

The Beautiful One Has Been Born: A Study of Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Chicken Chasers*

Ibiene Evelyn Iboroma

Department of English Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

iibiene@yahoo.com

Abstract

Ayi Kwei Armah in his first novel, *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*, decries corruption, cynicism, and embezzlement of public funds by the new black power elite of Africa who expropriate the fruits of independence from the masses. Armah, disenchanted, asserts that the beautiful ones who would drive the economic and socio-political affairs of the African nation have not yet been born. Anchored on insights from role-identity theory, this paper x-rays the behaviour enacted by the Secretary-General, (S-G henceforth) of the African Cultural Organisation in the variety of roles he occupies in Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Chicken Chasers*. The aim is to posit that the S-G is the beautiful one that has been born in contraposition to Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*. The paper demonstrates that the S-G provides moral and civic leadership in the performance of the variety of roles he occupies and concludes that he is an embodiment of all the leadership qualities society expects of a leader. Hence our assertion, the beautiful one has been born. The paper recommends that African leaders should borrow a leaf from the S-G to make life more meaningful for the masses.

Keywords: Beautiful, Behaviour, Role-identity, Chukwuemeka Ike

Introduction

Ayi Kwei Armah, in his debut novel, *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*, criticizes the corruption, self-interest, and misappropriation of public funds by the emerging black power elite in Africa, who unjustly take away the benefits of independence from the general population. Emmanuel Obiechina affirms that "the new political class proved unequal to the challenge of nation-building and incapable of providing moral and civic leadership" (121). The title of Armah's novel itself makes a statement that involves looking forward to the future for an answer. Thus, Charles Nnolim

pondering over the title wonders: "Will they ever be?" (122). Adopting role-identity theory as the framework, this study x-rays the behaviour the S-G enacts in his negotiation with role partners in a bid to fulfil the expectations of the different roles he occupies. The aim is to present the S-G as the beautiful one that has been born.

Farmer, Steven M., et al. argue that "a role identity reflects an internalized set of role expectations, with the importance of the identity being a function of commitment to the relevant role" (620). In a similar vein, S. Stryker posits that "the more central an individual's role identity, the higher the

probability that the individual's behavior will be consistent with that identity (qtd in Farmer et al. 621). Burke and Reitzes on their part focus "on the match between the individual meanings of occupying a particular role and the behaviors that a person enacts in that role while interacting with others ... This match includes the negotiation of meanings for situations and identities, and how they fit together to provide a situated context for interaction" (qtd in Stets and Burke 227). Stets and Burke aver that having a particular role identity means acting "to fulfill the expectations of the role, coordinating and negotiating interaction with role partners, and manipulating the environment to control the resources for which the role has responsibility..." (226). They argue further that such individuals driven by the desire to fulfill the expectations of the role, view themselves as different from others with whom they interact with regard to their "own interests, duties, and resources" (227). Again, Tonia Christine Caraveo contends that "role identity theory proposes that the commitment and behavior is reflected by the extent the individual identifies with the role" (18). All in all, role identity theory argues that any role that has become part of a person's identity will most likely make the person act in a manner that conforms to the behavioural expectations associated with that role. In other words, an individual constructs a sense of self from the experiences he acquires through the enactment of social roles. Role-identity will therefore be employed in investigating the behaviour the S-G enacts while interacting with

others in the different roles he occupies in Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Chicken Chasers*.

Analysis of the Text

The S-G, the protagonist of the novel under study, is not given a proper name but a nominal label. However, S-G is not an empty nominal label. Besides, according to Ayodele Adebayo Allagbé, "...every literary name or naming label always makes sense in its narrative context or serves a social or artistic effect or narrative purpose" (23). He is the S-G of the African Cultural Organization (ACO henceforth) whose responsibility is to oversee cultural issues in Africa. He is a distinguished citizen of Manu, one of the Member States of ACO. Three parameters will be employed in delineating the S-G's behaviour in the roles he performs: his role as a political leader, his role as a married man, and his role as a Christian.

The S-G as a Political Leader

The first mention of the S-G in the novel is in connection with the plot to forestall his reappointment for a second term. Mrs. Peace Bozo (Baby Face henceforth), the chief delegate of Manu, informs Mat, one of the delegates, that she is sending him three days ahead of time to Plassas, where the meeting of the Executive Board of ACO would take place, to prepare the ground for the removal of the S-G from office. She warns: "If at the end of the meeting, that swollen-headed man retains his position as the Secretary-General..., I shall demand nothing less than your head for the untold embarrassment you will have caused the government..." (3). Also,

Professor Fumi, the chief delegate of Shika, another Member State of ACO, also sends Chass ahead of time to Plassas “to prepare the ground for the dethronement of the S-G” (6). Chass assures Mat when they meet in Plassas:

I promise you that we’re lined up to puncture once and for all that bogus myth put out about the S-G, that he is righteous, God-fearing; the ideal faithful husband; the man who is so harmless that he cannot crack the shell of an egg! All that rubbish will vanish like the smoke from your cigarette by the time we are true with this meeting. (10)

It is pertinent at this juncture to consider some of the allegations levelled against the S-G that warrant his denial for a second term. He is being accused of sexual immorality. Chass discloses to Mat that the S-G employed Afua, (Black Beauty henceforth) his Executive Assistant, whom Chass nicknames “the S-G’s Sexual Assistant” (9) just to satisfy his sexual needs anytime he travels: “all she is employed to do is to accompany the pompous ass on his jaunts all over African continent, to minister to his insatiable needs, all expenses paid by the ACO” (9). Again, Selah, another staff of ACO, circulates “a photocopy of a letter allegedly written by the S-G to one Mrs. Pam in Dumboy, thanking her profusely for helping him to unwind during his last visit to that country. Not only that, Saki, the S-G next in command, gives Baby Face, “...the photocopy of yet another love letter, this time from a girl to the S-G” (23). “Both Mat and Saki had built a very strong case on the S-G’s moral laxity” (53).

To some, the S-G is a spendthrift. Chass alleges: “he has misguided the organization to approve free this and free that...- free house, free car, free driver, free petrol, free engine oil, free gardener, free cook.... He has even acquired a free mistress for himself, at the expense of the ACO...” (9). Others like Chass describe him as being arrogant. He says the S-G “is a peacock. He never seeks advice from any of us, even though some of us know more about the ACO than he does...he has never been to the Professor’s house, nor to mine, to pay the traditional respects...” (9). Dr. Stom, the Chairman of ACO, also sees the S-G as being arrogant: “He is arrogant. Even his wife is also arrogant...Measures herself against my wife and does everything to show that she is superior to my wife...” (53).

There are other charges against the S-G besides the ones mentioned above. For instance when the High Commissioner in a conversation with Mat describes the S-G as “a distinguished Manu citizen” (16), Mat snaps: “does he regard himself as a Manu citizen?... Does he regard you as his High Commissioner? Did he even greet you?” (16). However, the High Commissioner sees through Mat “his naked and consuming hatred of the S-G...His excellency was particularly put off at the thought that Mat saw nothing improper in trying to persuade people who did not know the S-G, through verbal tirades and libelous documents...” (20). In addition, Baby Face spearheads the removal of the S-G to avenge him for turning down her sexual overtures. She ruminates:

The S-G has treated her like a scum. She had gone beyond the bounds of propriety to let him know how much she adored him...She had given him a secret post office number, to enable him to write to her at will...And yet he never wrote one single line... She had given him the phone number of a trusted friend...He never used the number.... She ought to have given up but how could she? Give up such a tall, masculine, handsome man, the mere mention of whose name...was sufficient to send an electric signal right down her spine?... The ball was now in her court. The time for revenge had come. And she was determined to teach him a lesson he would never forget in his life. (30-32)

She shamefully avows herself of having built up “a modest reputation for getting men to do her bidding. The only man who had beaten her hollow was the S-G. And that was why she has come to Plassas to humiliate him” (33). Baby Face in scavenging for more information that will implicate the S-G, meets with Dr. Stom if he could bring up charges against the S-G “in his work” (52). Dr. Stom excitedly outlines five things that are objectionable about the S-G. They are:

One! ‘He is arrogant’. Very arrogant. Thinks that because he is tall and I am short, he can overshadow me...Number two, he has no respect for me as his Chairman. Always is talking of himself as Chief Executive...as if the Chief Executive is more

important than the Chairman of the Organization...he feels too big to open the car for me...Number three, even though I ask him to call me by my first name, as I call him by his, he addresses me stiffly as Mr. Chairman... Number four... he ridicules me in secret, saying that I do not deserve appointment both as Vice Chancellor of my University and as Chairman of the ACO because I have not published any book...” Number five... when my wife’s uncle died, he did not send me any message of condolence... I suppose that’s all but that’s more than enough to disqualify him already. (53)

Does this make sense? It only shows the hollowness of the so-called Chairman of an important organisation such as the ACO. The narrator informs us that right from the first day Dr. Stom “met the S-G, following his election as the Chairman, Dr. Stom has been struck down with inferiority complex because the S-G is tall and handsome while he is short (56). The narrator further intimates us that what particularly hurts Dr. Stom’s “manly pride” is the fact that none of the girls employed in the Secretariat appeared in the least interested in him notwithstanding his high office and the expensive gifts he lavished on them. And yet, they took obvious delight in milling around the S-G. He swore he would do everything possible to get the S-G out” (56). Most importantly, Dr. Stom wants to succeed the S-G. He muses: “the position of the Secretary-General would give him some

respice, not to talk of the stupendous salary and fringe benefits..." (57). He looks at the conditions of service of the S-G and exclaims:

Chei! The salary alone was almost *three times* his current salary before you add the expatriation allowance, the dependants' allowance, the non-accountable entertainment allowance, the post-adjustment allowance, the children's education allowance...the allowances seem to be endless... (197)

Further, Dr. Stom wants Black Beauty to be his "bed aide without delay" (197) and the S-G seems to be on his way.

Like Dr. Stom, Prof. Fumi's plan to work against the S-G's second term is also driven by envy and greed. Envious of the S-G's special conditions of service, he plans to unseat him even before he completes his first term. He sees himself as being "named the new Secretary-General of the African Cultural Organization" (41). As typical of many African political leaders, Prof. Fumi advances his reasons for eyeing the position:

The S-G's salary alone was three times his own...when you add the innumerable allowances, the free-this and free-that, garnished with full diplomatic status and immunity, the S-G operated in a dream world. Cruised around in an air-conditioned car....he would draw as much of his salary as he wished in foreign exchange...he could educate his children outside his country of residence... (43-44)

He like Dr. Stom also plans to have Black Beauty as his Executive Assistant having tried many times and failed woefully on each occasion to have her. He confesses: "How secretly he had longed for Black Beauty!" (44).

However, the S-G is innocent of all the allegations levelled against him. His innocence is underscored in several ways in the novel. For instance, Baby Face informs Dr. Stom that Mat "produced quite a dossier for the government on the S-G. It seemed so watertight..." (52) but upon thorough investigation into the allegations, "...nothing was found against the man" (52). Again, ABC, one of the staff of ACO, who has worked closely with the S-G testifies:

I can swear that all the stories and documents being peddled by Mat, Chass and Saki, and the others are completely false and unfounded...So are the stories of Afua being his mistress. Anybody who knows the S-G as I do, and knows the relationship between him and his adorable wife, will not think of charging him with sexual immorality. (104)

ABC goes on to enumerate the S-G's sterling qualities in his work:

Seriously ...the only fly in the ointment is that the S-G lacks political instinct. Because he is an honest man, he has the naivety to assume that every other person around him is honest. He has the religious belief that truth will always triumph over falsehood, and so will make no effort to fight back his adversaries with their weapons. Because he brings

a high degree of probity to his work, he deludes himself into believing that his good work will speak for him... (104)

ABC's testimony is corroborated by Prof. Fumi, one of his detractors. He confesses: "...as much as he did not want to admit it, the S-G was doing an excellent job. The ACO under him was making positive contributions to cultural renaissance in the various Member States..." (43). Black Beauty also affirms that the S-G has a brilliant mind and that he sets an example of punctuality, industry, and innovativeness which he expected everyone to follow (105). She states further that the S-G "made you feel that the Secretariat belonged to you...you had a stake in its progress..." (105). But to his detractors such as Selah:

The S-G committed the mortal sin of advocating change, and innovation. He wanted matters disposed of in no time... while Selah abhorred speed, anything that smacked of urgency: files were to be sat on, not dealt with expeditiously...Selah could not see himself learning new tricks. That was why he hated the sight of the S-G. (85)

Selah deliberately sits on files or takes sick leave just to "sabotage S-G's major projects" (105). Despite his attitude to work and backstabbing, the S-G as a seasoned administrator, refuses to take it personally. Even when he is advised to transfer Selah to another department, he refuses saying: "If he couldn't get Selah to mend his ways, which other officer in the Secretariat could? He would win him over by and large

through examples" (105). This also is his stance concerning the laxity of Saki, his second in command. He says "he would win Saki over through positive influence" (105).

Furthermore, the S-G's sense of objectivity and fair play is beyond question. Nothing can come between him and his duties. Once he has taken a stand on any matter, he does not succumb to undue influence from the people in power. A good example is his appointment of Zac as Secretary for Field Services. He did that amidst great opposition. He "knew he was winning more enemies for himself by insisting that the post of Secretary for Field Services should go to Zac whose ability he rated highly. It had meant rejecting a candidate fielded by some highly placed and influential men" (180).

Again, though the S-G is aware of the calumnies that his subordinates are spreading against him, he refuses to give the appearance of a troubled man. Baby Face surprised at his undaunted posture, engages him in the following conversation:

Baby Face: 'I came over to find out why you haven't been in touch to discuss the recent events with me....the renewal of your appointment.'

The S-G: 'If you don't mind my asking... would you, from your wide experience in these matters, not have considered it improper for me to ask to discuss an issue with the chief delegate of the Manu?... As far as this matter is concerned, I see you as the leader of the Manu delegation, charged with the duty of acting as my chief

prosecutor, a job which, as everyone can see, you are executing most brilliantly and with devastating success...'(148-149)

She takes a step further to intimidate him by showing him "a photocopy of a letter signed by the Big Man, directing the action to be taken in respect of his appointment" (149), the S-G still keeps his cool. Hear him: "I've never blamed you, or anybody else, for what you are doing. Yours is a delicate assignment, to carry out orders military style...Which is why I have kept severely away from you. As well as from all other delegates" (149). Baby Face astounded continues:

The way you have behaved since this matter began. You have for some time now known what was brewing. Yet you did nothing. This is our second night here. You obviously know the intensive activities going on around you. And yet you have done nothing. Are you waiting until the whirlwind which is gathering momentum around you whisks you off the ground before you stir yourself, Mr. S-G? (150)

He interjects: "What should I have done?"(150). What a hero! Invariably, the S-G stands the chance of losing his seat because he is not a bootlicker. Samjo intimates ABC and Black Beauty:

The people in power are angry with the S-G because he has not made any effort to get in touch with the Manu Government since the plot to remove him from office began. They feel slighted that he has not thought it fit to

seek an appointment with them to ask for forgiveness... All he needed to do was to go on his knees, affirm his loyalty, and Government would leave him to carry on with his work. (138)

Black Beauty interjects: "What has he done wrong to be seeking forgiveness...Is he an employee of the Manu Government?" (138). Samjo also intimates to them that the S-G declined his suggestion of finding time to talk things over with Baby Face but "the S-G pooh-pooed the whole idea. God forbid that he should ever go on his knees before any human being to beg for a job, he said. He was determined to go through the ordeal, trusting in his innocence" (138). Africa is crying for leaders like the S-G who "will not be bought or sold, men who in their innermost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall" (Ellen G. White n.p).

Baby Face dogged in her pursuit to dispirit the S-G, suggests to him to notify the Chairman first thing tomorrow morning that he has decided not to seek a second term. In doing so, he would leave the job with dignity. She adds: "I'm sure the UN and its Agencies will be vying for a man of your caliber and stature...Why don't you consider this seriously?" (155). The S-G cuts in: "I deeply appreciate your concern for my welfare. However, your instructions are clear- to prosecute me, not to bargain with me. I want no bargaining either. I am prepared to bear my cross to the very end, no matter the consequences"

(156). He politely dismisses her by telling her that “it’s late for a lady, and a married one at that, to be out in a man’s room” (156). The S-G’s stance gives credence to Stets and Burke’s submission:

People act to keep perceptions of themselves in the situation consistent with their identity standard. They take actions to modify the situation so that perceptions of the self are consistent with the standard in spite of situational disturbances caused by others, prior actions of the self, or other situational influences. (233)

Much later in the story, Baby Face herself attests to the S-G’s calm and dignified composure in the face of his tribulation. Hear her: “The glowing reports of you which had come my way, your calm and dignified composure despite all the unsettling thundering activities around you, all these simply poured top grade petrol on the fire which had been smouldering inside me” (261). The S-G’s innocence concerning the allegation that Black Beauty is his bedmate, his “Pu-bic Officer” (152) is also proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Prof. Fumi confesses: “Was it not sheer envy that had impelled him to hawk the story that she was the S-G’s mistress?” (44). Black Beauty herself attests to the fact that the S-G is innocent. She ruminates:

Here was a man under whose wings she took shelter from the onslaught of the men who attended one meeting or the other organized by the ACO Secretariat, men who always

seem to arrive sex starved...Here was a man who had never even attempted to hold her hand, or to kiss her cheeks and yet who seemed so happy to work with her as she was to work with him. (84)

Again, when Samjo, ABC, and Junior confront the S-G with the rumour that Black Beauty is his mistress, he politely intimates to them: “There’s nothing between the two of us outside official duties” (237). Junior not believing the S-G interjects: “It’s difficult to swallow that...You mean to tell me that you’ll take an oath that you’ve never touched a girl who is richly endowed with everything a man desires in a girl, and who transparently adores even your footprints? Are you Jesus Christ?” (237). The S-G reiterates: “I want to assure all of you, as my good friends, that there is absolutely nothing of that sort between me and Afua” (237).

Evidently, all the allegations levelled against the S-G are founded on envy, hatred, and revenge. On the D-day of the ACO board meeting where his fate is going to be decided, the S-G ruminates: “...nobody had come up with any charge against him. Not even the people who wanted him to be removed could put their finger at what he had done amiss” (208). Even the document produced for people to sign as evidence against him “demonstrated in clear terms his many positive contributions during his four years in office” (208). This is confirmed by his reappointment for the second term made possible by no other person but Baby Face, his chief prosecutor. Having no concrete evidence to stab him, she

flies back to Manu to see the Big Man and convinces him through “bottom power” (261) to obliterate his stance and confirm the reappointment of the S-G. Her speech:

Mr. Chairman, Sir. ..I have been instructed by the government of the Republic of Manu to convey its felicitations and fraternal greetings to the Chairman and delegates here assembled, and to express its appreciation for the excellent job done by the Secretary-General of this organization...during the past four years, and to commend most warmly to this distinguished board his application for a second four-year term of office...I, therefore, in my capacity as chief delegate of Government of the Republic of Manu, hereby move that this house accept the application of the incumbent Secretary-General for a second term of office. (232)

The S-G as a Married Man

The S-G “made no bones of the fact that he was happily married, and no intention of taking another wife, even on a part-time basis” (83). He keeps his marital vows tenaciously. He keeps to God’s word that “marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled...” (*The King James Bible*, Heb. 13.4). Baby Face makes several attempts to seduce him but she never succeeds. He cautioned her on one occasion that “it was not proper, since each of them was happily married” (145) which she dismisses “as teenage moralism.” (145). In another instance, the man in him

wanted to respond to her advances, but he exercises self-constraint. He confesses: “...there was a hungry expectation in each eye. She looked so delicious. Any man would have paid anything to have her...” (158) but he resists the temptation. The S-G muses as she leaves his suite: “I will always successfully resist you, Mrs. Baby Face Bozo...She had come to try a fast one on him and he was glad he had frustrated her plans” (158). She makes another attempt to seduce him after his reappointment for the second term but the S-G again escapes. He reassures himself: “Fail she must” (263). The S-G “was glad he had dealt appropriately with her...” (266). Also, Black Beauty on two occasions betrays her feelings for the S-G while in Plassas. In one instance, she flings herself at him saying “I love you! I love you!! I love you!!!” (205) giving him the come-on but the S-G constrains himself. He says to her: “You can see for yourself what my feelings for you are. You are the most adorable and desirable girl from all angles. But much as I would count myself the luckiest man in this world to make love to you, *real* love, not cheap commercialized love, I cannot...” (205) and when she queries, he answers: “because we both know it is not proper” (205). This is reminiscent of Festus Iyayi’s Idemudia in *Violence*. When Queen offers herself to Idemudia, he admits that “the temptation was great” (295) but he rejects her offer saying: “I can’t...no, no, no. I can’t” (298). Surprised, she asks: “Why can’t you lie down with me?” (299). He answers: “You have a husband and I have a wife. It would be adultery” (299). Black Beauty seduces him again

while breaking to him the news of his reappointment for the second term but once again the S-G was able to resist the temptation. He reassures himself: "He would not allow even a delirious Black Beauty to destroy a reputation it had taken him many years to build" (234). What a man! However, seeing that "his emotions appeared to be getting the better of him" (248), he prayed for "God's special intervention to maintain the sanctity of his marital vow if she returned to his suite later as he knew she would. He urged God to give each of them, not him alone, the strength to resist the other so that their relationship would remain as it had been so far—platonic" (248-249). The S-G's prayer shows that he has that beastly nature in him but longs to bring it under control in honour of God and his marital vow. Here again, the S-G demonstrates that his strongly held identity is central to his sense of self and does everything in his power to protect it. His conduct aligns with Stets and Burke's observation that "when disturbances change the situation such that individuals perceive situated self-meanings and expectations of themselves as different from their identity standard, they act to counteract the disturbance" (233). The S-G performs well in his role as a husband because he gains a sense of control over the environment. Caraveo argues that "to identify whether or not a person has merged a role with themselves can also be determined by the attitudes they have regarding the role" (19). The S-G's behaviour towards Baby Face and Black Beauty concerning their sexual advances corroborates Caraveo's submission.

The S-G as a Christian

The S-G successfully overcomes the sexual overtures of Baby Face and Black Beauty because he is a God-fearing man. Again, he believes in the power of prayer to change things. He always prays to God for help in the course of his tribulation: "The act of prayer had given him renewed strength" (198). So on the D-Day of the board meeting when his fate was going to be decided, he knelt to pray after reading some scriptures from the Gideon Bible on his bedside locker:

He had been on his knees for half an hour, during which period he had rummaged his conscience, his four years as Secretary-General, and for the nth time felt convinced that he had not committed any offence deserving the ordeal he was facing. Once again, he left everything in the almighty hands of God. What else could he do? ...God has always fought his battles for him. He would do the same again on this occasion. (198)

Pondering over what the possible outcome of the meeting might be, he muses: "Let God decide! If He says I should leave, I'll leave. It may well be that he has opened a more attractive door for me which my eyes have been unable to see because they are weary with concern for my present difficulties..." (208). And God fought his battles. It is when the raging inferno is about to engulf him on the floor of the board meeting that events take a dramatic turn. Baby Face, the chief plotter, rises to her feet to announce the S-G's reappointment for a second term

in office by the Government of the Republic of Manu. Upon hearing the good news about his reappointment, the S-G goes on his knees:

He offers his humble thanks to God for pulling him through the difficult situation without compelling him to compromise his principles or to lose his faith in the eventual triumph of truth over falsehood. While commending to God all who had worked hard to champion his cause, he had also asked God to forgive all those who, for whatever reason, had done all they could do to run him down. He had undertaken to demonstrate to them that he had no room in his constitution for malice; for revenge. (248)

Conclusion

Festus Iyayi asserts that “inside every seemingly decent man or woman a criminal waits to break out. The criminal in him would break out at the right moment...” (*The Contract* 141). The S-G’s sterling qualities run counter to this assertion as this paper has demonstrated. The right moment comes for the criminal in the S-G to break out when Baby Face and Black Beauty make several attempts to seduce him but he exercises self-control. Not only that, he refuses to harbour any form of animosity towards those who through verbal tirades, libellous documents, and false accusations try to run him down in his work: “he had also asked God to forgive all those who, for whatever reason, had done all they could do to run him down. He had undertaken to

demonstrate to them that he had no room in his constitution for malice; for revenge” (248).

There is ample evidence from the foregoing that the S-G anchors his identity on God. This anchored identity allows him to constantly strive to embody the principles attached to it. It helps to insulate him from the emotional chaos that would have occurred in the performance of his roles as a political leader, a married man, and a Christian. Prof. Fumi’s comment about the S-G is to the point: “It was not easy to trap a man who keeps his distance from wine, women, or easy money” (29). He matches the meanings and expectations of his roles with the behaviours he enacts. The expectations and behaviours associated with his role as a political leader are consistent with the expectations and behaviours associated with his roles as a husband and a Christian. There is no trace of inter-role conflict in him. He remains confident in who is even in the face of adversity. Baby Face’s remarks succinctly underscore this submission: “Tell me...Why are you always so confident? So cocksure of yourself that even without opening your mouth you make your opponents lose confidence in themselves” (154). He answers: “If you want to know, I have an abiding faith that truth will always triumph over evil” (154).

There is no gainsaying the fact that the S-G’s moral and civic convictions are at variance with the lifestyle of many political leaders in Nigeria, in particular, and Africa, in general. There exists in the S-G motivational forces of self-consistency,

self-regulation, and self-efficacy. Mat's plan "to puncture once and for all that bogus myth put out about the S-G, that he is righteous, God-fearing; the ideal faithful husband..." (10) is not a myth after all but a proven reality as this study has demonstrated. His conduct confirms Chinua Achebe's assertion:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character...The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or the inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal examples which are the hallmarks of true Leadership. (1)

Toeing this line of argument, Unya et al. posit:

The basis of good leadership is honourable character and selfless service to one's organization or state. Respected leaders concentrate on what they know (such as beliefs and character), what they know (such as job, tasks, and human nature), and what they do (such as implementing, motivating, and providing direction). (6)

Adeolu Ouwaseyi Oyekan giving a voice to Achebe and Unya, et al.'s argument submits:

Character and competence are the most important factors in solving the leadership problem faced by the continent. Character on the part of the leadership addresses the problem of corruption, which has been the bane of the continent for so long. Leadership anchored on good

character places the interest of the people above that of the self. It is apparent that the gale of looting across the continent is as a result of absence of character in leadership. To have character is to place a higher premium on integrity and service than a heartless appropriation of the people's patrimony for self-alone. (224)

Undoubtedly, the S-G fits perfectly into all the leadership qualities outlined above. He represents in every respect, the beautiful one Armah and the society at large are searching for; hence our assertion, the beautiful one has been born. 'Beautiful' in this case is spelt correctly because the S-G is a true copy of a leader vehemently fighting against anything ugly as this study has demonstrated. He is indeed a symbol of positive change in the society. The paper therefore recommends that African leaders should borrow a leaf from the S-G to make life more meaningful for the masses.

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