

## Social Construction of Depravity and Authorial Perspective in Greg Mbajiorgu's *The Prime Minister's Son*

Emeka Aniago\*

**Abstract:** The study examines *The Prime Minister's Son* written by Greg Mbajiorgu<sup>1</sup> as a drama of social criticism by discussing the trajectories of social construction of depravity and the apparent destructive re-calibration of psychical disposition of the concerned individuals. Thus, the study analytically looks at the playwright's authorial perspectives on social class segregation paradigm and the subsisting realities as phenomena that are products of social construction of reality. In a bid to illuminate on the deliberate attempts by Mbajiorgu to use drama to criticise a society's problems, in pursuance of plausible conceptual suppositions, the study applies the theory of social construction of reality and the polemics of social criticism as the preferred conceptual and analytical frames. Lastly, in applying content analysis as the preferred analytical approach, the study projects that the analytical conclusions arrived at in the study will further the appreciation of Mbajiorgu's portrayals of contexts and dimensions to actions and inactions of the society towards mitigation or exacerbation of socio-economic deprivation and dehumanization.

**Keywords:** authorial perspective, drama of social criticism, social construction, social depravity

### INTRODUCTION: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DEPRIVATION

This study links the polemics and dialectics of the dramatist as a social critic to the concept of social construction of depravity. Consequently,

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<sup>1</sup> Greg Mbajiorgu is a Nigerian mono-dramatist, solo performance artist and scholar. He was born in Enugu on May 24 1964, had his primary school education at Port-Harcourt Primary School, Rivers State and his secondary school at College of Immaculate Conception (CIC), Enugu. He had his tertiary education at University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and University of Ibadan both in Nigeria. He has authored a number of works such as *Hands of Fate* (Drama), *Wake up Everyone* (Drama), and *Water Monologue* (Poetry). Mbajiorgu lectures in Theatre & Film Studies Department, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

this study contends that the literati as social critics including dramatists are influenced in many ways by their personal as well as their shared social construction of reality in their formulation of ideological inclinations and preferences.

To deepen the understanding of the salient perspectives of the author, a reader needs to appreciate the realities that constitute the predominant social ideology and philosophy in the author's environment. Therefore, enhanced knowledge of the author's background in this direction could go a long way in providing a reader with greater propensity to make plausible deductions on the inter-textual shades of the authorial metaphors. This study suggests that portrayals in a creative writings are in many ways reflections of social realities and realities according to Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz are socially constructed. She contends that social construction theory in line with the perspectives of the forerunners such as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967), Burr, V. (1995), Carey, J. (1989), Gergen, K. J. (1994; 1999), "addresses the processes by which people jointly construct their understandings of the world" (Leeds-Hurwitz 2013, 891). Furthering, she notes that advocates of this theory, "assume that meanings are developed in coordination with others rather than separately within each individual or in the world of things, making social interaction the loom upon which the social fabric is woven" (Leeds-Hurwitz 2013, 891). Hence, "each culture or social group develops its own understandings of the world, creating its own meanings for behaviour and how this is to be understood" (Leeds-Hurwitz 2013, 892). Similarly, Tänzler et al. (2012, 3) describe social construction of reality as a conceptual paradigm viewed within the social science and humanities as a means of providing plausible deductions as regards to how "social order exists as a product of human activity in its genesis". Furthermore, the theory of social construction of reality illuminates on how "social order is the result of past human activity" and how "social order exists only and insofar as human activity continues to produce it" (Tänzler et al. 2012, 3). Therefore, social construction of reality may be defined as a concept which explains that human realities majorly exist in different manifestations mainly because of social and interpersonal influences (Gergen 1985). To Tom Andrews (2012, 39), social constructionism "originated as an attempt to come to terms with the nature of reality". Furthering, Andrews, adds that social constructionism is in many ways traceable to an interpretivist approach to thinking, hence conceptually

and ontologically “in attempting to make sense of the social world, social constructionists view knowledge as constructed as opposed to created” (Ibid.).

The relevance of this view in this instance is that one is inclined to accept the supposition that Nigeria’s social reality of depravity as projected in the primary study *The Prime Minister’s Son* is a product of Nigerians’ cumulative choice of actions and inactions. Still on the application of social construction of reality as a suitable conceptual frame in analyzing social products of human behaviours and actions, Andrews explains that the theory of social construction of reality provides critics with necessary framework to rationalize and appreciate that social contexts and concepts are constructed rather than discovered (2012, 40).

On the provision of plausible framework for a clearer understanding of the expression ‘social contexts’, Victoria Dickerson and Jeffrey Zimmerman (1996, 80) observe that a social constructionist perspective, “locates meaning in an understanding of how ideas and attitudes are developed over time within a social and community context”. To espouse further on the conceptual nuance which social constructionism provides, Alexandra Galbin observes that:

Social constructionism regards individuals as integral with cultural, political and historical evolution, in specific times and places, and so resituates psychological processes cross-culturally, in social and temporal contexts. (Galbin 2014, 85)

Furthermore, Galbin observes that “apart from the inherited and developmental aspects of humanity, social constructionism hypothesizes that all other aspects of humanity are created, maintained and destroyed in our interactions with others through time” (Ibid.). Here, Galbin applies the conceptual frame of social constructionism in attempt to provide rational and plausible explanations to dynamics of realities in different social contexts, which includes variable such as social depravity and affluence. The notion here is that this paper intends to draw from the applicable and relevant substances from the conceptual nuances of social construction of reality, the concept of social criticism through drama, the implication and contexts of authorial voice as metaphor in analyzing Greg Mbajiorgu’s *The Prime Minister’s Son* through interpretive analysis.

Furthermore, this study focuses on the metaphor of language application as a contextual purview which falls within rhetorical

strategies, as a means of analyzing the palpable authorial perspectives in the play *The Prime Minister's Son* in relation to some scholarly polemics on realities of social construction of depravity.

In creative writing such as drama, prose and poetry, authors usually generate their story from source materials which can be categorized as historical, typical or actual reality source materials. These source materials are culture specific products of social construction of reality. Therefore, in presenting a story, a creative writer applies such mediums as characterization, character statements (monologue and dialogue), shades and nuances of language, story localization in time and place(s), plot typology and sequence, realities of conflicts and its resolutions, as veritable means of projecting authorial perspectives, within an interpretive community's social construction of reality. These projections can be encapsulated as messages and points-of-views which subsumes the ideological and philosophical inclinations of the author. An informed contextualization of authorial perspective provides the basis for plausible deductions and attributions from a piece of creative writing. Thus, over the years, scholars have attempted to provide reliable basis through which authorial perspective of a creative work can be better understood.

According to Rich Szostak (2014) authorial perspective can be appreciated through informed understanding of the disciplinary inclination(s), the ideological, ethical, epistemological, aesthetic, theoretical, methodological bents and approaches as well as the rhetorical strategies of the writer. Furthermore, Szostak believes that improved understanding of a given writer's authorial perspective in a focused study will facilitate communication both within and beyond social groups. Whereas Antonio Garcia-Gutierrez and Daniel Martinez-Avila (2014) are of the view that it would alert users to potential biases in the focused text. Here, the contextualization of potential biases in a creative writing can be illuminated through the analysis of the text's degree of representation of the relevant social construction of reality. Hence, Viviane Clavier and Celine Paganelli (2011) consider the benefits of classifying authorial perspective to include enhanced achievement of proper evaluation of the potential relevance of a creative work. Whereas Tatiana Lukoianova and Victoria Rubin (2013) are of the view that clear understanding of authorial perspective might also enhance the detection of purposeful deception. In many ways the nuances and shades of authorial perspective in a drama of social criticism can be view within the

purview of socio-dramatic transition of language which according to Abdul-Rasheed Adeoye (2015, 101) represents the linguistic nuances and flavour subsuming the “flexibility of language use and movement; its dynamism in dramatic construction through the playwright’s dramatic characters”. In line with Adeoye’s view, the socio-dramatic transition of language application in African drama indicates that the playwright’s message(s) can be appreciated from several trajectories, and some playwrights, he contends, take the intentionality of expressions in drama to admirable aesthetic density. Furthermore, Adeoye observes that “the second face value of this concept is the significance of language as a social vehicle of communication within society, culture, theatre and the audience” (Ibid.). Thus, the analysis of language application in a play within the conceptual frame of socio-dramatic transition of language, according to Adeoye is about “ascertaining the level of linguistic possibilities and socio-cultural factors that influenced” a playwright’s use of language in his or her plays (Ibid., 102). Adeoye’s purview is subsumed in the premise that “literature as a central part of culture and experience; its text and sub-text draw inspiration from the society that it helps to create and give identity to” (Ibid., 102). In many ways, in the above passages, Adeoye alludes to the culture specific realities of an author’s choice of source material and the context of a literary source material as a web which its illumination depends heavily on relevant interpretive community’s social construction of reality. Thus, this position subsumes as well as reflects the context of drama as a medium of social criticism, because criticism projects its intentionality and urgency through subsumed attribution in language metaphor and conceptuality of the relevant interpretive community. More so, it is plausible to describe Adeoye’s concept as that which emphasizes the essence of author’s communication which artistically tender language to accommodate local flavours in a socio-dramatic transition as that polemics that points towards the artistic means of enhancing communication density and conceptuality. Furthermore, it is this technique in literary composition that Adeoye conceptualizes as ‘Tribaltonism’ which he describes as:

the use of detailed localized tribal linguistic and paralinguistic aesthetics for a particular play. Also, it is the creative writer’s flourishing imagination at objectively reproducing and representing material and immaterial cultures of a given community or society without sacrificing the true essence of the people a writer is writing for. (Adeoye 2015, 110)

A critical aspect of Adeoye's purview which this paper intends to rummage on is the notion that the writer is in the first instance consciously creating his/her composition through clear appreciation of the intended reader's and audience language peculiarities, which is a product social construction reality. It is within the scope of this authorial creative latitude that the writer decides to increase the sublime essence of his composition. Espousing further, Adeoye notes:

The circumstances and the dynamics of the various characters that the playwright will represent have conferred on the playwright, the creative ability to transit with language and to create various atmospheres that will help him or her to convey the very subject of his discourse. (Ibid., 118)

The view here is that authorial perspective defines the various inclinations, philosophy, awareness, ideology and worldview of the creative writer. Hence, authorial perspective can be conveyed through a play's aspects such as the characterization, language, setting, and resolution of dramatic conflict as suggested earlier. Furthermore, the deduction, in line with Adeoye's contribution which we accept as helpful in advancing plausible suppositions on authorial perspective is his remark which illustrates the importance of propriety of language and expression in literary composition. Contextually, this view represents an indication of the significance of the writer's grasp and depth of understanding of the social construction of reality, the thematic preoccupation of the story as well as the writer's familiarity with the language and its impact propensity on various categories of readers and audience.

#### CONTEXTUALIZING AUTHORIAL PERSPECTIVE IN A DRAMA OF SOCIAL CRITICISM

The expression 'drama as a medium of social criticism' in line with the perspective of this study, represents conscious efforts by playwrights to create drama that will critically portray the inadequacies, retrogression, maladministration, ineptitudes, disenchantments and anomalies that subsists, existed, or are foreseen in a society, in a bid to generate as well as to stimulate public interest on the focused subject(s). To this end, it is plausible to suggest that drama of social criticism targets or focuses on a given society as well as selected concern(s). The expression 'medium' in line with the perspective of this study connotes the channel or means through which social

criticism is propelled. The idea here is that social criticism can be attained through several mediums and platforms that are deemed viable, such as prose, poetry, and songs. However, the cardinal perspective in this regard is that a social critic portrays the realities of the society in ways and manner that indicates disapproval or approval of such situations and circumstances. According to Gerhard Zecha (1992, 153) “the critical social researcher it is held, is the one who must look beyond the immediate social facts and see the value framework of society”. Therefore, the point of view of this study is that a social critic is “precisely the one who has to take into account, the factual, evaluative and normative feature of the social framework” (Ibid.). Furthermore, in accord with Zecha’s position, Emma Goldman (2005, 1) is of the opinion that “in order to understand the social and dynamic significance of modern dramatic art, it is necessary” for the artist to appreciate, “the difference between the functions of art for art’s sake and art as the mirror of life”. Goldman goes on to explain that while “art for art’s sake, presupposes an attitude of aloofness on the part of the artist towards the complex struggle of life,” in which case a dramatist represents “merely an artistic conjurer of beautiful forms and a creator of pure fancy” (Ibid.).

The above supposition by Goldman in many ways provides the basis upon which we discuss Greg Mbajiorgu’s authorial perspective as portrayed in *The Prime Minister’s Son*. The notion here is that even though every drama mirrors life and its realities, not all are intended for criticism of life’s actions and inactions. Consequently, this paper sees the drama of social criticism as that which mirrors as well as interrogates the shades and nuances of complex struggles of life. Looking critically at the efficacy of drama as a medium of social criticism Ziky Kofoworola (2011, 27) contends that “drama provides an exciting forum for dissecting societal ills and problems with the ultimate aim of finding solutions”. Again whereas social criticism is an attempt to provide an opinion as informed by knowledge and perspective, this paper agrees that:

It is plausible to say that playwrights use drama as an effective medium of re-enacting some prevailing social realities in a bid to instigate public debates. These public debates conceivably are aimed at creating veritable platform for mind-rubbings. Whereas these mind-rubbings are expected to generate robust awareness amongst the populace in order to trigger positive communal quests for solutions to varied societal maladies and anomalies. (Aniago 2017, 69)

Noteworthy, the perspective Aniago espouses is in line with Goldman's view (2005, 3), who observes that "such drama is at once the reflex and inspiration of mankind in its eternal seeking for things higher and better". Therefore, the technique, intensity and authorial inclination adopted by a dramatist to tackle social inadequacies represent the variables that distinguish writers in this category. Illuminating further on this trajectory, Lawrence Bamidele notes that:

The writer is part of the current of human thought; the writer shares the language, attitude, tone and voice of his fellows and expresses his values that come from discernible context in society, in a nation and at a period. Against this background and various other views, sociology of literature has concerned itself with the social commitment of art, the position of the writer in society and his relationship to that society. (Bamidele 2000, 3)

Again, this paper draws from Andrew Gibson's approach on social criticism which lays down the broad strokes of an interpretive approach to social criticism. In developing this approach, Gibson stresses the importance of pluralistic notion of social justice. The context of this approach in the discussion of social criticism encapsulates the conceptual that one-dimensional conceptions of social justice which revolves around legal equality in negation of the idea of probable multiple 'spheres of justice' adversely narrows the scope of social justice interpretation. The spheres and nuances of justice according to Gibson, includes the spheres of care and merit. Thus, an analysis of social criticism can be propelled by humanistic disposition beyond legalistic interpretation. Furthering on the dimensions to multiple perspectives on social criticism, Gibson (2008, 102) notes that "the social basis for these different spheres is best understood against the canvas of an ideal of self-fulfilment and individuality". He observes that "based on the elaboration of these two sets of premises, a pluralistic conception of social justice and a collective ideal of personal self-fulfilment" emanates (Ibid.). According to Gibson:

The basis for a socially contextualized, interpretive approach to social criticism, one that is less detached and formulaic than normative critique, and thus more attuned to the plural and contradictory aspects of the historic morality of specific communities. (2008, 103)

What Gibson's contribution subsumes in this regard is that social justice is describable mostly within the prisms of locale specific definitions, even though the tenets of social justice accommodate universal commons in some situations. Illuminating further on this inclination, Gibson explains:

If we take social criticism, generally, to mean critical insight directed towards cultural affirmation, elaboration and betterment, its interpretive form can be understood as a matter of developing such insight based on the moral sensibilities and practices which have already gained a foothold in a specific time and place, in a specific country or community of experience. (2008, 103)

Still on the same trajectory, according to Kenneth Eni and Doubara Otiotio (2013, 225) "the artist recourse to social criticism is born out of the need to correct ills for the betterment of his society" because "since to assign to oneself the responsibility of exposing and correcting these perceived ills is to set oneself against the perpetrators of these ills". Analytically, the contexts of setting oneself against the perpetrators of these ills can be seen as confronting the perceived perpetrators either in radical or non-radical social disposition. To confront social anomalies through brazen point blank techniques, unambiguously is clear characteristic of radical social criticism, whereas, when a writer apparently generalizes, applies mild and conciliatory language/metaphors as well as obscures the target of his criticism; such a writer can be viewed as non-radical social critic.

In attempting an interpretive analysis on the classification of the focused play as a drama of social criticism, this study contextualizes *The Prime Minister's Son* as a conciliatory metaphor with varied connotations at different levels. In this regard this study looks at the aspects of the characterization, language, and location in the play as contextual metaphors. According to Michael Osborn (2009, 654), metaphor occurs when we use words or visual constructions to make novel references in atypical contexts. In this regard, this study extrapolates the varying suggestions of ideas subsumed in metaphors in *The Prime Minister's Son*, through attribution within interpretive contexts. Furthermore, Osborn in his explanation of the shades of metaphor application in creative writing observes:

Perhaps the most basic use of metaphor is to expand the reach and repair the inadequacy of our referential system. When confronted by novel subjects, our tendency is to communicate by using words that

seem related or similar, based on points of comparison between the novel and familiar subjects. (2009, 654)

### SYNOPTIC OVERVIEW OF *THE PRIME MINISTER'S SON*

The play's story is an evocative tale which oscillates around a dejected sixteen year old boy referred to as The Prime Minister' Son, by the playwright, who was brought into the world as a result of wily amorous alcohol driven one-night indiscretion between a popular socialite known as 'Prime Minister' and his house-help, Ezinma. The story indicates that in his drunken state, The Prime Minister subtly implored Ezinma, who came into his bedroom to find out why he has not come to dinning to have his dinner, to have a glass of wine with high alcohol content. Ezinma after initial feeble refusal respectfully obliged and gulped the drink. Shortly, she feels rapidly dizzy and thereafter slept off in her master's bed. After that night, gradually, Ezinma discovers that she is pregnant and this slowed her ability to carry-out her stipulated chores. As this lingers, The Prime Minister sought to find out what is wrong with Ezinma. Coincidentally, the time The Prime Minister enters Ezinma's room to find out what is wrong with her, happens to be the time Emenike, the house-boy is in Ezinma's room attempting to find out too what is wrong with Ezinma. As The Prime Minister probes Ezinma and she suggests that he, The Prime Minister is the one responsible for the pregnancy, he gets very infuriated and demands that she and Emenike vacate his premises within stipulated hours, after he attempts to pin Ezinma's pregnancy on Emenike. In response, Ezinma and Emenike left The Prime Minister's house as instructed, got married thereafter and began to face their lives realties together. Emenike got an affordable one room in a shared compound in a poor neighbourhood and began to work strenuously as a manual cement loader and off-loader in a bid to sustain his family. Emenike enrolled Ezinma's son in an expensive school and vowed to sustain him all through before he abruptly died of exhaustion largely due to extreme overwork. Emenike's sudden demise created substantial economic misery for Ezinma and her son, and in response Ezinma withdrew her son from the costly school. As Ezinma and her son settled down to life without Emenike, not long after, Ezinma lost all her petty trade wares and kiosk to government officials who were carrying out routine spontaneous order to clear the road-sides of shacks and undesirables. Overwhelmed by this misfortune, Ezinma becomes mentally dislocated, thus she began to roam the streets and roads

aimlessly. She tragically died through an unfortunate fall from a great height. Devastated by his mother painful death, Prime Minister's Son mourned uncontrollably. Thereafter, Prime Minister's Son discovered bits and pieces of valuable information regarding his paternity and related circumstances. Having no relative left, he attempts to meet The Prime Minister, whom he did discover is his biological father. His attempt to unite with him ended in dejection because he was turned back and ordered not to ever attempt to repeat his visit by The Prime Minister. Rejected, he looks towards uncertainty and life alone.

### *THE PRIME MINISTER'S SON AS METAPHOR OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEPRAVITY*

The story commences with the character Prime Minister's Son, portrayed as a deprived young man, particularly through his utterly tattered outfit. Lamenting his ordeal as he moves close to his mother's tombstone. The playwright presents a scenario of hopelessness, through the character, The Prime Minister's Son who suggests that he has but given up struggling to re-aggregate his life: "What shall I do? I am tired of life. What shall I do? I am tired of life. I am one who has no one to turn to" (Mbajiorgu 2011, 11). This opening salvo creates an atmosphere and mood of pain, anguish and misfortune which is intended to effectively affect the reader or audience of the drama. Here, the playwright provides a platform to appreciate the beauty of metaphor in the lamentation. Evidently, the choice of language by the playwright is interestingly simple, even though the density and weight of the matter involved remains heavily delicate. Here, again, the rendering, clearly points to disenchantment, disillusionment, passionate plea, and the essence of humanity, subsume in the need to provide succour to the down-trodden. Illuminating on the substance of the dramatic technique applied by the playwright, in relation to the thematic pre-occupation of the play, Onyebuchi Ile (2015, 31) observes that *The Prime Minister's Son* is "a simple piece of drama about complex philosophical themes". Furthermore, Ile notes that:

The simplicity of rendering of *The Prime Minister's Son* in terms of language belies the complex dramaturgy of Solo Performance Art, which it captures: the assumption of a multiple role by a solo dramatist requires skill: the ability to modulate the voice to suit the role assumed is one; the capacity to rouse the attention of the audience and hold the attention is another. (Ile 2015, 31 – 32)

The complex philosophical themes, arguably includes the incongruity of the appropriateness or otherwise of burden of depravity each individual carries either from birth or at some point in life, as enacted by Mbajiorgu in the focus drama. To personify the metaphor of depravity, the playwright positions the character Prime Minister's Son as one who totally lacks the will and dexterity to face travails and circumstances of life. The character extends his embodiment of hopelessness by pleading with his dead and buried mother to resurrect. Through this, the playwright portrays the image and status of the Prime Minister's Son as a 'baby', particularly when he asks, pleads and wonders in the following manner:

But why, Mother? Why? Why did you leave me this way? Now that you are gone, what is my joy in this wicked world? Why, Mama. Why must I live without you? (*Breaks into tears*) Mother, please come back, return from wherever you have gone. Come back, Mama. This life does not make sense without you. Come and take me along with you. Mama, please come [...]. (Mbajiorgu 2011, 12)

Again, the play projects the practically non-existent social welfare condition in Nigeria; hence a victim of civil war has to suffer without necessary mitigating palliates. This is clearly expressed in the following comments by the blind woman, who happens to be Ezinma's mother, while she was narrating her circumstance to The Prime Minister as he pulls-over to give her and her daughter alms: "I lost my eyes and husband during the civil war. Since then, I've been roaming the streets with my only child begging for alms" (Mbajiorgu 2011, 15). Furthering, the playwright suggests that in deed some people are bearing the brunt of their inclinations and divide in the Nigeria civil war, thus the Blind woman concludes: "We're war victims. My daughter and I are among the few survivors of the tragic air raid that almost wiped out the entire Umualla village during the Nigeria/Biafra civil war" (Ibid.). As The Prime Minister seeks to find out why she did not tilt towards her relatives for succour, she tearfully explains: "All our blood relations were wiped out during the severe air raid of nineteen sixty eight. Without any one to learn on, we resorted to the streets" (Ibid.). The playwright presents the Prime Minister as one with some element of compassionate disposition. This can be observed when Ezinma attempts to commit suicide as a result of her mother's death from a hit-and-run accident. He promptly issued out a cheque of thirty thousand naira, provided official vehicle as well as one of his

drivers to enable Mr. Okafor to get back to the hospital without delay. Furthermore, Prime Minister provides a cash amount of N2000 for sundry contingencies and handed a personal memo to the medical director through his driver. The Prime Minister's compassionate disposition continued even as he and his wife decided to visit Ezinma at the hospital with plenty of food and fruits as soon as he got the news of her regaining consciousness. Yet another example of Prime Minister's kind disposition is when he instructed his wife to send food and beverages to Ezinma for the period of two months she was admitted in the hospital. Furthermore, after Ezinma's discharge from the hospital, "Mr. Okafor, who had not much means to cater for Ezinma, was extremely happy when Prime Minister offered to take total responsibility for Ezinma's welfare for the time being" (Mbajiorgu 2011, 30). The playwright presents Ezinma as an individual so subdued by poverty, so much so that at her first morning in the palatial mansion of the Prime Minister, in a thoughtful mood:

She reviewed her situation for the umpteenth time, wondering whether it was not better for her to just go back to her former home rather than continue with her illusory existence in Prime Minister's house. (Mbajiorgu 2011, 32)

The playwright strives to extend the gloom of the have-nots, by presenting a tale of abject circumstances of Emenike's background captured in the following words by Emenike:

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. (Ibid., 34-35)

Before this tale, Emenike is projected by the playwright as one whose psyche has been so messed up by depravity, similar to the disposition of Ezinma and her son Prime Minister's Son, through his description of himself in a least dignifying manner: "the bastard, house-boy and gardener in this house" (Ibid., 34). When Ezinma felt flabbergasted and goes ahead to seek clarification from Emenike, pertaining to the possible reasons behind his mother's action, Emenike responds by describing his biological run-away father, Boniface as the reason. Furthering, Emenike claims and describes his father Boniface as his mother's, "irresponsible secret lover, my so-called father, who vanished into the thin air after impregnating a poor uninformed secondary school girl" (Mbajiorgu 2011, 35). Thus in a most

unsavoury manner, Emenike continues the projection of the entrenched deprived psyche:

As I was saying, a child of the dustbin I was, until a passing countryman picked me up and sent me to the orphanage. There I grew so rapidly that at the age of seven, I was bigger than most of my mates. (Mbajiorgu 2011, 35)

The playwright advances some imagery and thoughts, alluding to a tacit acceptance of magical realism in the clime and era in which the play story resides in the following contexts:

Out of curiosity, I asked people in the neighbourhood whether they knew where Ozoemena could be, each person I asked treated me like a dynamo. I sensed something fishy 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 cabalist master would soon use me for sacrifice. The boy also wished I would rot in the shrine, but then he had unwittingly unravelled the puzzle of Ozoemena's disappearance. In my room that night, I kept eating Kola nuts to keep awake. By the dead hour of the night, when the spirits are known to roam the surface of earth [...], I escaped... (Ibid., 37)

Through the remark above made by Emenike the playwright suggests that the society in which Emenike found himself is lacking social safety nets, thus people are degraded and dehumanized directly and indirectly. Thus, Emenike explains that the time he was roaming the street as a homeless boy, he reveals: 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" (Ibid., 37). In the following passage, the playwright drives home the reality of entrenched socio-economic disparity in the society, through Emenike's reflection:

This adventure continued, most times with luck, few times without, until the arms of economic regression gradually started affecting the dustbins, which began to harbour waste papers and used polythene bags instead of the usual leftover meals. Peter one of the dustbin scavengers was the first to disappear, followed later by Jones. With scarcity of food in public dustbins, I went hungry for a couple of days. Just as I was about to give up the hope of surviving, Peter resurfaced, looking very refreshed and robust. On enquiry, he told me that the

dustbins at the Government Reserved Areas fared better, so to the GRA I headed. (Mbajiorgu 2011, 38)

Subsuming the contexts of anguish captured in the play, Ile (2015, 32) rhetorically reflects: “what is our hope in a world filled with only pain and sorrow?” Furthering, Ile asks: “Are our pains and sorrows, experiences to help us live aright or are they just sheer pains and sorrows?” (Ibid.). Ile thinks that the answers to these questions are in the world religions as well as in secular humanism (Ibid.). In a pessimist bent after lamenting the inability of man to end sorrow and pains regardless of significant strides in science and technology, Ile reflects:

Is the world then absurd? Will people continue to be afflicted by suffering in the world? Is it the fault of those who suffer pain that they undergo such? (Ile 2015, 33)

According to Ile, the dramatic rendering by Mbajiorgu provides a forum for humanistic consideration to the complexity of life depravity. He believes that it is noteworthy and significant the choice of rendering by Mbajiorgu, thus he goes ahead to observe that in “*The Prime Minister’s Son*, the world is depicted as absurd” (Ile 2015, 32). Consequently, Mbajiorgu in this play reflects on the preponderance as well as the enduring nature of life struggles and the crushing pains that accompany it, mostly for the socially disadvantaged individuals such as ‘The Prime Minister’s Son’, his mother, and Emenike.

## CONCLUSION

The metaphor of socio-economic depravity in Greg Mbajiorgu’s *The Prime Minister’s Son* which we view from the angle of drama of social criticism is dense and provoking. The playwright highlights that the imaginable avenues of breaking out of the shackles of depravity are littered with attendant pains and anguish. Again the playwright philosophically suggests that life is a continual battle to avoid the side of depravity. The central character the Prime Minister’s Son relates how his apparent only escape door from desolation and depravity vanished while it appeared within reach. In response he wonders and laments the chronic replete misery entrenched in all stories of his life known to him dating back to his forebears. Again, the play’s story revolves around the polemics of ethereal illumination, portrayal of fortitude as a form of grace, depiction of shades of melancholy as realities of desolation, illustration of the differing nuances and faces of

deprivation, presentation of the graphic realities of socio-economic inequality, and the apparent unavailability of mundane plausible answers on why the righteous suffer, specifically children. The centrality of the theme of vicious cycle of crushing depravity elevates and places the portrayal in the drama within in the ambit of philosophy of the absurd and the incongruent. Clearly, Mbajjorgu enacts the realities of the absurdity of life travails within the prism of crushing depravity by children who come to the world and land in abject poverty, with no easy escape. Here the playwright presents an emotion laden scenario which succinctly interrogates the place of social justice in the psyche and behaviour of the people in the locale he depicts. Significantly, the playwright laments the inequality that prevails in the society, thus one can appreciate through his authorial perspective that he disapproves of it. Again the playwright acknowledges that the circumstance of birth plays a significant role on the socio-economic divide one could find him or herself. In line with Adeoye's language propriety and socio-dramatic transition of language the playwright applies meaningful imagery such as the 'anus of the society' to enhance the intensity and density of his communication.

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