

**FLIPSIDE CRITICISM OF THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL DYNAMICS
OF OLUNDE AND PILKINGS IN WOLE SOYINKA'S
DEATH AND THE KING'S HORSEMAN**

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Abstract

The psycho-social dynamics of main characters such as Olunde and Pilkings in Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman is interesting for exploring the circumstances of individuals contending with forces that finally impose outcomes they never really intended. Using qualitative methodology and textual analysis, Death and the King's Horseman was subjected to the critical tools of flipside theory to interrogate the depiction of people on the margins of society. The purpose was to shed more light on the behaviours of selected characters. This research establishes that it is by applying flipside theory that one can appreciate how characters on the margins of society can cause significant social transformations, and that Olunde and Pilkings are not flipside characters, neither is Death and the King's Horseman a flipside work. Flipside theory is an important contribution to the global toolkit of literary theories by bringing discourse about victims of social existence to the fore.

Keywords: Olunde, Pilkings, flipside theory, psycho-social dynamics, Soyinka

Main Text Introduction

Matias (2012) considers it important to look at “fault” within the context of human behaviors and, in relation to tragedy, he establishes a dialogue between Freud, Aristotle, and Sophocles which shows that human experiences influence the writing of literature (pp. 79-94). On his part, Medjigbodo (1979) describes tragic literature from Africa as a specific form of cultural expression that takes cognizance of the human situation and addresses social issues (p. 70). There was this real life incident in September, 2023 in Enugu State, Nigeria when heavy rains generated a flood that caused a building to collapse and kill four young siblings. The parents of the unfortunate children were left asking themselves why that kind of tragedy struck the family at a time when they were still struggling to keep the family going due to a harsh economic situation.

Tragedy both in real life and in fiction underscores the importance of digging into the psycho-social dynamics of individuals grappling with tragedy and battling for survival. It must be taken into consideration that such individuals carry the weight of whatever pitiful or devastating experiences they are going through. In this regard, literary works with tragic plots interrogate tragedy to make sense of it and to enable people to harness it in productive ways. It is

against this background that the work of tragedy that will be subjected to critical analysis was selected, namely, *Death and the King's Horseman* which was written by Wole Soyinka in 1975 in the postcolonial period.

Death and the King's Horseman has been studied by many scholars and explored from a wide range of angles. However, no one has accomplished this using flipside criticism, to the best of this researcher's knowledge. This is because flipside literary theory only recently emerged as another tool of literary criticism.

The aim of this research carried out on *Death and the King's Horseman* is to uncover new insights about the psycho-social dynamics of select characters in the plot while the objectives are to show that significant features of tragedy can be found in the plot; to demonstrate how flipside literary criticism uncovers important insights about imbalances in social relations capable of making people on the margins of society mobilize and cause transformations or significant changes to social structures and cultural assumptions.

This research is significant because it will equip individuals with useful intellectual, psychological and sociological resources to sufficiently appraise tragedy in life and fiction, and to understand and harness its psycho-social impacts on people. This research will also equip students of literature with more theoretical frameworks and conceptual tools for the critical interrogation of works of tragedy and for the understanding of the behaviours of characters in plots. In addition, this research will equip lecturers with additional teaching resources to impact positively on the cognitive, emotive and psychomotor domains of learners. Finally, this research will provide readers and audiences with another platform to interrogate tragedy and to appreciate its psycho-social effects on individuals, and on select characters in *Death and the King's Horseman* in particular.

The scope of this research ranges from the primary text, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, to secondary texts relevant for the success of a research like this such as critical essays that discuss drama from a wide range of perspectives.

The limitations to this research included problems with easily accessing both the primary, and secondary texts relevant for this research, and with funding to cover all that.

Materials: Literature Review

Ready (1988), and Birbalsingh (1982) share some interesting opinions. Birbalsingh applied a comparative approach and historical analysis and his findings underscores the point that "*Death and the King's Horseman* is based on actual historical events employed imaginatively in roughly the same way that history is used in such plays as Shaw's *Saint Joan* and Brecht's *Galileo*" (p. 202). The tragic plot is derived from historical events that occurred in the Yoruba city of Oyo in 1946 when Nigeria was a British colony: "A Yoruba king had died and custom required his horseman, Olori Elesin, after about one month, to commit ritual suicide and go to serve his king in heaven. Suicide being illegal under British law, the local District Officer arrested Elesin" (p. 202). Similarly, Ready (1988) connects the 1986 Nobel Prize for Literature won by Soyinka with *Death and the King's Horseman* which was specially cited by the awarding committee. Ready recounts that it was in 1974 during his tenure at Churchill College, Cambridge that Soyinka discovered how to appropriate history in drama. Ready also holds that Soyinka was influenced by the great tragedies of the Greek Classical period and by Shakespeare and "Soyinka wishes to ensure that a play such as *Death and the King's Horseman* affirms the ritual origins of tragedy" (p. 711).

Scholars like Talajooy (2015), Ojaide (1992), and Reed (1988) call attention to the impact of cultural differences on literary productivity and hegemonic bias on its appreciation. In their view, Western structural and conceptual prejudices undermine remarkable talents and creativity by writers from the southern hemisphere and global critical reception of literary works by writers of African descent. Using a historical approach and comparative analysis, Reed (1988) points out that “Soyinka said as much in the course of an Interview with *The New York Times*. Currently, the American intelligentsia... embrace a smugly blind attitude toward 'the other,' the fashionable metaphor for the Third World.... As one [racist Western] columnist put it.... The uplift of the Third World will only happen through the graces of 'Western civilization'” (p. 705).

On his own part, Ojaide (1992) used a comparative approach and among his findings is the view that the plot of this tragic drama “is not typical of works written in Africa in the 1970s, which generally deal with socio-political protest against government corruption. It is more like works of the late 1950s and early 1960s, which express cultural conflict between the African and the European (Western) worlds” (p. 210). Ojaide also notes that “African literary works are classified in the West as postcolonial, but never construed so by African writers and their primary audience of Africans.... African critics of African literature in Africa and some more nationalistic ones abroad speak of 'post-independence African literature' instead of the postcolonial” (p. 210). Towing a similar line, Talajooy (2015) holds that “traditional structures and themes appear in modern forms to renegotiate people's cultural identity... and mythologize the positive aspects of history to redefine cultural identity with the best their cultures offer” (p. 379).

Ikyoive and Sheik (2017), and Jain (1986) recommend that *Death and the King's Horseman* deserves deep level critical analysis. Ikyoive and Sheik (2017) applied an analytic approach to *Death and the King's Horseman* and analysis of data gathered showed that ritual suicide is a component of culture rather than a form of personal escape. Jain (1986) used cultural studies and sociological analysis and among his findings, holds that *Death and the King's Horseman* is not “a play about the colonial situation, or about cultural clash” which are interpretations even Soyinka himself rejects (p. 252). For Jain, this play also differs from other Soyinka plays because neither the satiric nor the comic overarches the plot whereas the “dominant strategy of the play is irony, and the reversal at the end happens to be a tragic reversal” (p. 252). Jain finds a metaphysical dimension to Olunde's suicide and accords only incidental significance to the colonial factor and the historicity of the main event (p. 252).

Ifatimehin (2017) and Williams (1993) look at differences in cultural practices and their social implications. Using cultural studies and sociological analysis, findings by Williams includes the view that ritual is an essential cultural feature of feudal societies and was “part of a complex and insidious apparatus of cultural and political reproduction employed by the dominant groups” (p. 67). Ifatimehin (2017) applied the method of deconstruction to explore contrapuntality, alterity and the trope of culture clash in *Death and the King's Horseman* and came to the conclusion that the reading of clash of cultures rather enriches appreciation of the play and its social relevance.

Barnaby (2004), Afolayan (2019), and Sere (1984) insist that African works should be read without bias to avoid undermining their literary merits and social relevance. Sere's (1984) critical studies maintain that African playwrights like Soyinka compete favourably with their Western counterparts and that Soyinka, with respect to his tragic drama, “enjoins the reader (or director) to aim at the more difficult task of bringing out what is essential in the play and which is latent in the threnody, or song of lamentation, as given in the play. When a reader does this, Soyinka insists, he will find that the confrontation in the play is largely *metaphysical*” (p. 229).

Using a historical approach and qualitative method, Afolayan's (2019) findings include the view that griots (oral storytellers or court poets) are relevant to modern African societies.

Abakporo (2022) and Booth (1988) share some views in common. Booth (1988) adopted the tools of hermeneutics and among his findings is the view that *Death and the King's Horseman* can be approached from the angle of the metaphysics of sacrifice. He points to Brian W. Last who argues that “Olunde's climactic sacrifice can only be understood in metaphysical terms” (p. 529). Booth also affirms Ralph-Bowman's (1983) view that Soyinka accomplished something outstanding because “While effectively utilizing the conventions of 'Western' tragedy in the play, he has triumphantly succeeded in refuting both the ideology and the esthetic upon which these conventions are based” (p. 529). Booth holds that the drama shows an un-Western theme and literary technique. Abakporo (2022) uses the historical approach to counter Western critics like Ruth Finnegan who deny competence in African drama for want of conformity with the Aristotelian template. Abakporo argues that Africa has every right to differ from Western conventions in order to build on its own tradition.

Using a qualitative method and critical analysis, Kesur and Patil (2022) establish through *Death and the King's Horseman* an interpretation of African drama as a tool of resistance against foreign hegemony and oppression. George (1999) adopts a historical approach and cultural analysis and his findings show that *Death and the King's Horseman* attracts a stream of critical reviews because Soyinka produced “a drama of archetypes, developing in the process a vision of history, society, and tragic drama” which is “based on socio-cultural passion, even as the playwright's oeuvre constitutes an attempt to work through the passion by means of art” (p. 67).

Garuba (2022), and Ralph-Bowman (1983) see African drama as a tool for social criticism. Using a historical approach and sociological analysis, Ralph-Bowman (1983) holds that, “It is difficult to resist the sense of déjà vu in the selection of events in *Death and the King's Horseman*, difficult to resist the conclusion that the forces at work in colonial 1946 are seen by Soyinka to be at work in postcolonial 1974” (p. 81). Garuba's comparative study of Soyinka's theatre and Beckett's theatre underscores the view that the two playwrights exhibit a modernist interrogation of man's existence but that the former shows an inclination towards traditional conventions whereas the latter inclines towards non-conformity.

Ofoego (2016), Topper (2019), and Ogundele (1994) have some interesting views about *Death and the King's Horseman*. Ogundele adopted a comparative approach and sociological analysis which highlight how Soyinka set down instructions concerning the correct stage interpretation of *Death and the King's Horseman* as well as stating that the “threnodic essence” of the play is mainly the metaphysical confrontation exhibited by events that unfolded around Elesin. Ogundele also holds that “With its emphasis on the use of the human body—through dance, music, songs, and chants, a reported sexual act, and two deaths—to complement dialog that expresses those feelings, values, and beliefs, the play's subject is also textured by aesthetic rituals” (p. 47).

On his own part, Ofoego (2016) applied a historical approach and sociological analysis and among his findings, he holds that crafting an engaging work of tragedy involves a high level of creativity. With respect to character development, he says that, “It seems to me that too swift a diagnosis of Simon Pilkings' motivations obscures both the meaning of ideology, and more importantly, its working-out, the ways in which our understanding of the functioning of ideology in a colonial context are” (p. 259). Topper (2019) adopted a historical approach which underscores how the colonial system imposed a secularist worldview on Africans held together by strong bonds of ritual and culture and that it was the forced transition from ritual to secularism

that caused the tragedy (“cosmological trauma”) in *Death and the King's Horseman* (pp. 53-79). Topper also recounts that the initial title of the drama was “Death and the District Officer” and that a scene that was later deleted drew a parallel between the proposed ritual suicide of Elesin and the suicidal disposition of Simon Pilkings, the District Officer, who desired to join the British army in World War II (p. 53).

The different methodological approaches used by these scholars as reviewed are interesting. However, they do not offer the use of flipside theory to understand the psycho-social dynamics of Olunde and Simon Pilkings in *Death and the King's Horseman*, which is what this research offers.

Theoretical Framework: Flipside Literary Theory

Flipside literary theory emerged in 2018 from a decade of field work carried out by ChineduNwadike on the life conditions of the poor and the less privileged compared to the life conditions of the rest of society and the attitudes of people towards these two social classes. Findings from this field work which he carried out in the South-eastern and Middle Belt parts of Nigeria inspired a collaborative research paper he published in 2018 with Chibuzo Onunkwo. He also published another paper in 2018 that principally detailed the operational principles of flipside theory. The core contribution of flipside theory to literature is to bring to the fore and interrogate how less privileged people in general are depicted compared to the depiction of the rest of society.

Flipside theory broadly divides society into two categories, namely, flipview society (people in mainstream life), and flipside society (people on the margins). The term “flipside” can be likened to the tail (hidden side) of a coin while the other side which is the head (visible side) is the “flipview” side. The social concern that people with the means or the opportunity should not oppress other people if we will have a balanced and sustainable society can be likened to the real fact that a coin is made up in equal measure by a head and a tail, and by the scientific fact that even though one can fly an airplane on one engine, it is much safer doing so on two engines.

With reference to the plots of literary works, flipview society refers to characters who are depicted as living in (relative) comfort while flipside society refers to characters who are placed on the margins of society such as roadside beggars, mentally-afflicted people, dumpster scavengers, children hawking wares in traffic jams, poor and homeless people, victimized refugees and migrants, and people wrongly accused of crimes. This general category of people can be described as victims of social existence because oftentimes they find themselves in those circumstances by reason of family background, social or natural disaster or some other factors hardly within their control.

In this wise, when the plots of literary works draw more attention to flipview characters, that is, characters from mainstream society, this can be called plot prejudice. It is also plot prejudice when plots show a bias for characters from flipside society. For similar reasons, when literary writers and consumers of literary works (readers and audiences) are drawn more to plots whose main characters come from flipview society, plot prejudice is also at work. Same applies to having a major interest in main characters drawn from flipside society.

The emergence of different literary theories over time has been an interesting phenomenon as each literary theory was developed to answer some felt needs. Currently, the global toolkit of literary theories has an impressive array of theories with areas of interest that cut across human and environmental concerns. It is against this background that one can appreciate

Leitch's (2001) view that, "The task of literary history is thus only completed when literary production is not only represented synchronically and diachronically in the succession of its systems, but also seen as a special history in its unique relationship" (p. 5). However, while there are existing theories that, for instance, explore the depiction of women (feminism), gender (gender theory, queer theory), social relations of power between the poor and the rich (Marxism), and race relations (critical race theory), there is no single theory that interrogates the depiction of less privileged people in general in works of literature. This is the gap that flipside theory now fills.

Furthermore, flipside criticism can synergize with some other forms of criticism where relevant to achieve a robust critical analysis of a literary work rather than treated like an isolated field. Flipside theory pushes discourse about people on the margins of society centre stage in a world where, ironically, national and world leaders and international groups have been talking quite loudly about care for the poor and the less privileged, and yet, there has been no single literary theory that answers to that need.

The operational principles of flipside criticism come in the form of three determinant questions that interrogate every work of literature, and a fourth one that determines whether a literary work qualifies as a flipside work or not (Nwadike, p. 112). These determinant questions are: (a) Did a plot constitute a flipside character as its protagonist or give that position to a flipview character? (b) Did this protagonist, if a flipside character, cause significant transformations in the society (the rise or fall of important individuals, groups, ideas or events) while still a member of flipside society rather than developed to become a member of flipview society? (c) Is the disposition of the flipside protagonist towards other flipside characters favourable and empowering, favourable and disempowering, unfavourable and empowering or unfavourable and disempowering? For the fourth requirement, a plot must have a flipside protagonist whose disposition towards other flipside characters is favourable and empowering to qualify as a flipside work. This requirement underscores the social concern that the dignity and rights of victims of social existence should be respected, that they should be treated well even by their colleagues, and that they should be empowered to live better like the rest of society.

Fall's (1979) *The Beggars' Strike* has an interesting plot where beggars in Dakar rally together to protest the disrespect of describing them as polluting the tourist industry and the humiliation of eviction from city streets on the orders of MourNdiaye, the Director of Public Health Services and Hygiene. These beggars were manhandled into a settlement zone but they went on strike against accepting alms from people anymore. Their refusal even to return to the streets to accept alms made it impossible for other people like Mour Ndiaye, the protagonist, to give alms in fulfilment of religious obligations. This turn of events caused a crisis powerful enough to destroy his political ambition to become the Vice President of the Republic. However, this novel does not qualify as a flipside work because Mour Ndiaye is a flipview character. This contrasts with Nwadike's(2014) *The Holy Heist* where the protagonist, Austen, is a flipside character. He is an unemployed university graduate who went into drugs and became mentally-challenged but whose activities destroyed the bourgeois ambitions of some flipview characters. He remained a flipside character in the plot and exhibited a favourable and empowering disposition towards other flipside characters. Thus, *The Holy Heist* qualifies as a flipside work.

Humanism is clearly at the core of flipside theory but this humanism welcomes religion if some characters incline towards it rather than hoisting atheism as the ideal. Flipside humanism considers religion part of the humanistic equation of such characters, that is, as part of what makes them human and members of society. Flipside humanism also calls into question any

justifications that may be provided for ideologies, social institutions, racial or cultural assumptions and systemic practices such as the slave trade and slavery, colonialism and its various modern forms that generate, legitimize, or promote inhuman practices.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative methodology and applies textual analysis for the critical exploration of the psycho-social dynamics of Olunde and Simon Pilkings in *Death and the King's Horseman*. This process is carried out in a systematic way.

This research covers the primary text, namely, *Death and the King's Horseman*. Some secondary texts considered relevant to this research are also accessed.

The primary source of data for this research is the tragic drama under study, namely, *Death and the King's Horseman*. Secondary sources of data include other relevant materials ranging from printed works to online publications that make contributions to this research.

Data from these two sources are subjected to the critical tools of flipside theory. The application of this theory is done in a systematic way to achieve specific objectives.

Results and Discussion: Flipside Analysis of the Psycho-Social Dynamics of Olunde and Pilkings

The main characters selected from *Death and the King's Horseman* that will be subjected to flipside criticism are Olunde and Simon Pilkings. This selection does not undermine the roles of other characters like Iyaloja, Praise-Singer, and Jane Pilkings.

(a) *Olunde*

As the first son of the Elesin Oba, a highly-placed man in the society, Olunde lived a privileged life and enjoyed some rights and privileges. Olunde's father, the king's Chief Horseman and a titled chief, made sure he put things in place to groom him properly as his successor after his death. In Olunde's eyes, when his father meets his fated death by ritual suicide, a path he will also tread in his own time, nothing can be offered in place of winning "the honour and veneration of his own people" (4.356).

Olunde also was lucky to enjoy the benevolent attention of the British Colonial District Officer, Simon Pilkings. Pilkings expropriated Olunde from Elesin and sent him to England to train as a medical doctor despite his father's objections (2.329; 2.330). The Pilkings even imagined him also gifted enough to be a poet (2.329). In anger, his father publicly disowned him but culturally, how he did it made it ineffective (4.360–361). The privilege of living in Europe afforded Olunde an opportunity to learn how Europeans live and think and to draw comparisons between them and his Yoruba people back home. It was from this that Olunde, right after returning from England, replied Jane Pilkings with some scorn when she wondered whether he was shocked that she and her husband trivialized the sacred *egungun* masquerade attire by wearing it to a ball in honor of a visiting British prince:

OLUNDE. (Mildly) And that is the good cause for which you desecrate an ancestral mask?

JANE. Oh, so you are shocked after all. How disappointing.

OLUNDE. No I am not shocked, MrsPilkings. You forget that I have now spent four years

among your people. I discovered that you have no respect for what you do not understand. (4.353)

Although he became quite busy working in a hospital taking care of wounded or dying British soldiers as the Second World War raged on (4.360), Olunde had a change of heart about staying away from cultural responsibilities after a relation sent him a cable from home that just said: "Our King is dead" (4.355). He knew he had to leave England and return home to bury his father who was expected to die by ritual suicide in a month's time and be buried along with the king (2.328).

Olunde denied his European benefactors the opportunity of stopping him by returning without informing them (4.361–362) and he was lucky to travel in the same ship that conveyed the British prince to Nigeria under escort (4.356). He strongly disapproved of efforts by the Pilkings to stop the ritual suicide (4.356; 4.361) and, to him, Elesin was already dead and he was just eagerly waiting to see him in the nature of a corpse for him to carry out the customary rites befitting an Elesin (4.359–360). He knew he would become the next Elesin after that (2.330; 4.359) but he still nursed hopes of returning to England to complete his medical studies and become a first-class medical doctor (2.329; 4.358).

However, when it dawned on Olunde that Elesin has failed in his primary duty after the two of them met by chance with Elesin surprised to see his son already back home and Olundesurprized to see his father still alive and in chains, Olunde disowned him:

ELESIN. Olunde? (*He moves his head, inspecting him from side to side.*) Olunde! (*He collapses slowly at **Olunde's** feet.*) Oh son, don't let the sight of your father turn you blind.

OLUNDE. (*He moves for the first time since he heard his voice, brings his head slowly down to look on him.*) I have no father, eater of left-overs. (4.365)

Thereafter, Olunde took it upon himself to remedy the damage and protect the dignity and privileges of the Elesin position that was his family's birth-right. This included an effort to reconcile with his father (5.367–368). He made himself a substitute for his father and carried out the ritual suicide instead. He preferred to take that radical step to living to see his father's failure shamefully cast the family down from its elite status to the margins of society. For Olunde, ritual suicide for the community is akin to the self-sacrifice of an English sea captain who remained on board to blow up his ship that has become dangerous and save the population living by the harbour (4.354). He also characteristically compared it to the suicidal mindset of soldiers sent into battle by their commanders to die in the ongoing war like doing a mass suicide (4.357).

In line with the operational principles of Flipside criticism, Olunde, by his social position and the power and privileges that accrued to it, was a flipview character. Although he was not constituted a protagonist, he was developed to remain a member of flipview society throughout the plot. Furthermore, he caused significant social transformations through his radical suicide to save his community from collapsing and to prevent the cosmic catastrophe expected with his father's failure to fulfil his duty. Olunde's disposition towards flipside characters was favourable and empowering considering that he was determined to do all in his power to serve the interests of all the members of his community.

In conclusion, Olunde was a flipview character and was developed to remain a flipview character in the plot of *Death and the King's Horseman* but he was not the protagonist. He was able to cause significant social transformations while his disposition towards flipside characters was favourable and empowering. Going by the four principles of flipside criticism, the drama does not qualify as a flipside work.

(b) Simon Pilkings

Simon Pilkings was the colonial District Officer and represented the enormous power and privileges enjoyed by members of the British colonial administration in that part of the world. He was very determined not to permit any activity on the part of natives to jeopardize colonial interests. That was why he quickly gave orders to stop the ritual suicide of Elesin as soon as he got wind of it (2.326; 2.333). In addition, when he realized that Sergeant Amusa failed in that task, he had to go and get things done by himself (4.351–352; 4.362–363), including handling the market women's riot after he arrested Elesin (4.349; 4.363).

Pilkings had the bearings of an oppressor and this was felt even by his wife, Jane and some white colleagues. He let people know he was in charge and this made it difficult for him to take Jane's advice to treat the natives with open-mindedness (2.325; 2.327; 2.331). He considered it part of his job to mock cultural practices he did not understand, confiscated and desecrated the *egungun* attire, and used derogatory words on the natives and their cultural practices (2.325). He even occasionally extended his attacks on religion to some Christian practices (2.330–334).

Pilkings was not a man to let anyone talk down on him and he felt upset when the Resident did so after stumbling on information about the ritual suicide and the market women's riot (4.349). Although Olunde found favour in his eyes, he still impressed it upon both Olunde and Elesin, his father, that things must go his own way (2.329). He plotted with Olunde and sent him to England to study medicine despite opposition from his father who needed him to stay around to be groomed as his successor (5.367). Actions like that created serious antagonism between the two men:

PILKINGS. I seem to be fated to clash more often with that man than with any of the other chiefs. (2.328)

Going by the determinant principles of flipside criticism, Simon Pilkings was not constituted the protagonist of the drama but he was a flipview character who remained a member of flipview society till the end of the drama.

He caused significant social transformations by causing the humiliation of Elesin when he prevented his ritual suicide and also arrested and imprisoned him. His action also threatened the entire community with a cosmic catastrophe. Olunde indicated this when he thought Pilkings had failed to stop the ritual suicide:

OLUNDE. Mr Pilkings, I appreciate what you tried to do. I want you to believe that. I can tell you it would have been a terrible calamity if you'd succeeded. (4.261)

In addition, his disposition towards flipside characters was unfavourable and disempowering.

In conclusion, Simon Pilkings was a flipview character and remained in that position. He was not constituted the protagonist but was able to cause significant social transformations while his disposition towards flipside characters was not favourable and empowering. Going by the four determinant principles of flipside criticism, *Death and the King's Horseman* does not qualify as a flipside work.

4.5 Conclusion

The systematic application of flipside criticism on select characters in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* uncovered interesting insights about Olunde and Simon Pilkings, two characters that were selected for analysis. This has added to a better appreciation of these literary works.

Flipside critical analysis showed that both Olunde and Pilkings were not flipside characters and none of them was constituted the protagonist of the tragic drama. Furthermore, each of them was developed to remain in flipview society till the end of the drama just as each of them was able to cause significant social transformations. However, in the area treatment of flipside characters, Olunde had a favourable and empowering disposition while Pilkings had an unfavourable and disempowering disposition. Finally, Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* does not qualify as a flipside work because it fails the four determinant principles for that.

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