

**CHARACTERIZATION AND
CONFLICT IN OKEY NDIBE'S
FOREIGN GODS INC**

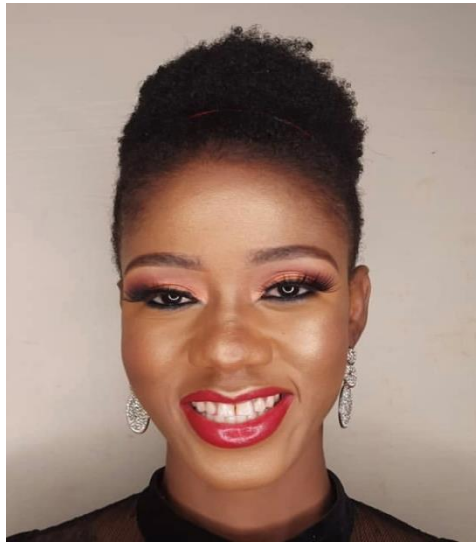
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of characterization and conflict in Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc.* The study is in five chapters, and they are introduction, literature review, characterization, conflict, and conclusion. Sociology of literature is the adopted theoretical framework, and the approach shows the interrelationship between characterization and conflict in the novel. Given the content and context of the novel, the adopted literary theory helps the reader to situate the themes of migration, identity clash, corruption, religious conflict and alienation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

A writer can pass his or her message across his or her message to readers via many techniques. Thus, in order to understand the message in a text, the reader must understand the various devices used by the writer. Aslbiene Evelyn Iboroma says, textual meaning or theme is embedded in the elements or techniques of the text

Theme can be defined as the abstract idea which is expressed in a work of art, an abstract idea that the reader extracts from his/her study of the characters, plot and setting that make up the story, or from the authors careful use of poetic devices if it is a poem. In other words, it is the meaning released by the work when we take all aspects of the work in its entirety into account. (245-6)

Keeping Iboroma's statement in mind, we shall examine the use of characterization in Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc.* We shall also examine the relationship between characterization and conflict in this said novel. This will enable us to understand the connection between characterization and the thematic concern of the author

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Characterization has been the subject of debate amongst foreign and local scholars of the African novel. As Chinweizu, Onwuchekwalemie and IhechukwuMadubiike say:

Among the specific charges made against the African novel in the area of characterization and description are the following that characters are underdeveloped, that character portraits are not full or detailed enough, that personality traits are not probed in depth, that complete characterizations are hard to come by, that dialogue is

not much used to develop characters, that the motivations of characters are not really probed; and that pictorial descriptions are sketchy (113-4)

But we shall not focus on Western prejudice against African novels here

Given the importance of characterization to the success of a novel, the questions before us are clear How has Okey Ndibe developed the characters in *Foreign Gods, Inc*?

How has characterization contributed to conflict in the novel?

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine characterization and conflict as carriers of meaning in Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc*. The following are the objectives

- i. To examine the characterization of the major characters in Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc*
- ii. To examine the use and kinds of conflict in Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc*.
- iii. To examine how conflict and characterization embody the writer's message.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc* was published in the United States in January, 2014 However, the Nigerian edition of the novel was recently released in 2017. Although the novel has been in the literary scene for four years, significant scholarly attention has not been paid to the novel beyond a few newspaper reviews As a result of this, this research seeks to fill the gap by paying critical attention to the novel

1.5 Biography of Okey Ndibe

Okey Ndibe whose father was a postal worker and his mother a teacher was born in Yola, Nigeria. His early life in Nigeria was greatly influenced by the Biafran War, a subject that he later wrote about in an essay entitled "My Biafran Eyes" He finished his elementary school education in the town of Enugu Ukwu and attended St. Michael's Secondary School, Nimo, in Anambra State, Nigeria at the end of the Biafran War

Ndibe worked in Nigeria as a journalist and magazine editor, and went to the United States in 1988 at the invitation of famous Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. In the United States, Ndibe helped to found African Commentary, a magazine described as "award-winning and widely acclaimed Ndibe holds both an MFA in Creative Writing and a PhD in Literature from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He continued to write for magazines and papers in the United States, winning the 2001 Association of Opinion Page Editors Award for best opinion essay in an American newspaper for his piece "Eyes to the Ground The Perils of the Black Student."

Ndibe has worked as a professor at several colleges, including Connecticut College, Bard College at Simon's Rock, Trinity College Connecticut, and Brown University. He has also been the Shearing Fellow at the Black Mountain Institute at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Ndibe is an author of short fiction, novels, poetry and political commentary. He is a regular columnist for NEXT, a Nigerian newspaper. His first novel, entitled *Arrows of Rain*, was published in 2000. His second novel, *Foreign Gods, Inc.*, was published by Soho Press in 2014; it was named one of the best books of the year by such publications as *The New York Times*, *Inquirer*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and *Mosaic*, as well as being included in National Public Radio's list of best books of 2014

1.6 Scope and Limitations

The literary text under study, here, is Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc*. In our examination of the novel, we shall limit our study to the use of characterization and conflict in the novel and how Ndibe uses them (characterization and conflict) to pass across some messages to his readers.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Sociology of literature which is considered to have been propounded by the French historian Hippolyte Taine will be adopted as our theoretical framework. Sociology of literature combines two disciplines sociology and literature. Sociology deals with the study of the society and its institutions. Sociology of literature, therefore, basically, deals with how one's understanding of the society can aid one's understanding of a literary text. Sociology of literature, therefore, looks at the crucial relationship between literature and the society In Udumukwu's words, "The sociology of literature recognizes the elemental interconnection between literature and society" (Criticism 193).

The history of sociology of literature can be traced to the time of ancient Greece The Greek scholar Plato and some modern scholars have attempted to examine a sociological approach to literature. These scholars saw literature as a product of the society and that the events in literature are shaped by the society. Plato is credited to being the first to raise the issue of the relationship between society and literature. He tried to examine the implications of literature on the society Plato saw literature as an aspect of society that has negative implications for the society He saw literature as being capable of influencing man's reasoning and making him sentimental (Udumukwu, Criticism 58) He believed literature ought to be removed from the ideal republic. However, Aristotle did not agree with Plato and Aristotle's objections paved the way for the sociological approach to the study of literature With the emergence of the novel in the eighteenth century, this approach gained more ground especially with de Boland's maxim that literature is an expression of society.

There are two paradigms to the study of sociology of literature: the Positivistic sociology and the Marxist sociology. These paradigms emerged from the works of Raymond Aaron who

regarded both paradigms as the two schools of sociology. These two paradigms (the Positivist and Marxist sociology) are studied under what is called the conflict perspective and the functionalist perspective (Udumukwu, Criticism 193).

The functionalist perspective focuses on the ability of a society to cohere. In the words of Udumukwu, "Functionalism... emphasizes the problem of order at the social level. The assumption here is that societies are cohesive and are differentiated in terms of their structural arrangements" (Criticism 193). Basically, and in addition, the functionalist approach examines the place or role of literature in the society, the place or role of society in literature, and the effect of the literary phenomenon on the society.

The conflict perspective, on the other hand, deals with the events that lead to a change in the society. While the functionalist perspective deals with how societies cohere, the conflict perspective deals with the transformations in the society and how those changes or transformations came to be. We shall apply this conflict perspective to our study of *Foreign Gods In*

Major advocates of the sociology of literature include: Raymond Aaron, Priscilla Clark, Emile Durkheim, Madam de Stael, et cetera.

1.8 Methodology

This study adopts the analytical method of analysis, derived from the word, analysis, we understand that it involves studying "...a problem in detail by breaking it down into various parts. Also, we cannot analyze a novel without an awareness of the logical connection between plot and character, point of view and theme" (Udumukwu, Criticism 25). From Udumukwu's observations, analysis involves the study of the various elements or devices inherent in a text.

The analytical method, therefore, deals with the identification and examination of the various elements inherent in a literary text as well as how those elements are used as vehicles through which a message is delivered to the audience or readers. However, in our adoption of the analytical method of analysis, we shall not identify and examine all the elements or devices in the literary text under study. Rather, we shall limit this method of analysis to, simply, the identification and analysis of two elements (characterization and conflict) and how these elements are carriers of meaning.

1.9 Definition of Terms

1.9.1 Characterization

The word "character" is at the root of characterization. Character and characterization go together as they are simply two sides of the same coin. Characters are, simply, the people who inhabit the world of a literary text. E.M. Foster sees characters as "word masses" invented by the novelist and conditioned according to his priorities and temperaments" (54), while M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Harpham see characters as "persons presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say the dialogue - and what they do the action" (3).

Characterization, on the other hand, refers to the make-up of a character. In other words, characterization includes the behaviour, attitude, disposition, appearance, status, age, beliefs, et cetera of a particular character. The totality of a character is encapsulated in the character's characterization. In the words of AustineUkaNwanyanwu, characterization is the way an author reveals the peculiar qualities and attributes of his character" (46). Characterization is a strategy

which is why Kayodelyasere sees it as "the methods adopted in creating characters by writers..." (52). We can, therefore, say that characterization involves the process of creating a character

Character and characterization are indispensable to a literary text. This is as Benneth says, "The foundation of good fiction is character-creating and nothing else." (qtd. in Woolf 187) Characterization helps a novel to fulfil its basic distinguishing feature from other narratives such as romance and folktales. This distinguishing element is verisimilitude As Onyemaechil/dumukwu says, "Unlike the older forms before it such as epic, myth, legend or folktale or even romance, the novel concentrates on the reality of experience in the present. It is this concreteness of representation that gives the novel its verisimilitude This is the quality in the novel as a work of the imagination that makes it to be seemingly true to life (Change 2). As Udentia O. Udentia puts it, "The nature of reality in a novel, to a great extent, is determined by the nature of the characters" (69). Therefore, through characterization, the writer creates characters that are true to life.

1.9.2 Conflict

Conflict involves a clash between two or more opposing forces which, usually, arises from differing ideologies. As Udumukwu observes, "Conflict is primarily defined as the opposition of forces. Essentially conflict manifests when a character is struggling with another character or entity (that is, another person or even an animal or a natural force, or his own personality)

conflict may crystallize as a disagreement between ideas in the narrative" (Criticism 41).

There are, basically, two types of conflict under which the other kinds of conflict are subsumed. There are the external and internal types of conflict. The external conflict arises when the entity opposing a character is outside of the character. It occurs "when there is some external force or obstacle blocking the fulfilment of a character's desire" (Udumukwu, Criticism 42). The kind of conflict can manifest in situations where a person stands against supernatural beings, person stands against another person; and person stands against society (Udumukwu, Criticism 42-34). The other type of conflict is internal conflict. This arises within a character. This manifests in the form of "one against oneself" It is, usually, psychological in nature.

Conflict is indispensable to a literary text because it is the conflict that drives the plot of a text. And the story ends, immediately, the conflict is resolved. Conflict is so important that it is regarded as one of the elements of a plot. Thus, in his examination of plot, Nwanyanwu identifies five (5) elements of a plot: exposition, complication, conflict, climax, and denouement (28). And to emphasize the crucial place of conflict, we can explain all five elements of a plot thus: exposition - the time without a conflict, complication - the beginning of the conflict; conflict the opposition of forces which is the conflict itself; climax the highest point of the conflict; denouement the resolution of the conflict.

In this study, we shall, then, examine characterization and conflict in a literary text and how these two techniques have been used to realize the theme of the literary text being studied here.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some critics and book reviewers have discussed the nature of Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc.* they are attracted by the issues the book raises about the society, partly the features of economic migration in the novel. According to Justin J. Stephani:

Ndibe takes the story of a Nigerian immigrant and advances it nearly ten years. Laid before Ikechukwu Uzongdu's (Ike) unrest and desperation from having failed to acquire a role in corporate America (despite a college education). Ndibe transforms the American Dream into a barren minefield of temptation and manipulation. In doing so, the linear and concise plot becomes a lesson on moral and cultural relation that's nuanced and visceral (n.d.)

Stephani's observations indicate how Ndibe makes use of a literary technique known as contrast.

In *Foreign Gods, Inc.*, Ndibe contrasts expectation and reality. Migrants' expectation for an economic improvement in their standard of living in a foreign country is contrasted with the reality of events which take place when they get to America. America presents several challenges which could prove very difficult for the Nigerian migrant to handle. Among these challenges is the issue of his Nigerian accent, which symbolically is a representation of his Nigerian identity. Ike is told that he cannot be offered a job in corporate America even though he has graduated Cum Laude in Economics from Amherst College. And to get the job, he must lose the accent (identity) and acquire an American accent. But his inability to do so leads Ike into degeneration as he moves from a situation of hope and plunges deeper into situations of desperation and frustration. According to Michael Lipkin:

Life in America had started out great for Ike. He graduated from Amherst College cum laude in Economics and expected to get a high-powered finance job and make enough money to live well and support his relatives in Nigeria. But now he can't find a job in finance, partly, he's told, because of his heavy accent. Thus begins Ike's

succession of bad decisions. The result of his naïve, indecisive, passive nature He's manipulated into marriage by a woman nicknamed Queen B who squanders all his money, sending him into debt. (n.d.)

Lipkin points at the degeneration that takes place in Ike's life Furthermore, after his hope of finding a job in corporate America fails woefully, Ike goes into gambling if only to raise some money for his family back in Nigeria. When this gambling plan fails, Ike becomes a taxi driver. The degeneration is heightened in this situational irony, that Ike moves from graduating from Amherst College Cum Laude in Economics to becoming a taxi driver. Taxi driving does not provide enough for him and his family (mother and sister) back in Nigeria He therefore degenerates further by resorting to stealing. When all plans to improving his economic standard of living fail woefully in America, Ike resorts to stealing Ngene, a war deity of his community.

Apart from migration, another prominent feature in Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc* is the contrast between tradition and modernity. Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc* shows a Nigerian society in transition, moving from the traditional state to a modern state. And as a result of this transition, the elements of tradition are no longer respected. The characters in the novel who represent tradition are Osuakwu (Ike's uncle) and Nne (Ike's grandmother) while the characters who represent modernity in the novel are: Mark, Ike and Pastor Uka. By contrasting these characters, Ndibe presents the nature of society in transition, a society without regards for the sacred. According to M.A. Orthofer:

Ike makes his rounds and we get a lay of the land, a Nigeria of extremes, tradition and modernity, obscene wealth and great poverty, all not just side by side but overlapping. Ike abandoned this, decades earlier, but he's clearly not managed to quite find his place in the US either. Will the bringing of the traditional idol from its sacred place to its new home change everything or anything? (n.d.)

By taking away the deity (Ngene) from its sacred position, modernity represents a lack of regard for the sacred things of the traditional society. In the novel, the three characters who represent modernity take the sacred things for granted. Ike steals the Ngene deity just to make some money in the United States, Pastor Uka takes Christianity as a tool for exploitation while Mark sees himself as "the man who sells gods." *Foreign Gods, Inc* explores the lack of respect and regard for sacred things in a society in transition from the traditional times to the modern times.

Though the traditional and sacred beliefs are taken for granted in a modern society, Ndibe presents the potency of the sacred and traditional beliefs in the modern society. The society Ndibe presents to us is a modern one but in that modern society we see the potency of traditional ways of life and belief represented through Ngene and Ike's fainting feats during storms.

Even though Ike is in the United States of America, a country quite far away from his village in Nigeria, he still suffers the fainting feats which his uncle, Osuakwu, later informs us is a sign that Ike is chosen by Ngene to serve Ngene. Osuakwu informs us that he too underwent the same fainting feats during storms when Ngene chose him. Therefore, Ngene which Ike sees as having lost its power in the modern times (because there are no more wars to prove Ngene in the village) shows itself to be still powerful in the modern society. As Orthofer says:

In trying to justify his crime Ike isn't quite convinced by the gallery-owner's philosophy, but tells himself there may be something to it in a postmodern world, even gods and sacred objects must travel or lose their vitality, any deity that remained stuck in its place and time would soon become moribund. (n.d.)

Orthofer shows the mindset of modern societies. People justify their lack of regard for sacred objects. They believe that they have to "save" the sacred objects from becoming moribund from dying or nearing an end. So to them, these sacred objects are "nearing their end" or dying, in other words, losing value and relevance and the only way to save them is for them (the sacred

objects) to "travel". But this is simply an excuse used in order to monetize the sacred objects. In their quest for profit, they have no fear and regard anymore for the sacred.

But Ndibe uses *Foreign Gods, Inc* to show the potency of the traditional beliefs. Ngene is not to be seen as an idol but as a symbol of the traditional belief system. And Ngene's potency in the modern world (or in the novel) symbolizes the potency of the traditional ways or belief system in the modern society. The torment Stanton, the white missionary, undergoes as well as Ike's fainting feats during storms is used to represent this potency of the traditional belief system in a modern world. In the words of Orthofer

It can be seen that Ike's life has been determined by powers far out of his control, from his failure to get an appropriate job to the old connection to the Ngene cult but there's certainly considerable contributory negligence on his part. Certainly his ill-conceived and right-through the end barely - thought - through plan makes it seem like he's willing to leave himself at the mercy of the gods.... There's a possibly decent sort of lesson about tradition and modernity buried somewhere in this novel. (n.d.)

Ndibe does not only present a transition in a society from a traditional one to a modern one, he also presents the cause of this transition. For Ndibe, the hypocritical activities of the European Christian missionaries are to blame for the transition into a modern society which has no regard for the traditional ways of life. We have regarded the activities of the Christian missionaries as hypocritical not out of bias but simply as a result of the presentation of these activities in *Foreign Gods, Inc*. Firstly, the behaviour and actions of Stanton, the Christian missionary are contrary to what he preaches, but we shall examine that fully in the subsequent chapter Secondly, Ndibe informs us that converts are won not because of the preaching of the missionary but because of the guns which the missionaries came with, fear of the guns. Ndibe therefore seems to be blaming the activities of the missionaries which he sees as hypocritical to be the cause of the

transition into a modern society with no regard for the traditional way of life and culture This is because Stanton who represents the European Christian missionaries in Africa had no regard for the African traditional beliefs and therefore regarded them as pagan and barbaric. According to Orthofer

A near chapter-length aside, describing an early missionary's activity when he came to Ike's homeland under British rule, is one of several solid bits showing the effect outside forces and ideas (including that religion the reverend brings to town) had on the locals. (n.d.)

And Ndibe uses Ike and Stanton as scapegoats of the wrath of Ngene. What Stanton undergoes psychologically when he defines Ngene (symbolically representing the traditional belief system) is similar to the psychological torture Ike undergoes at the end of the novel when he too defines Ngene by bringing the idol from its sacred abode to the United States of America. Ngene is presented as being capable of torturing those who defy it. In other words, there are some consequences for defying the traditional ways of life especially those regarded as sacred. According to Lipkin, "later in the story, Ike himself begins to experience madness comparable to Stanton's Is that the fate of all who defy Ngene? The reader may even wonder: 'Does Ngene really have spiritual powers?'" (n.d.). Of course, Ngene may not have any spiritual powers. The idol is simply a symbol. A symbol is "a person, object, place, or event that comes to stand for something other than it is, usually something more than it is, and for a class of events or relationships" (Hall 479) For Ene Eric Igbifa

The word "symbol" refers to anything which stands for, signifies or represents another thing. Thus, a red traffic light, a red circle with the image of a cell- phone in it and a red diagonal line across it, and the vertical green-white-green flag are symbols for "stop," "switch off your phone," and "Nigeria" respectively. Words as a matter of fact, may even be considered symbols for the ideas or things which they name. (102-3)

Ngene is therefore a symbol signifying the traditional belief systems. And the torture which Stanton and Ike undergo after defying the idol symbolizes the consequences one will face for defying the traditional belief system, especially those traditional beliefs that are sacred to the people

Another aspect of *Foreign Gods, Inc* which makes it a creative piece are the techniques used in the literary text. Ndibe makes prominent use of several techniques in order to realize his message. As Lipkin comments:

As Ndibe takes us through these developments, he gets an ever-firmer grip on us, pulling us more and more deeply into Ike's world, into his dilemma. The author does this with a seemingly effortless use of literary skills, including flashback, vivid description, characterization, suspense, symbolism, side stories folded into the main story (n.d.)

Lipkin identifies some of the prominent techniques inherent in Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc*. These techniques are very important in the literary text as Ndibe uses them to realize his message. For example, there are some techniques through which the basic thematic preoccupations of the literary work are enshrined. These literary techniques include: humour, contrast, character and characterization, and conflict. We shall not discuss characterization and conflict here as those will be our concern in the following chapters. We shall, however, discuss contrast and humour.

Ndibe uses humour or satire as a literary device in order to pass across the message of corruption and exploitation. The events which take place between Ike and the officers at the luggage claim and between Ike and Pastor Uka are humorous or satirical. Ndibe wants us to laugh at the ridiculousness of the events in order to correct the social ills of corruption in Nigeria and the exploitation in the church. Apart from the above, there are other humorous events which take place in the literary text. According to Lipkin

From the time of Ike's arrival, Ndibe introduces memorable characters, some humorous and some dramatically touching, such as corrupt customs officers, old friends of Ike's; his impoverished mother and sister, his grandmother who is thought to be a witch, and his uncle Osuakwu, the head priest of Ngene. (n.d.)

These characters introduced above including Pastor Uka are the ones who embody the satire or humour in the literary work. And some of them are also the characters through which Ndibe achieves contrast in *Foreign Gods, Inc*, of course, that includes Reverend Stanton. In *Foreign Gods Inc*. Ndibe contrasts Reverend Stanton and Pastor Uka, Pastor Uka and Osuakwu, the belief in Ngene and the belief in God, to name but a few. In Lipkin's words

Is Stanton any worse than Utonki's present day Christian minister, Reverend Uka? Uka is a sham, a swindler, out to get money from his followers, including Ike's mother and sister. Stanton, as bad as he may have been, at least truly believed in what he was doing and sought no profit, even leaving his beloved wife and children. And is Stanton's god truly superior to Ngene, at least for the people of Utonki? Stanton rails about sin, but later in the story. followers of Ngene simply thank the morning spirit for protecting them and ask the same from the spirits of the afternoon and evening, they don't worry about being inherently evil (n.d.)

Lipkin's examination of Ndibe's contrast between Reverend Stanton and Pastor Uka is geared towards a difference in comparison not a similarity That is, Lipkin examines the difference between Reverend Stanton and Pastor Uka. But irrespective of how much Lipkin tries to present both characters as being different especially in their motives, the truth still remains that both Reverend Stanton and Pastor Uka are symbolic representations of the same idea which is religious hypocrisy Reverend Stanton preaches one thing but is the direct opposite of what he preaches. Pastor Uka is also a direct opposite of what he preaches. In fact, Pastor Uka's hypocrisy is worse than Reverend Stanton's Ndibe could be saying that Reverend Stanton's

religious hypocrisy "gave birth" or led to a greater form of religious hypocrisy represented by Pastor Uka. We shall examine this issue extensively in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTERIZATION IN FOREIGN GODS, INC

Our objective in this section is to examine how characterization can be used as a technique to pass across some messages. We shall therefore examine the characterization of the major characters of Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc*.

3.1 Ikechukwu Uzongdu (Ike)

Ike is the central character in Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc*. Through Ike's characterization, Ndibe explores the issues of migration. One of the manners through which we know about a character is through what the narrator says about the character. In *Foreign Gods, Inc*, the narrator says:

He'd work as a driver for thirteen years, ever since graduating from Amherst College, cum laude, in economics. Now, it would be over. (Foreign. 13)

From the narrator's comment, we understand that Ike is intelligent, having graduated cum laude in economics from an American university, Amherst college. But though Ike, a Nigerian migrant, graduates cum laude in economics in America, we are told that Ike is a driver. This is the use of irony in characterization. According to Hugh Holman and William Harmon, irony refers to "the recognition of a reality different from appearance" (264). The irony in Ike's characterization is that though he graduates as one of the best students in economics from Amherst college, he ends up as a driver. The expectation is that having graduated cum laude in

economics, he should be working in corporate America. Instead, he is simply a taxi driver like is not a taxi driver because he is not hardworking. On the contrary, the narrator informs us that Ike is quite hardworking:

For a moment, he again entertained the idea of heading for his apartment. He intended to turn right on Second Avenue. Instead, he turned left, towards United Nations Plaza. (Foreign 14)

Rather than returning home when he gets tired of driving, especially since it is late, Ike continues driving to make some more money. Also, this hardworking trait is seen in his academic pursuit.

As the narrator says:

Having made that promise [the promise to his mother that he would secure a good job in America and take care of her), Ike pushed himself at Amherst college as hard as he could. And when he earned a cum laude in economics, he trusted that he'd made himself an attractive hire for any fortune 500 company (Foreign, 46)

Ndibe makes Ike a hardworking character and an intelligent student who graduates cum laude in economics. Still, he makes Ike a driver. This characterization is used to pass across the message of the reality of things in America. In Nigeria, people believe that if they migrate to America, their economic standard of living will be improved for the better. As a consequence of this belief or expectation that America is a place where migrants can achieve all their dreams, especially economic dreams, several Nigerians seek every means, both legal and illegal, to migrate to America. Ndibe therefore creates a character (Ike) who stands every chance of achieving this economic expectation, yet does not. Ike's characterization (hardworking and intelligence) is used to contradict the expectation that America is a place where dreams come through. Ndibe creates a seemingly perfect character who ought to have succeeded in America but yet does not. Ndibe uses Ike to expose to migrants or those who wish to migrate that even though one seemingly has

everything it takes to succeed in America, one may not succeed. Through Ike, therefore, Ndibe contradicts the expectations of prospective Nigerian migrants about America.

Ike is unable to get a job in corporate America simply because of his accent. Migrants do not usually imagine that such factor as their accent could prevent them from succeeding in America. The narrator says.

In short order, he received his work authorization and began to apply for jobs. It was then that frustration set in. He attended five interviews at banks and investment firms, but the expected job offer never came. And then he had an interview for a job at Frisch Investments, Inc. "Your credentials are excellent, but the accent is crappy" (Foreign 32)

Before he becomes a driver, joblessness becomes Ike's characterization to show that unemployment is also a problem in America. It also was Ike's characterization to show that a Nigerian stands a better chance succeeding in Nigeria where accent is not a problem.

In addition, Ike, being unable to find a job in corporate America, but still having the need to send his mother some money, decides to indulge in gambling. Part of Ike's characterization therefore is that he is a gambler. As the narrator tells us

A year after arriving in the city, he'd taken to gambling. He had wanted quick cash to replenish some of the money Queen Bee had lavished on expensive clothes and jewelry. And he had wanted extra cash to send to his mother and sister... (Foreign, 45)

But Ike does not become a gambler by choice or because of the presence of excess money, he becomes a gambler by circumstance. The above citation indicates Ike's motivation for becoming a gambler. As Onu observes, "motivation is made up of the circumstances, actions, speeches, temperament, etc, which may offer explanations for, or determine, the actions of a character"

(37) Ike's motivation for becoming a gambler is to generate some money to send to his family mother and sister-back in Nigeria, and to cover up for the money he lost to please Queen Bee, an African-American who had agreed to a fake marriage in order for Ike to get a green card.

By making Ike resort to gambling in America, Ndibe tries to show what frustration and desperation can lead a migrant in America into. Ndibe therefore uses Ike's characterization to indicate that frustration and desperation are some feelings which dawn on migrants in America, as contrary to the expected feelings of excitement of being in America

Finally, Ike's frustration leads him into becoming a thief, as he decides to travel back to Nigeria to steal Ngene, the war deity of his community We can see a progressive degeneration in Ike's characterization, hardworking and intelligent student, graduating cum laude in economics from Amherst College, becoming a taxi driver, a gambler, and a thief These characterizations embodied by Ike, the central character, are used to teach that there are some unanticipated consequences of migration, among which are frustration, moral and psychological degeneration

3.2 Reverend Walter Stanton

Reverend Stanton is another significant character whose characterization is used to pass across a message regarding the nature of Christianity Stanton is a European missionary in Utonki. As the narrator says

The spectacle of the strange visitors drew the elders and people of Utonki to the square where the community celebrated its festivities. Then, speaking through his interpreter, Reverend Stanton announced that he had come to bring salvation to a people in darkness. (Foreign 99).

Stanton declares through the interpreter that the people of Utonki are in darkness, indirectly, regarding himself as being in and of the light. From what the narrator tells us above, we understand that Stanton is a Christian missionary who sees the behaviours and beliefs of the people of Utonki as evil. Since Stanton's characterization as we are told from the outset, is that he is a Christian missionary, we shall examine Stanton's other characterizations to see the nature of Stanton's Christianity

Firstly, Stanton is quite impatient. Unlike the belief in Christianity of the virtue of patience, Stanton, the symbol of Christianity in the novel, is impatient as he screams at the interpreter:

"Are you bloody mute?" demanded Stanton, impatient to know what Okafor had said at such length. (Foreign 105)

Here, we see the narrator describing Stanton as impatient. We also see this impatience when the people of Utonki, the new converts precisely begin asking questions to seek clarification. Stanton is too impatient to clarify them and the narrator says.

And edge of exasperation nudged away Stanton's eager mien. Fixing the interpreter with a glare, he spoke in a slow, halting manner.

"Tell them to get it into their thick heads, once and for all, that there aren't other gods besides the one we worship... Tell, them finally, that there will be no more questions for today" (Foreign.... 103)

Another way through which we can know a character is by what the character says. From what Stanton says above and how he says it, we see that impatience is a major attribute of the missionary. Stanton's impatience attribute contrasts with the patience ideal of Christianity.

Secondly, Stanton's impatience always leads him into a rage and acts of aggression. For instance, when Stanton teaches the new converts of the Pentecost and how the Holy Spirit possessed the disciple, the narrator says

Many converts were moved. Pentecost, they surmised, was a form of Agwu, the spirit of possession. But when one of them, a woman who used to lead the village women in songs, flung herself on the ground and began to speak in a strange, frenzied tongue, the missionary's face turned red. He rushed at her, kicking and stamping. She withered and trembled on the dirt floor, indifferent to his kicks. Huffing and puffing, the missionary shouted, "No madness here! I wouldn't stand for it! Carry the mad woman away!" (Foreign... 104)

We also understand a character from his actions. Stanton's impatience leads him into kicking and hitting a new convert who is seemingly trying to dramatize the events that took place during the Pentecost as described to them by Stanton. Stanton, rather than putting her through, physically assaults her.

In addition, we can understand a particular character by how other characters see the particular character or by what other characters say about the particular character. At arrival in Utonki, the closest character to Stanton is the interpreter, and we understand from the novel that the interpreter has been with Stanton even before their missionary journey to Utonki. Thus, how the interpreter sees him is crucial here, and as the narrator says:

The interpreter made to speak but instead fidgeted, stuttered, and stopped. Unlike the people of Utonki who only knew Stanton on the surface as a splotchy-faced, hairy-chested man who spoke nasally, the interpreter knew the ease with which the missionary could fly into a rage. And the sting of that rage! (Foreign..., 106)

Thus, we are informed that even the interpreter sees Stanton as a man of rage. From Ndibe's choice of words, emphasis is placed on the nature of Stanton's rage, or used to heighten the degree of the rage. The narrator says, "And the sting of that rage" (Foreign 106). The word "sting" is used to highlight and emphasize the high degree of Stanton's rage. And this high degree of rage

is contrary to what Christianity advocates in the Bible. Soon, even the new converts begin to understand that Stanton is a man filled with rage and violence as the narrator tells us:

In the day, he became a sulking man, prone to outbursts of fury. He took to slapping Jacob more and more. The converts were bewildered. In one breath, their missionary talked about peace and love and Christian charity. Then in another he flew into a rage, frothing at the sides of his mouth, slapping thunder into Jacob's eyes. (Foreign... 119)

Stanton's violent acts, aggression, fury or rage is dramatized even to and on the new converts. The converts become confused not because Christian doctrine is confusing, but because the words and actions of the Christian missionary, Stanton, are not at par. Stanton talks about love, patience and peace, but his actions are filled with rage, fury, aggression and violence. Also, Ndibe does not use the word "anger" to describe Stanton, rather, from the citations we have seen above, such words as "rage" and "fury" are used. These words are used to heighten the level of Stanton's anger and impatience.

Furthermore, contrary to the doctrines of Christianity, Stanton curses and swears a lot. The Christian religious book (The Bible) advocates that no filthy words should proceed from a Christian's mouth, yet Stanton, a reverend, is constantly cursing and swearing.

"Don't stand there like a hag! Tell me what the fellow said." He glowered at the interpreter. "Bloody buffoon," Stanton said. "Who talked about the law?..." (Foreign..., 106)

Unleashing two quick slaps on Jacob's face, Stanton barked, "Never, ever call my God a magician! And never, ever mention the name Jesus in vain! Vile, heathen pig!" (Foreign 118)

Stanton continues abusing the interpreter and the new converts verbally by referring to them by such terms as "vile," "bloody buffoon," "hag," "heathen pig!" Such use of language is against what the Bible advocates. Stanton continuously uses swear words and curses that his protégé, the interpreter, is influenced by such use of language and begins to refer to the converts by such words:

"Vile heathens," he [The interpreter, Jacob] said. "Blind pagans! Why do you call prayer shouting? (Foreign., 111)

By making Jacob, the interpreter, embody Stanton's use of language. Ndibe is exposing the negative influence of Christianity wrought by European missionaries.

Also, Stanton is unapologetic. Stanton refuses to apologize whenever the need to do so presents itself. Rather, he attempts to rationalize his refusal or adamancy to apologize. After Stanton unjustly beats us his interpreter, the narrator says:

Later that day, as he sat down to reflect on the incident, Stanton felt that he'd probably overreacted. He even entertained the idea of apologizing to his interpreter, but the temptation passed. What was the injustice of slapping a man unjustly compared with the heresy of reducing God to a magician?" (Foreign, 118)

Rather than apologize for unjustly slapping Jacob, the interpreter, Stanton justifies his wrong action by seeing the action as nothing compared to what Jacob did.

We have so far identified several attributes (characterization) of Stanton. We shall now examine the message such characterization is passing across. we have identified the following to be the characterization of Stanton. he is impatient, violent and aggressive, easily offended and flies into a rage so easily, uses swear and curse words, and unapologetic. All these are attributes contrary to the Christian religious ideals contained in the Bible

Ndibe uses Stanton's characterization to pass across the message of religious hypocrisy. Virtually everything Stanton does is contrary to what he teaches or what the Bible advocates. Yet, he sees himself as one in "the light" and the people of Utonki as being in "the darkness." But his behaviour does not reflect those of people in "the light." Ndibe, therefore, sees Christianity as a hypocritical religion. Or we can say Ndibe sees some advocates of Christianity as hypocrites.

Therefore, Christian religious hypocrisy is the central message embodied in Stanton's characterization.

3.3 Pastor Uka

Apart from Reverend Stanton, another character who represents the Christian religion is Pastor Uka. Uka is the pastor of "Maity Deeds World International Redeemers Church" (Foreign..., 144). Pastor Uka is a deceiver and a home wrecker. He appears to his followers as pious and righteous, but he is morally bankrupt. As the letter sent to Ike by his sister reads:

You're divinely favoured to be a millionaire, but Osuakwu and Ngene [Ike's uncle and grandmother respectively] caused you never to get married. God told Pastor Uka that you must send 1000 Dollars immediately. The money is to help the pastor destroy Ngene. Once you send it, God will unleash blessings in your life. You will find a wife and millions of dollars will find you. (Foreign..., 65)

Uka uses his position as a pastor to deceive his congregation in order to exploit them as he tells them "But God said only those who tithe will be blessed" (Foreign..., 153). Uka attaches having God's blessings to the condition of giving some money to the pastor. He constantly speaks "on behalf of God" to deceive the congregation on what God wants. We can discover the nature of this trickster character by looking at his words as he says:

"God told me to tell you that your wealth would have been released a long time ago, but you were not ready For the longest time, God has had your millions in his hand, ready to release it. All he wanted was for you to sow the seed. Divine law says that we must sow in order to reap..." (Foreign. 162)

Uka alludes to the Bible portion of sowing and reaping but manipulates it for his own selfish benefits. He is also a liar. He constantly prophesizes about things that never happen. As he warns Ike:

"If you go to see either of them [Osuakwu and Nne], you'll die. I received that message this morning. If not for my fasting and prayer, you would have been finished months ago. (Foreign, 165)

And whenever Uka lies, he uses God as a "back-up." He claims his lies come directly from God: "It was God who told me to warn you," he said, his voice unsteady. "God ordered me to warn you not to talk to her" (Foreign.... 158).

Uka is also a greedy character. While admonishing Ike for never sending any money to his mother for the church, he says:

"...He [Satan] made you turn away from your mother, turn away from your sister, turn away from God. Satan stopped you from sowing your seeds. (Foreign..., 161)

Ndibe uses the figure of speech, climax to reveal Pastor Uka's priorities as well as greed. Climax refers to "the arrangement of descriptions, ideas, actions, sentiments in an order of increasing intensity and impressiveness" (Onu 80).

From Uka's listing of what the devil did to Ike, he arranges the acts of the devil from the seemingly least important to him to the most important: turning away from mother, sister, God, and finally sowing of seeds. At the apex point of Uka's priorities is the sowing of seeds, not God. This reveals his greed.

Pastor Uka is also proud and arrogant. He takes the glory for "saving" the people of Utonki from witches and wizards, even though he is lying about the witches and wizards. As he claims

"Every night! I pray. I call down Holy Ghost fire. I break spells and yokes. I unbind the bound. Without me, this village wouldn't know peace at night. You wouldn't have been able to sleep at night." (Foreign, 164)

Though everything Uka says above is a lie, we understand that he is a very arrogant and proud person through his use of pronouns. Uka consistently uses the self-referring pronouns "I" and "me." These pronouns have been regarded by language practitioners as selfish and arrogant. As Okoh observes:

You should therefore direct the attention of your reader to what you have to say, by de-emphasizing the use of the first person. A persistent use of "I" not only smacks of arrogance, but can also be interpreted as making great but unfounded claims regarding your status. In fact, if such a situation of immodesty persists, the teacher under whose tutelage you have been may simply counter, "who are you anyway?" (121)

Therefore, through Uka's continuous use of the "I" and "me" pronouns, we understand he is a very proud and arrogant person.

Ndibe uses Pastor Uka to present the nature of some contemporary pastors in the society. These pastors are notorious for lying and manipulating the Bible in order to exploit members of their churches. Also, through Pastor Uka, the theme of religious hypocrisy is emphasized. We can therefore relate Pastor Uka to Reverend Stanton. Though Reverend Stanton is not manipulative or a liar, his characterizations were not at par with the doctrines of Christianity. He acts contrary to what he preaches and is used to dramatize religious hypocrisy. But this religious hypocrisy is heightened through Uka's characterization of Ndibe, therefore could be saying that the religious hypocrisy of the missionaries gave "birth" or led to the rise of a worse form of religious hypocrisy in the contemporary period.

Ndibe also uses Pastor Uka to expose the effects the words of such religious hypocritical pastors have on families. Pastor Uka is a home-wrecker. The constant accusation of one's family by pastors to be the cause of one's problems has led to the destruction of the unity that exists in a

family. Before Pastor Uka's arrival, Osuakwu, Ike's uncle tells Ike what happens after Ike's father's death:

Every morning, after beating the gong in greeting to Ngene, I went to see Nwanyi Eke [Ike's mother), to inquire after her health. Each night, right after eating. I visited her again to make sure her day had gone well. She seemed pleased with my visits. Once, when Iha had beaten me down with its fever and I couldn't go, she hastened here, her face scarred with fear. For the three days I was flattened by Iba, Nwanyi Eke joined my wives to prepare me meals filled with sharp leaves. (Foreign, 194)

Osuakwu's words above indicate a family in peace and harmony even after the loss of a family member. But after Pastor Uka arrives Utonki and begins lying to Ike's mother as well as some others, this harmonious family is jeopardized and enmity begins to rule the family We see how Pastor Uka wrecks Ike's family from Ike's conversation with his mother

"You know what?" he [Ike] pursued "All this talk of witches and wizards upsets me. Where is it coming from? Who's been telling you that Nne and Osuakwu killed Papa?" she [Ike's mother] breath with relief. "That's the first thing you should have asked Everything I've told you came straight from a man of God, Pastor Uka. It's God who revealed everything to him" (Foreign 136)

Ike's mother's gullibility and Pastor Uka's lies lead to the end of the unity that once existed in Ike's family as Ike's mother believes and sees Osuakwu [Ike's uncle] and Nne [Ike's grandmother] as a wizard and a witch respectively. Pastor Uka goes ahead to lie to Ike that.

"Oh yes, God showed me how they killed your father And these satanic agents were planning your own death. That's when God revealed their plans to me." (Foreign, 162)

But we understand that Pastor Uka is a liar also from what Ike says about him. After Uka tells Ike that Ike will die immediately Ike visits his uncle and grandmother, ignorant that Ike had already visited them, Ike says

"I went to visit my grandmother last night" "Yes, I was with her more than two hours. We talked and joked. She didn't eat me. This is the woman you just warned

me not to see or I'll die The birds in your dreams, do they tell you such pathetic lies?"
(Foreign.... 167)

We can even deduce this lying trickster quality of Uka through how the author (Ndibe) speaking through the narrator sees him. This is known as revealing a character through authorial comments. The author, speaking through the narrator says, "Uka cut the image of a cheap trickster, unmasked" (Foreign..., 159).

But though Uka is unable to deceive Ike, he has succeeded in deceiving Ike's mother and elder sister, leading to the end of the harmonious relationship in the family

Ndibe also uses Pastor Uka's characterization to warn the society that believing in such religious hypocritical pastors as a result of our inability to discern could have grave or death consequences. This is realized through Regina's (Ike's former girlfriend before he travels to America) drug-pushing husband, EmekaEgoigwe. Egoigwe is a drug-pusher who relies on Pastor Uka's prayers for protection. As a result of Pastor Uka's constant lies and deceits that Egoigwe is safe to continue drug-pushing, since Egoigwe gives him (Uka) huge sums of money, Egoigwe ignores his wife's (Regina's) warnings. As Regina tells Ike:

"Yes, Pastor Uka, he was my husband's prayer warrior"

"Go on," Ike prodded. "What happened."

"My husband brought Pastor Uka home. Then Uka said God told him I was possessed."

"Possessed?"

"By the marine spirit. That's what the pastor said, that I was bonded to the water mermaid. He said God also revealed to him that I would bring bad luck to my husband-unless I was delivered." (Foreign, 226)

Egoigwe is gullible enough to believe Pastor Uka's lies as Regina says:

"My husband said the man [Uka] was next to God. You won't believe the kind of money Uka made from my husband. And from other drug smugglers."

"They believed his prayers could save them from arrest. My husband certainly did."
(Foreign... 227)

Egoigwe dies at an airport as the rubber which he had swallowed, containing the drugs, gets torn and the drugs spill in his stomach. Egoigwe's death is used to show the grave consequences in believing in hypocritical, lying religious charlatans like Pastor Uka.

Ndibe also creates satire through Pastor Uka's characterization. Satire is used to ridicule, mock or criticize a character or subject matter in order to correct it. This satire is created through Pastor Uka's illiteracy. Pastor Uka's actions and words in the novel make us laugh at him as they portray him as an illiterate. This illiteracy is best presented through how he writes the name of his church. When Ike decides to join his mother to Pastor Uka's church, simply to see the man who has been lying to his mother, seeing the signpost of the church with the name written, the narrator says.

He stopped to read words scrawled on a broad wooden board. The script was uneven, wavy. In bold letters: MAITY DEEDS WORLD INTENATIONAL REDEAMERS CHURCH. Then in smaller print. COME TO BE PROSPARED, RELEACED FROM YOKES AND SATANIC ATTACKS, WUMBS OPENED, MIRACLOUS DELIVARANCE, DEVINE WANDERS!!! IN JESUS MAITY NAME!!! A bellow of laughter stirred inside him. He struggled to hold it back but let out a gush of breath. "Who wrote this?" he asked.

"Our pastor, why?"

"Why? The man's spelling is terrible. He needs a divine editor" (Foreign 144)

By making illiteracy part of Pastor Uka's characterization, and Ike's mockery that Uka needs a "divine editor," Ndibe attempts to satirize Uka, to make the readers laugh at the character. By laughing at Pastor Uka, the readers see him as ridiculous. Ndibe tries to correct the hypocritical

acts of religious charlatans by making us laugh at them. And by laughing at them, we have rejected them and what they represent.

3.4 Osuakwu (Ike's Uncle)

Osuakwu is the chief priest of Ngene. He is a symbol in the novel. A symbol, according to Kennedy, is "a thing that suggests more than its literal meaning" (130) Okoh sees it as something possessing "suggestive or connotative powers" (Writing 209). Put simply, a symbol "means what it is and something more too" (Perrine qtd. in Maduka, and Eyoh 46). Osuakwu symbolizes or represents the traditional religion. Through Osuakwu's characterization, one sees a contrast between the three religion-representing characters Osuakwu, Stanton and Pastor Uka.

Osuakwu is caring. After the death of his younger brother, Ike's father, he constantly checks up on his late brother's wife, not to take advantage of her as most traditional men would, not to insist on marrying her; or to blame her for the death of his brother, forcing her to take an oath. Rather, he visits her to ensure she is in good health. As he tells Ike:

If I could have sacrificed myself to Death in order to retrieve my brother from its clutch, I would have done that. I had to check my grief only because I realized it fell to me to help Nwanyi Eke [Ike's mother] to hold herself together. For several years, I tried to help your mother mend her broken life. Every morning, after beating the gong in greeting to Ngene, I went to see Nwayi Eke, to inquire of her health. Each night, right after eating. I visited her again to make sure her day had gone well. (Foreign, 194)

Unlike some men who would have taken advantage of Ike's mother's condition to abuse her or sexually assault her, Osuakwu does everything he can to assist her, unconditionally.

Secondly, Osuakwu is patient and tolerant. Irrespective of what he does for Ike's mother, with the arrival of Pastor Uka and his lies, Ike's mother believes that Osuakwu who had been unconditionally kind to her for years is a wizard and his mother, Nne, a witch. Ike's mother

openly abuses and verbally assaults Osuakwu saying he is a wizard and Nne a witch, but Osuakwu tells Ike:

"At first, I laughed it off. I was sure your mother would return to her senses, she would come to know that the stranger's stories were madness... Our people say that if a profane act marks a year, it becomes part of custom. I've waited for your mother to come to my compound and say that what she said before she no longer says. It's been three years and Osuakwu is still waiting" (Foreign.... 199)

From the above, we see that Osuakwu is tolerant, as he laughs off Ike's mother's abuses, hoping they would end. We understand that he is patient as he has waited for her for three years, and is still waiting.

We can contrast the characterization of Stanton and Osuakwu. And this contrast in characterization will reveal the irony of the story. While Osuakwu is patient enough to wait for Ike's mother to stop abusing him and his mother, even though, being a chief priest, he has the means to "silence" her permanently or inflict her with an illness, we are told about Stanton that:

The interpreter knew the ease with which the missionary [Stanton] could fly into a rage. And the sting of that rage! (Foreign..., 106)

The phrase "...the ease with which the missionary could fly into a rage!" indicates Stanton's impatience. This is an irony because the expectation is that the Christian should possess patience while the traditionalist possesses impatience. But as Hugh Horman and William Harmon posit, irony is "a broad term referring to the recognition of a reality different from appearance" (264). Frye, Baker and Perkins say that irony is used to differentiate the asserted from the actual case or reality (qtd. in Ngwoke 168).

In addition, Osuakwu is non-confrontational or aggressive. He believes in peace. As he narrates to Ike what happens the first time Ike's mother abuses him

"Ikechukwu, my ears heard words no mouth should ever utter For a man to be accused before the world of killing his own brother, a mother blamed for the death of her own son no words can be more bitter to the ear! I left your mother's home and ran as fast as my bones could carry me to tell Nne what my ears had heard. Before I could open my mouth, Nne began to tell me her own horrors. The evening before, your mother had stood at Nne's threshold and called her all manner of names. She called Nne a sucker of blood and devourer of her son's flesh. She told Nne the mother of her husband - that death stalked her door. Are such words spoken? Are they spoken even to one's enemy? (Foreign..., 195)

Osuakwu is non-confrontational or aggressive as after being abused and accused of killing his brother, rather than retaliate verbally or physically, he leaves the scene to go see his mother This attribute is also contrary to Stanton's aggressiveness and confrontational tendencies. Even after Ike's mother calls Osuakwu a wizard and Osuakwu's mother a witch, Osuakwu does not retaliate in any form, not even verbally. When Ike comes to meet him, he asks Ike:

"Did you tell Nwanyi Eke [Ike's mother] that you were coming to see me?" (Foreign, 192)

Osuakwu is not rude verbally or otherwise, and he is not vengeful as he still refers to Ike's mother as Nwanyi Eke, a name he had always called her, even though she calls him a wizard He goes ahead to tell Ike: "Your mother is my wife..." (Foreign, 193). By retaining the name he uses to refer to Ike's mother before the coming of Pastor Uka, Osuakwu is revealed as a character who is not vengeful or rude, unlike Stanton who uses curse and swear words to refer to even characters who have done nothing wrong to him, characters such as Jacob, the interpreter and the new converts.

Ndibe also contrasts the characterization of Osuakwu from that of Pastor Uka. Unlike Pastor Uka who is a liar and deceiver in the name of speaking for God, Osuakwu is not a liar.

Osuakwu does not claim to choose or speak for his god. When Uka lies to Ike's mother that Osuakwu wants to make Ike the next chief priest of Ngene, Osuakwu tells Ike

Ngene chooses his own carrier. If he wants you, you must leave everything else. If he doesn't, nobody can sneak you into the priest's chair. 1, Osuakwu, won't dare. I can't"

"Only a man who courts death would usurp a deity's voice," said the newly arrived old man. (Foreign..., 198)

Unlike Pastor Uka who consistently claims to be speaking on God's behalf and begins deceiving the people, Osuakwu does not lie. Osuakwu says he cannot speak for Ngene Ngene chooses for itself. This is a contrast in characterization highlighting an irony, that a pastor is a deceiver and a liar while a traditionalist is an upright man. Ndibe uses this irony to criticize the idea that traditionalists are morally bankrupt. As Emeaba says, irony is "used for ridicule, contempt, humour or satire" (102).

Ndibe uses Osuakwu's characterization as a means of debunking the stereotypical representations of traditionalists. In Nigeria, traditionalists are viewed as evil, morally bankrupt, dirty, deceits, liars, vengeful and wicked; people who could use their "juju" powers to hurt or harm others. Through the irony in the characterizations of a chief priest (Osuakwu) and a pastor (Uka), Ndibe mocks the foolishness of how traditionalists are stereotyped or perceived in Nigeria. Matthew Hodgart observes that irony is used "to make the reader uncomfortable, to shake him out of his complacency and to make him ally in the battle against the world's stupidity" (qtd. in Maduka 144)

Therefore, the manner in which Ike's mother sees Osuakwu symbolizes the stereotypes created about traditionalists by the society, especially the Christian society Therefore, Osuakwu's characterization is aimed at debunking such stereotypes. Osuakwu then is a character

representing traditionalists in general as Ndibe uses him "to refer to something which suggests a range of reference beyond itself" (Osa 7).

In conclusion, this study has been able to explore how a writer's careful and creative use of characterization can be used to pass across various distinct messages to the readers. Therefore, to realize some of a writer's message, a reader would have to examine the characterization of the characters in the literary text.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONFLICT IN FOREIGN GODS, INC

In the previous chapter, we examined characterization in *Foreign Gods*. Ine by Ndibe. We were able to establish how characterization embodies a writer's message in this chapter, we shall examine how the characterization of the various characters can lead to conflict.

Firstly, we shall examine how Ike's character contributes to conflict in the novel. Ike as we have earlier observed in chapter three is a Nigerian migrant living in America. Contrary to the expectation of many Nigerians, Ike is poor in America as he is unable to get a job in corporate America even though he graduated Cum Laude in Economics from Amherst College. As a result of financial difficulties, Ike resorts to gambling but even that does not favour him. His decision to return to Nigeria to steal *Ngene* in order to sell it to Mark in America leads to a conflict as he arrives Lagos airport. After Ike completes the immigration formalities, one of the uniformed porters tells him:

"Oga, bring money to settle customs,"...

"What do you mean by settle customs?" Ike asked, feigning ignorance.

The porter flashed a rogue, wry, smile, "Ah, Oga, you no be Nigerian?....."

"I'm a Nigerian," "So?"

"Customs no go let your luggage pass unless you settle them,".

"Wait."... "You're asking me to hand you money to bribe customs, or they won't let me go. Is that it?" (*Foreign.... 76*)

The conflict between Ike and the uniformed porter simply arises as a result of Ike's poor financial state which constitutes his characterization. If Ike were a wealthy man, he would have offered the porter the money. The narrator says:

"What do you mean by settle customs Ike asked, feigning ignorance (*Foreign 76*)

The phrase "feigning ignorance" indicates that Ike knows that the request of bribe is a part of Lagos customs officers behaviour. But because of his poor financial-state characterization, he is unable to offer the potter some money. This leads to an external conflict that is further heightened when Ike meets the customs officers.

The officer shrugged, unimpressed. "I don't tell you. This na commercial quantity." "Show me where it's written that somebody who lives abroad can't bring in twenty, thirty shirts as gifts." "Are you trying to teach me my job?" he asked, raising his voice. He pointed to his sodden shirt. "Are you saying the government that gave me this uniform is stupid?" "Did you hear me mention the government?" he fought back. "Did I once say the word stupid?" (Foreign, 78)

The conflict between Ike and the customs officers intensifies into Ike being abused and insulted by other customs officers, but irrespective of the insults and verbal abuses Ike suffers, he does not give any money to the customs officers simply because he does not have enough to part away with. This conflict arises because of Ike's characterization which we have examined in the previous chapter. Had Ike enough money, he would have found it easy to give the customs officers some money and move on.

Ndibe uses the external conflict between Ike and the customs officers to discuss or expose the corruption in the Nigerian society. In Nigeria, corruption and the giving and taking of bribes have become the order of the day. The Lagos airport becomes a microcosm of Nigeria as a whole. That is, the events, conversation or conflict between Ike and the custom officers at the Lagos airport is a representation of what happens in Nigeria as a whole.

This can be seen when the potter asks Ike "Ah, Oga, you no be Nigerian?" (Foreign, 76). The potter's question indicates that the giving and taking of bribe is a common thing in Nigeria, something every Nigerian should know about and indulge in also. Also, the narrator says: "What do you mean by settle customs?" Ike asked, feigning ignorance (Foreign 76) The narrator informs

us that though Ike has lived in America for thirteen years, he still understands that bribery and corruption is common in Nigeria. So Ike simply pretends he does not understand because he does not have money

Ndibe thus uses the conflict to expose the level of corruption in Nigeria. The level of corruption has risen so much that even thirteen years in a foreign country does not stop one from realizing the place of corruption in Nigeria. Therefore, Ndibe informs us through the character, Ike, that any Nigerian who seems to act all honest in the face of corruption or the giving and taking of bribes may simply be pretending as a result of lack of money, not honesty Ike does not refuse to give the custom officers bribe because he is honest but because he does not have. And his pretentious honesty is brought to naught when he arrives the airport on his way back to America, and carrying Ngene Ike finally offers them bribe in order to get into the plane, carrying Ngene

Secondly, there is an excessive presentation of religious conflict in Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc.* The religious conflict in the novel manifests in several forms, through several characters and through the characters' characterization.

A religious conflict manifests between Reverend Stanton and the new converts. This religious conflict results from Stanton's impatience characterization. When Stanton talks about God and His characteristics, a convert attempts to show that the Igbo people also have a god that possesses the same characteristics. The convert's question and doubt that if Stanton's God is everywhere, how then is it that this God cannot be seen lead to the religious conflict which arises between the convert and Reverend Stanton:

"It's because the true and living God is invisible, Stanton explained "How can something be everywhere and yet invisible?" he [the convert) asked finally "He's creator and maker of everything. With him, everything is possible. He can do and undo, came Stanton's resort. "Then he should do to make himself visible, the convert suggested "We can't tell God what to do." "I'm not saying tell him. Take a sacrifice to him and beg him," said the convert "It is through sacrifice that gods are deceived." "Our God cannot be deceived," Stanton explained with visible impatience (Foreign 102)

The religious conflict above arises because of Reverend Stanton's characterizations. If Stanton was patient and tolerant, he would have found it easier to better explain the image of God to the new convert.

Furthermore, Stanton's arrogance leads to an internal conflict. Rather than lovingly encourage the new converts to neglect the traditional belief in idols and embrace God, Stanton arrogantly declares to the doubting converts

"What you call Ngene is nothing. It's a lie with which you've imprisoned yourself. It doesn't live in the river. Nor does it own the river. Our God owns everything. He made your river and also the wood Ngene was carved from" (Foreign..., 102)

The manner in which Stanton arrogantly and impatiently attempts to make the people of Utonki accept God, as well as his non-Christian actions which are contrary to Christian ideals leave the people in constant doubts about the new religion (Christianity) being introduced to them. And consequently, the people remain adamant about completely abandoning the traditional religion.

This leads Stanton into suffering an internal religious conflict. As the narrator says:

There was no doubt in Stanton's mind what action God was calling him to take. It was to physically annihilate Ngene. That was what God had sent to him to Utonki to do. That he hadn't accomplished that task so far was the reason sleep had been emptied from his eyes The reason his nights were besieged. He'd challenge the converts to an ultimate test of faith. He'd order them to prove the mettle of their faith

by vanquishing Ngene. He'd goad them to seize the deity and set it on fire. But what if the converts demurred? Or worse, renounced their faith? (Foreign... 125)

Stanton's inability to make the people of Utonki abandon Ngene as a result of his impatience arrogance and non-Christian actions, leads him into suffering the religious internal conflict presented above. Stanton's internal conflict manifests as he believes he must destroy Ngene physically not spiritually, but wonders what the converts will think about such action.

Ndibe uses this internal conflict to discuss religious hypocrisy. The conflict indicates that Stanton's Christian religious conversions do not come about through spirituality or through persuasion but through physical action. The internal conflict indicates that Christianity prospered in Africa when it was introduced not because the people were persuaded against traditional deities but because the Christians applied physical and sometimes violent means. This conversion of the people of Utonki through physical violent actions of the missionary is presented earlier in the narrative as the narrator says.

One day, Stanton led his men deep into a mangrove sacred to Ngene to cut down tree limbs for use in building a shrine for his deity. The warriors of Utonki gathered together at the shrine of Ngene, armed with machetes and guns, determined to chase off the impertinent band of missionaries. Instead, Reverend Stanton and his soldiers handed the warriors of Utonki their most crushing defeat in living memory, felling their head warrior in the first moments of battle. In the end, it was Stanton's display of strength that lent power to his message and won him a steady trickle of converts. (Foreign 100)

Also, there is an internal religious conflict which manifests between Stanton and surprisingly, Ngene. Stanton suffers a seemingly internal conflict induced by Ngerne. Ndibe's diction while describing Stanton's internal conflict indicates the possibility of it being induced by Ngene The narrator describes Stanton's internal religious conflict with Ngene thus:

Then his [Stanton's] mind became a whorl, awhirl with a parade of images, faces intimate and shadowy. His parents were the first to amble across the flickering screen in his mind, ghostly in their bone-weary gait. Then his wife and their two boys, their eyes set downward. He desperately wanted to shout to them, to beckon them to him, but some invisible force gripped his throat in a vice.... Finally, a wooden statue, hands spread out as if to embrace him. mouth shaped into an O, strode past, headed in the direction of the river. "Satan!" Stanton cursed. "Accursed." (Foreign... 122)

The phrase "wooden statue" indicates the image of Ngene. This is the reason we said that the writer presents the religious internal conflict Stanton suffers as being induced by Ngene. This internal conflict which Stanton suffers is persistent and leads to the missionary's psychological degeneration.

Ndibe uses this internal conflict Stanton suffers to depict the potency of the traditional religious beliefs represented by Ngene. Stanton as well as other European missionaries sees Ngene as nothing. Therefore, they have no regards for the sacred elements of the traditional African communities. Ndibe therefore uses the internal conflicts to show the consequences of disregarding the traditional belief system treated as sacred But Stanton is not the only character who suffers conflict for disregarding the sacred elements of traditional Africa or for perceiving Ngene as impotent.

Ike also suffers an internal conflict between man and supernatural forces. This is the conflict between Ike and Ngene. This conflict manifests through Ike's experience during storms. As the narrator says.

IKE FEARED STORMS. He was a second-year student in secondary school when the first assault happened. He was in the school's crowded cafeteria. A rain storm began. Its doowah, doowah made him groggy, turned his limbs weak. Before shocked onlookers, he staggered this way and that, like a senseless drunk, and then fainted dead away (Foreign. 16)

Osuakwu, without knowing Ike's fainting feats during storms, tells Ike that storms are used by Ngene, and when one experiences fainting feats during storms, it is an indication that one has been chosen by Ngene to be the next chief priest of Ngene. As Osuakwu says:

"...When Ngene winks at a man, the man has no choice but to serve. When I was called, did I want to answer? No! Like other young men, my dream was to snatch one of the white man's jobs. Then I started fainting when the sky opened up and wept its waters. (Foreign, 198)

Having established Ngene's use of storms and causing its chosen to faint during these storms. we can examine the conflict between Ike (man) and Ngene (supernatural force). In America, as Ike drives his taxi in a rain storm, the narrator says:

IKE'S HEART BEAT VIOLENTLY His hands shook. Sweat pooled in his armpits, and then licked his sides. If only the passenger would hold a conversation, he might be able to keep his focus off the storm, and fight off an attack. (Foreign..., 17-18)

The phrase "fight off an attack" almost makes it seem like the struggle or conflict between Ike and the storm induced by Ngene is a physical one, like they would actually engage in a physical combat. But simply, the phrase is used to highlight Ike's resistance and struggle against a supernatural force. But as Ike fights back or at least attempts to fight back the storm. the storm also "fights" harder as the narrator says:

In the mist of his [Ike's] thoughts, a bolt of lightning flashed, followed by a slow belch of thunder. Then the storm resumed, fiercer. Soaked pedestrians dashed for shelter. Ike's windshield and windows turned blurry with vapor. He clicked on the cab's headlights. He wiped the windshield in large, circular motions. (Foreign... 18)

This is the external conflict between man and a supernatural force. Ndibe uses this kind of conflict to show that even in a contemporary society, the sacred traditional belief system still remains potent. This conflict shows that the contemporary man's belief that sacred traditional beliefs are nothing but superstition is false or erroneous.

Another religious conflict manifests between Ike and his mother. This conflict arises from Osuakwu and Pastor Uka. Osuakwu is the chief priest of Ngene and therefore a traditionalist while Uka is a religious charlatan, deceiver and a home wrecker Uka's lies to Ike's mother about Osuakwu being the cause of Ike's father's death lead to the conflict between Ike and his mother:

Ike swallowed hard. "Mama," he said. "You're talking about Papa's mother and Papa's only brother." Her tone was unyielding. "They're of darkness. Light and darkness don't mix."..

"I don't want to hear this. I don't want to hear you say that Nne and Osuakwu will harm me." (Foreign..., 133)

The use of "light" and "darkness" is symbolic of the religious conflict which arises as a result of Osuakwu's characterization (being a chief priest). Osuakwu as well as any chief priest or traditionalist is regarded as "darkness" while Christians, even the hypocritical ones, are regarded as "light." Ike's mother's words that "light and darkness don't mix" indicate the religious conflict. Apart from Osuakwu's characterization, Ike's mother's characterization also contributes to this conflict. Ike's mother is gullible which is why she is easily influenced by Pastor Uka's deceiving words. Ike's mother's characterization contrasts with Ike's characterization. Unlike his mother, Ike is not gullible. And when his skepticism about Pastor Uka clashes with his mother's gullibility, this religious conflict arises.

In all, Ndibe uses the various conflicts in the novel to pass across some messages. Also, these conflicts can be realized through the use of characterization.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

5.1 Summary

The study examined conflict and characterization in Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc.* The purpose of the study was to identify how characterization and conflict embody the messages of the writer, as well as how the characterization of characters in the novel contributes to the conflict of the novel. The study was significant as there are quite a few or no scholarly reviews on the text, *Foreign Gods, Inc.* Thus, this study fills a gap. It is a work which can be cited by other scholars who wish to work on the novel.

The study adopted Sociology of Literature as its theoretical framework. In the analysis, the study examined the characterization of the major characters of the novel. These major characters examined are Ike (the protagonist or central character), Reverend Stanton (a Christian missionary), Pastor Uka (a hypocritical pastor), and Osuakwu (Ike's uncle and a traditionalist).

During the analysis, the study also examined the conflicts in the novel, paying attention specifically to how the characterization of the various characters contributes to the conflict in the novel. The study also examined the various kinds of conflict in the novel: man against man symbolized by the conflict between Ike and his mother, man against society symbolized by the conflict between Ike and the custom officers at the Lagos airport, man against himself symbolized by the conflict between Reverend Stanton and himself, Ike and himself, and man against supernatural force symbolized by the conflict between Ike and the storm believed to be

induced by Ngene, Stanton and the unknown figures hovering in his hut also believed to be induced by Ngene. As earlier stated, the study attempted a relationship between these conflicts and the characters characterization. That is to say, the study examined how the characters' characterizations which were examined in the chapter three of the study contributed to the conflicts in the novel, which were examined in the chapter four of the study.

5.2 Conclusion

After a careful examination of the characterization and conflict in Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc*, the study was able to identify some of the messages passed across by the writer through both literary techniques.

Ike who is a hardworking and intelligent Nigerian in America is poor even though he graduates Cum Laude in Economics from Amherst College. His characterization is used to expose the reality of migrant life in American, to compare the expectation of migrants to the reality they face. In addition, his poor financial status results in his conflict with the custom officers at the Lagos Airport when he returns to Nigeria. The conflict between him and the custom officers, however, is used to examine the level of corruption in the Nigerian society as the study advocates that the Lagos Airport is symbolically representing the whole of Nigeria.

Secondly, Reverend Stanton is found to be rude, impatient, arrogant, aggressive, and possessing attributes which do not portray religious or Christian ideals. His characterization is used to dramatize the religious hypocrisy of some European missionaries in Nigeria. In addition, his characterization causes a conflict between him and his new converts who sought clarification but he is unable to give the clarification as a result of his impatience, arrogance, aggression, et cetera.

Ndibe also uses Pastor Uka to represent some of the contemporary pastors especially in Nigeria, whose greed, lies, arrogance et cetera are the cause of some broken homes or families, like Ike's home. Uka is used satirically to express how some unobservant Christians are misled or deceived. Uka's lies and deceits even cause the death of a character, Regina's husband. Death therefore becomes a possible penalty for listening to such Christian or religious charlatans. Uka's characterization also contributes to the conflict he faces with Ike who refuses to be deceived by the lie that Ike's grandmother, Nne and Ike's paternal uncle are the causes of Ike's father's death and Ike's misfortunes and woes in America.

Finally, the study examined Ike's uncle, Osuakwu Osuakwu who is a traditionalist is presented as the opposite of the Christian characters in the novel (Stanton and Uka). Osuakwu is kind, truthful, patient, forgiving, et cetera. His characterization was used to debunk or reject the stereotypes created by the society about traditionalists being wicked, evil, dirty, untruthful, impatient, greedy, et cetera, kind of people. His characterization results in the conflict he faces with Ike's mother, Mama and ultimately the conflict between him and Pastor Uka. Being a traditionalist, he faces an external conflict with Pastor Uka, especially after Ike steals Ngene.

5.3 Contribution to Knowledge

It is not enough to identify the thematic preoccupations or the themes of a literary text. The reader or critic should also be able to identify and examine the techniques used to realize those thematic preoccupations. These techniques, also, should not just be the predominant ones such as point of view, plot, setting, symbolism, language, imagery, et cetera. The reader or critic should be able to examine the less discussed techniques of the text such as characterization and conflict

as all techniques used in a literary text are carriers of meaning. In addition, to do this, the readers or critics must develop a critical thinking ability to be able to go above what the literary writer says on the surface level to identify and explore what the writer says at the deeper level.

Furthermore, the examination or identification of the techniques in a literary text should not be done individually but collectively. That is, the critic should not just explore symbolism as an individual technique in the text, plot as its own technique, point of view as a distinct technique, et cetera. Rather, the reader or critic should examine how the techniques in the text all come together, interconnected to realize the writers' messages. For instance, in the study on characterization and conflict in Okey Ndibe's *Foreign Gods, Inc* we did not examine the two techniques characterization and conflict as two distinct techniques, rather we examined the relationship between both techniques. We were able to examine the characterization in the novel and to explore the relationship between the characterization and conflict in the novel. In other words, the study was able to examine how the characterization of characters leads to the conflict in the novel.

In all, therefore, all the techniques of a literary text are very important in the realization of the various messages in the literary text. Therefore, the reader or critic should endeavour to examine those techniques, as well as to examine the interconnectedness of the literary techniques.

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