

**Destiny: Contrived or Not. A Critical Evaluation of Greg Mbajiorgu's  
*The Prime Minister's Son.***

**By**

**Anyira, Kingsley Chukwuemeke**

Department of Theatre Arts,  
College of Education, Agbor, Delta State.

&

**Divine Sheriff Uchenna Joe**

Department of Theatre Arts,  
Imo State University, Owerri.

**Abstract**

*Discussions on destiny have existed as long as man. Even at that, the issue of destiny either being planned or unplanned reminds a major theme among very many scholars today. This study investigates the portrayal of destiny through the dramatic text in view by adopting the historical, content analytical and dialectical approaches to determine the side the text tilts to and in doing so, is guided by thoughts on determinism, systems and fortuity. It concludes with its opinion on destiny as uncontrived and unpredictable in which human beings must past through.*

**Introduction**

Subhendu Das submits that, "Destiny is the most complicated subject in our world..." (11). Meaning that the subject has so many facets and interpretations to it based on the perspective of the individual concerned and so has to be treated with utmost objectivity in order to properly reflect its true meaning and relevance in the existence and interpretation of human life. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* as "what happens to somebody or what will happen to them in the future, especially things that they cannot change or avoid" (397). On this, Oladipo (as qtd. in Balogun, 119) notes that,

“Human destiny is the mysterious power believed to control human events. Destiny or predestination is the believe that whatever happens or that will happen in that future has been preordained and happened according to an earlier master plan. It is the belief that every person has his biography written before coming to the world which consequently implies that anything one does is not out of freewill but something done in fulfillment of preordained history.

From this definition, one can decipher that destiny could be explained that all conglomeration of all occurrences in an individual’s life which he could not influence. However, studies show that different cultures have their own specific view of what entails. According to Felix Airorboman, “Among the Esans, destiny may be preordained, ordained or acquired. As preordained, a human being has an allotment, which will determine what that person will be... But the ordained and acquired forms enable an individual to play a role in shaping his destiny and those of others. Hence among the Esans, the issue of fatalism- that is what will be, will be – does not arise” (220-221). Oladele Balogun reveals that, “the Yoruba believe that destiny once chosen by one or conferred is unalterable. In other words, it becomes doubly sealed up such that the earthly existence of the person is an aftermath of the type of *Ori* one chose or conferred on one (122). Explaining further, Balogun states that, “*Ori*, an immaterial entity, otherwise called ‘inner-head’ is intractably connected with human destiny. It is responsible for the actuality and worth of man in the material world” (118). The conspicuous similarity between these two beliefs is that destiny as so presented could be preordained or conferred and chosen or acquired. The difference therein, lays in the alignment of a given destiny in Yoruba setting to the *Ori*, which binds the individual to the fate set for him/her by destiny without any room

for alteration whereas that of the Esans gives room for alteration along one's sojourn on earth depending on given circumstances which could include a man playing a role in determination of his own destiny. Airbonoman suggest that destiny is in Spheres, "It may be *teleological*, collective, selective or communitarian in nature. It is teleological if it is designed for a purpose. Destiny is *collective* if every member of a family or group is attended to by a particular fortune or misfortune. It is communitarian if it affects a whole community" (220). On the other hand, Christian theologians strongly hold the opinion that a man's destiny is controlled by his creator and the outcome of his life is a product of what his creator sets ahead of him and as well guides him to live it out. To this effect Kumarensan opines that, "Man's nature and destiny are through and through determined by the fact that God is related to man in terms of an active lordship and His dealings with him are such that he is not left to his own destiny, but guided towards the destiny set by the Creator" (171). To some others destiny can be controlled and the level of control one exercises over his destiny becomes a determinant factor on his socio-economic level in the society and in turn ones socio-economic level determines his control over his destiny. In relation to this, Whitehead et al points out that,

Theory proposes that people in low social positions have fewer resources to cope with excessive demands that their life entails, compared with people in higher positions. This leads to low actual control over destiny, in terms of money, power, information, prestige. It also leads to a decline in the power that an individual has to influence critical decisions affecting their lives (54-55)

In regards to determining and understanding of life's meaning in relation to destiny, Kray et al declares that, "From reflections in a personal diary to

analyses of world history, counterfactual thinking can alter our understanding of life. Mentally veering off the path of reality, only briefly and imaginatively, forges keys connections between what might have been and what was meant to be, thereby injecting our experiences and relationships with deeper meaning and significance" (116).

Arguments and suppositions on whether destiny is contrived or not are inexhaustible and it is based on the lingering need to ascertain the actuality of destiny that this study lends it voice to the discussion which in turn provides a background for further research into the concept of destiny.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is situated within three theories. First, Determinism as explained by Baumeister, Crescioni and Alquist (as qtd. in Holton, 5) who note that, "...everything that happens is inevitable, and nothing else was possible. Thinking about what might have been is thus pointless if not downright absurd, because nothing else might have been (other than what actually happened)".

Next is the General System theory. The fundamental notion of general system theory is it focus on interaction. The center in relationships leads to sustain that the behavior of a single autonomous element (individual) is different from its behavior when elements (individuals) interact with other elements (Mele, Pels and Polese, 127). In conjunction with these is Albert Bandura's exposition on Fortuity wherein he suggests that,

It is not that a fortuitous is uncaused, but, rather, there is a lot of randomness to the determining conditions of its intersection. Of the myriad fortuitous elements encountered in everyday life, many of them touch people only lightly, others leave more lasting effects and still

others thrust people into new life trajectories  
(12).

In relation to this study, these theories are used to reflect on the various views of destiny in the public domain likewise assessing the relationship of characters and events in the dramatic text with the view of determining how contrived or uncontrived destiny could be in relation to the dramatic text under study.

### **Methodology**

This study employs Historical, Content analysis and dialectical research methods. Historical research according to Aloysius Uzoagulu, "...is for the purpose of gaining a better and clearer understanding of the present and making a more reliable prediction of the future. Emeka Nwabueze submits that, "Content analysis is an objective way of determining and quantifying the existence of certain themes, concepts, characters, sentences, phrases and within a text" (77). Nwabueze also notes that,

Dialectical research is the direct opposite of empirical research. While empirical research is mainly concerned with the analysis and interpretation of data, dialectical research is concerned with ideas and arguments developed through appropriate logic (83).

The method herein is used to lay foundations for the study base on previous documentations on the subject in view, evaluate the subjects' existence in the text in relation to the characterization and thematic view of the dramatic text which will culminate drawing logical inferences that supports that suppositions of this study.

### Synopsis of the Dramatic Text

Dapo Adelugba (as qtd. in Mbajiorgu) submits that *The Prime Minister's Son* is:

...a grim story of a hapless boy who came to the world through the union of his natural father, The Prime Minister, with a house help in the Prime Minister's employment. When she discovered that she was pregnant on the account of the Prime Minister's drunken indiscretion of an evening, stopped performing her duties and her master naturally tried to find out why. She told him the truth but the Prime Minister, instead of accepting responsibility, tried to foist the pregnancy on his male house-help, ... Emenike took Ezinma away and they got married, shortly after, Ezinma gave birth to the Prime Minister's Son. Just as they were settling down to bring up their child, the hands of death snatched Emenike, and Ezinma ... Ezinma did her best to sustain herself and her child until the State Task Force destroyed the stalls which provided her and others of her like their means of sustenance ... Ezinma ran mad at the thought of being penniless and eventually died. It was after Ezinma's death that the Prime Minister's Son got to know the truth about his background. His attempt to get back to his real father failed and he ended up a wanderer lamenting his miserable fate (64).

## Discussion

Greg Mbajiorgu's *The Prime Minister's Son* puts forward characters that journeyed through life trying to find meaning to life and purpose of existence while some others either aided the process or frustrated it. Their success or failure to do so is left to the reader to determine but herein, to determine their inclination towards either contrived or uncontrived destinies, logical reasoning is therefore unavoidable.

The uncertain and indeterminate nature of human existence is portrayed when *The Prime Minister's Son* states that, "For sixteen years, Ezinma, Emenike and I lived peacefully, a happy family, until last year when my charitable and compassionate foster-father danced to the drumbeat of his ancestors" (13). No one wishes to lose his/her loved one and where possible will do all it takes to preserve, elongate and avert its occurrence but the family woke up complete and by evening were short of one person as Emenike joined his ancestors without any premonition. The uncertainty of life is further portrayed in the manner that Emenike and Ezinma left Prime Minister's residence. *The Prime Minister's Son* narrates that, "To avoid further disgrace, they left Prime Minister's premises thirty minutes before the end of the second hour" (47). This suggests that if they had their way in the making of the outcome of their stay there, they by no means wouldn't have near the house at first. Also, when light seemed to have shone on the way of the humble family through the hard working Emenike as their son looked forward to a bright future with quality education in one of the best secondary schools, the wind of uncertainty blows with Emenike's death and life suddenly turn upside down again for Ezinma and her son as the Prime Minister's Son reflects that,

Two weeks later, while we still suffered the shock of Emenike's death, our landlord served us a quit notice. We pleaded for a little time but he refused. Unable to influence his decision, my

mother and I sold most of our treasure and moved over to the main slum of the ghetto popularly known as *Water-side*, where we rented a small zinc structure (50).

On meeting Ezinma and her mother for the first time, Prime Minister's Son as Prime Minister comments "Your mother ... Is your mother blind?" (14), later he questioned Ezinma's mother saying, "You mean this beautiful girl has no real hope of surviving?" (15). Reflecting on these, one can deduce the state of amazement and incredulity that the Prime Minister was faced with the information an extremely beautiful young lady like the character Ezinma was the child of a blind homeless woman suggests that he been in a position to plan the destiny of Ezinma, she would have never been born into such a lowly condition but maybe a highly placed family that befits her exceptional beauty.

Furthermore, reflecting on the tragedy of the death of the character, Blind Woman, Ezinma's mother as embodied in Prime Minister's Son, which occurred on the day Ezinma received her appointment into service at Prime Minister's office in relation to an earlier congratulatory remarks of Mr. Okafor who states that, "I am glad to hear this. Good luck, my daughter. This is great opportunity for you and your mother. Make the best out of it okay" (18) which is a sort of foreseeing a better tomorrow for both mother and child. This brings to light that all characters involved had no control over the next moment and actions that culminated into the tragedy. If there were premonitions or had they control on the turn of events, maybe the Blind Woman would have heeded to the instruction of her daughter to stay indoors till she came back rather than wander away into her death; Ezinma because of her attachment to her mother may not gone off that day or if need be arrange for someone to keep eye on her mother till she return and Mr. Okafor would have told her to prepare for the worse. Still on Ezinma mother's death, the Prime Minister's Son narrates that, "Adaku, made

much effort to console her, reassuring her that what happened was nothing but the will of God..." (23). This aligns with the view of theologians that outcome of a man's life is predetermined by God, his creator and he would inadvertently do nothing but live it out.

In addition, while narrating the pathetic story of Emenike's tender years which he relates to Ezinma at Prime Minister's Son states that, "My humble biography began on that gloomy day in the history of mankind when my poor mother, a careless secondary school girl, gave birth to me and threw me, her own child, into a dustbin" (35-36). The poor child conceived out of an amorous relationship between his mum and the character Boniface, had no control over whom his parent would be, the condition of his birth and later abandonment and so had to follow a path supposedly imposed upon him by destiny. Even years later when a door open for Emenike to leave the orphanage by being adopted by a foster parent, he had control over the personality of the who was to adopt him which result in his falling into the hand of an occultist as Emenike embodied by Prime Minister's Son narrates that, "I sensed something fish was happening in my new home. It wasn't until I had a misunderstanding with one of the street boys that he, in a bid to spite me, told me that my occultist and cabalistic master would soon use me for sacrifice" (36). The fear of falling victim of the man's way of life pushes Emenike back to the streets as Prime Minister's Son narrates that, "There again, I embraced the dustbin for my daily bread, finding solace in the fact that I was not the only sane person hunting for food in the anus of the city" (37), a life he may have never envisaged to life while setting out from the orphanage.

Finally, the Prime Minister's Son bemoaning his experiences in life states that, "I found myself in a new world, a world of the unprivileged, a world of frustrated talents, a world of those innocent victims of natural accidents, accidents of birth parental background" (56). This underlines the

uncertainty that an individual deals with while navigating through life in order to live out his or her destined path.

### **Conclusion**

This study has established that the concept of destiny is strongly portrayed in *The Prime Minister's Son* and is depicted a significant part or factor of an individual's life. This is reflected in the well-crafted presentation of characters in the dramatic text such as Prime Minister's Son, Ezinma and Emenike whose story can be categorized within the sphere of collective destiny as every member of the family was attended to by a particular or almost similar fortune or misfortune.

The preceding section unveiled issues like sudden and unplanned events that in turn affected the lives of the characters favourably or adversely and brought to glare 'uncertainty' of life in most cases, underlining the supposition that no matter how well people try to plan or order their lives, there are circumstances and occurrences that cannot be stopped or controlled by these efforts. These occurrences most times inadvertently launch people into new vistas of life which were planned and can result in either upward or downward social mobility. Hence, destiny as portrayed by this dramatic is uncontrived; a man destiny open to whichever way or path is set before him in accordance with the conglomeration of events that he encounters in his life time.

### **Works Cited**

- Airobaman, Felix A. "The Concept of Destiny and Its Social Implications Among the Esans." *JORIND* 10:3 (2012): 219 – 226. Print.
- Balogun, Oladele A. "The Concept of Ori and Human Destiny in Traditional Yoruba Thought: A Soft-Deterministic Interpretation." *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16.1 (2007): 116 – 130. Print.
- Bandura, Albert. "Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective." *Annual Review of Psychology* 58 (2001): 1-26. Print.

- Das, Subhendu. "A Scientific Theory of Destiny." *Global Journal of Science Frontier Research Mathematics and Decision Sciences* 13.8 (2013): 11-69. Print.
- Holton, Richard. "From Determinism to Resignation; and How to Stop it." *Decomposing the Will*. Eds. Andy Clark, Julian Kiverstein and Tillman Vierkant. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013.
- Kray, Laura J., and others. "From What Might Have Been to What Must Have Been: Counterfactual Thinking Creates Meaning." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 98.1 (210): 106-118. Print.
- Kumaresan, J. "Man's Nature and Destiny: A Christian Theological Approach." *Indian Christian Theological Conference, Madras* (n.d): 167-171.
- Mbajiorgu, Greg. *The Prime Minister's Son*. 20<sup>th</sup> Ann. ed. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2011. Print.
- Mele, Cristina, Jacqueline Pels and Francesco Polese. "A Brief Review of Systems Theories and Their Managerial Application." *Service Science* 2:1/2 (2010) 126-135. Print.
- Nwabueze, Emeka. *Research Methods An Integrated Approach*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Enugu: ABIC Books, 2013. Print.
- Uzoagulu, Aloysius E. *Practical Guide to Writing Research Project Reports in Tertiary Institutions*. New ed. Enugu: Cheston Ltd., 2011. Print.
- Whitehead, Margaret and others. "How Would Differences in 'Control over Destiny' Lead to Socio-Economic Inequalities in Health? A Synthesis of Theories and Pathways in the Living Environment." *Health and Place* 39 (2016): 51-61. Print.