him from our home perspective.

Here, Fadaebo is not a literary figure *per se*, or a literary character, but a real human figure character in a real world. The study only using literary mirror to reflect the detailed physical characteristics of the original-life-Fadaebo at an electromagnetic radiation.

Theoretical Underpinning

Contributing from a linguistic perspective under Arts studies to a philosophical group demands a theoretical pep to underpin the argument. All great men and women seen as heroic characters belong to different schools of thought or tradition. According to Juan-Navarro (2007), even Plato is one and belongs to the mimetic group. Mimesis is a philosophical term with a variety of meanings including imitation and representation. The concern of this group is the relationship between art and nature with idealistic doctrine that opposes the permanent circuit of perennial forms to the fluidity of the human real world. Plato and his group focus on art as the imitation of existential reality. On this single instance do we wish to anchor our discussions on Fadaebo.

The HIM in Fadaebo

His Names

Semantically, names and their referents are arbitrarily related. This academic belief informs Searle's (1971:134) opinion that name "are meaningless marks, they have denotations but not connotations". This contradicts what Humphrey, the 36th American Vice President, said as is cited by Emeka-Nwobi (2012) that "the sweetness of a rose depends upon the name it bears". Standing on the precepts of Anthroponomy- a branch of Onomastics - we state here that names are given to identify, specify, differentiate, distinguish and designate an individual, as such have meanings especially in the African tradition. The conventionality of naming is not in the scope of this study.

Deluzain (1996) quotes a Puritan preacher to have said that "A good name is a thread typed about the finger, to make us mindful of the errand we came into the world to do for our master". A number of scientific researchers like psychologists who study human behaviours have explored the feelings that human names influence their bearers. Deluzain (1996) thus avers:

It has been well established through research that certain names are generally considered desirable in our culture and positive feelings associated with them. It is also well established that other names are looked upon as being undesirable and carry negative association,... Because of this, people unconsciously, but nevertheless effectively, send positive and negative messages in keeping with positive and negative images.

From the Biblical perspective, we see those whose names are undesirable and carry negative association changing them. Examples, Jabez (which means pains according to the foot notes) prayed God to change his name by blessing him. (1Chronicles 4:9-10); Naomi wanted her name changed to Marah (Ruth1: 19-22); Sarai to Sarah and Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5&15) and others. We wish to acknowledge here that most names in Igbo-land are mainly the indicators of the psychological state of the parents at the arrival of their children. Such states of mind can be guilt, fear, joy, wish, belief, hope, fashion, and so on. The present Igbo people have realized the importance of names and their influence to life, and so switched to mainly names that root in *Chi* (God) and hardly *agwu*.

Though Fadaebo's first name - Okwuive - has no *Chi* attached to it, it is indirectly rooted in *Chi*. It could even be seen as a pointer to what he would become in life as destined by his *Chi*. Okwuive is a compound noun - *okwu* (spoken word) and *ive* (ontological word-space). Though Okwuive (Okwuife)

literarily means words in the ontological word-space, its deeper meaning here may best be understood in the words of Okonkwo (2012:25) that *okwu* is as

Myth... that shapes and determines the transformation of humanity alongside their multifarious existential options, possibilities and opposing factors to guarantee intimacy with the created order *in illo tempore* - at the beginning of time.

For Fadaebo's "non-Christian" parents to give their child this name means that they believe in the myth of the ontological word-space that the child has come into. It also means that they believe in the order that assigns a part to the child to be played for the Master as the Puritan preacher stated. This child who later became Benedict mythologized into a Roman Catholic Priest as his multifarious existential option in the order of *in illo tempore*.

Taking up Fadaebo's second name Benedict, it would be necessary to refer to the dictionary meaning of the word. By www.dictionary.com (19th November 2016) and taking Benedict as a noun, it is defined as "a newly married man, especially one who has been long a bachelor". Same meaning obtains at www.merianwebster.com. Okwuive, following the dictates of the words in ontological word-space becomes a newly married man that remains a bachelor all his life. Is he really a bachelor? Could he be a bachelor when he left traditional religion to be married to Christ-His spouse for life? Could he be a bachelor when he has many children who refer to him as 'father'? For the researcher, he is Nnamben.

From the perspective of Christendom (Roman Catholic precisely) his second name Benedict is a Latin word from "Benedictus" which means blessing. By inference, therefore, Benedict means blessed. Thus the word in ontological word-space married for life to Christ is blessed. Indeed, Nnamben, Fadaebo, the first Catholic Priest in the whole of Ayamelum Local Government Area of eight (8) towns, you are a blessing.

Chamary (2015) in our outline article "The name game: How names spell success in life and love" states that one's name "can affect your standing at work, your success... even where you choose to live". Can this be taken as the case with Fadaebo? Again "The Week Magazine" (2012) states that "people are unconsciously drawn to things, people, and places that sound like their names" which is called implicit egotism in psychology. Can the name Benedict be the reason for the numerous human attachments of Fadaebo?

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The Character of the HIM

In the discussions of character, the study looked into the character types. Even when we can count the types on the fingers, the traits/values as the genetically determined conditions of physical and behavioral underlying values, may be limitless. These traits can be grouped into two broad kinds - the unconsciously acquired traits/values and the consciously acquired traits/values.

Two common examples that come to mind when consciously acquired character traits are mentioned are being educated and being informed. Fadaebo was a bright happy child in his “non-Christian family” who followed others to church at an early stage and never knew he was on the track to his marriage with the church and Christ. At the time of his primary education, the school and the church were in the hands of one body. With the academics on though, Fadaebo was more enraptured with the Christian faith that he joined the baptism class, became active, and got baptized. His journey through the junior and senior seminaries speaks for itself. No wonder then, he was deemed fit as soon as he returned from Rome by the church to be called into the teaching staff of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Ikot Ekpene where he was nicknamed “Episteme” for his works and teachings. Even when he eventually landed at the University of Nigeria Nsukka for a teaching job, he continued giving helping hands in the formation of seminarians at Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu. The consciously acquired character traits of Fadaebo really manifested throughout the different settings of his act of life.

We learn about people from their character traits and the way they interact with others. Some character traits deal with values and belief. Examples include being religious, honest, devoted, patient, optimistic, resourceful, adventurous, and so on. Some of these traits have already been associated with Fadaebo as discussed above.

Other traits may be related to a person’s physical description. Fadaebo is a person that would always have his hair shaven as far back as when I was small. Could it be that it helps him keep hair out of issues in his mind while praying from his Breviary, while meditating for a sermon, or reading his numerous philosophy books?

The natural built of Fadaebo makes him qualified to be called an average man in height and weight. His panacea for good health evident in his controversial work *Urine as Medicine* has kept him in the same shape for years till now. Some may

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see him as tall, but as far as he is not the tallest of his age group at home, he can only be considered an average man. A good friend of his - Rev. Msgr. Eugene Ugonna Igboaja - considers Fadaebo as a “short man” since he (Igboaja) is taller than Fadaebo.

Fadaebo believes that action speaks louder than voice. His works “Even Angels Eat Beans” and “Living Beyond Materialism” sum up his views as Eboh (1994:27 states:

If this is the case, it is only religion that can save us from the menace of materialism in our society. Religion that is devoid of ambivalence that results from one foot in the church and the other foot in the shrine, one wife in Church, another measure in the market place, ‘white’ on Sunday, ‘black on Monday... Our actions must be true, that is they must flow from interior attachment to the known truth... It is not only words but deeds that bring out the splendor of Christian living of our dream.

Fadaebo is kind and patient. He usually speaks with the natural Igbo accent and Igbo meanings. At situations where he is startled, surprised or excited, he would usually exclaim “Oodogwu! (The great one!). This depicts his conciliatory, resilient and gentle nature. No need discussing the reactions of such a person in turbulent and scary situations, because Fadaebo would rather remain silent at such situations. He is not an easy push-over from his convictions. Running to him in a distressed situation of injustice, he would often say “*Adina ka onu akoro gi*”, (Do not be what others say you are.) because, whatever happens to man happens to him in the mind. Expressing worries over any issue, he would still say the same thing. He believes in having positive dispositions towards every situation in life. That is just part of his nature, or do we say character trait only to make him fall in line with the footsteps and teachings of Christ.

In one of his works “Even the Angels Eat Beans”, Fadaebo tries to expose the unpredictable nature of human beings. Man as a social being often exhibit unpleasant surprises in his actions, inactions, and reactions. Some of such surprises sometimes root from jealousy. Expressing such worries with Fadaebo, he would say what Eboh (1999:2) noted by admonishing you to “becoming more tolerant and understanding of why people behave the way they do”. If you persist he would add “Pray because jealousy is worse than cancer”.

Fadaebo is ever ready to assist people, even when it encroaches into his schedule for Holy Mass. In his bid to assist, he may lose track of time and may not be punctual. I had the privilege sometime in the past to persuade him to leave a situation as it was encroaching into his schedule for Holy Mass and his reply was “*Fada ana ejelo Mass late, mgbe fada ji bia ka Mass geji bido*” (The Holy Mass starts when the priests comes, so he is never late). Some people would interpret this as being tardy, but an objective mind would see him as one with an allergy for people being stressed.

From the discussions so far, including that of the types of characters, is Fadaebo a flat, round or dynamic character?

Conclusion

An attempt has been made here to discuss Fadaebo as a living character according to literary characterization. The discussion is based on Plato and group’s view that literary art is an imitation of existential reality. The HIM (personality) in Fadaebo is focused and discussed in relation to the meanings of his names. His pronounced character traits are also discussed as are portrayed by his words. The reader is hereby finally given the adjudicative powers to decide if Fadaebo is a round, flat, or dynamic character.

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