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# *Adab Al-Rafidayn Journal*

**A refereed journal concerned with the publishing of scientific researches  
in the field of arts and humanities both in Arabic and English**

**Vol. Eighty-third / year fifty / Rabi al-Thani - 1442 AH / December 2020 AD**

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**Editor-in-chief**

# CONTENTS

Title	Page
<b>Clash of Cultures in Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman</b> <b>Asst.prof. Dr.Sanaa Lazim Al Gharib</b> <b>Talal Saleh Al Dhiab</b>	1 - 22
<b>A Socio-linguistic Study on the Relevance of Convergence and Divergence to In-group Identity on Twitter</b> <b>Lect. Dr. Ashraf Riadh Abdullah</b> <b>Dalal Abd Al-Ameer Mohammed</b>	23 - 52
<b>The Search for Ethnic Identity in Suheir Hammad's Born Palestinian, Born Black with Reference to Translation</b> <b>Lect. Ziyad Anwar mahmood Albajjari</b>	53 - 80
<b>Les traits autobiographiques dans Le Grand Meaulnes d'Alain Fournier</b> <b>Asst. Lect. Ghassan Salah Jarallah AL-BAZZAZ</b>	81 - 100

## *Clash of Cultures in Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman*

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Talal Saleh Al Dhiab \*

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... In the colonial context the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man's values.

—Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

### Abstract

This study introduces the postcolonial African theatre to the reader. It depicts a close investigation that shows the untraditional image of Africa, which is based on identity politics of the colonizers and the cultural consciousness of the colonized. It presents Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), showing a tragic hero, Elesin who falls from grace to shame as a result of internal and external elements. The playwright sets his play in the colonial period and based on a true story. The colonizers interfere in Elesin's fate, preventing him to commit a ritual suicide, and evoking him to question his identity. The study analyses the play from a postcolonial perspective, presenting various images of the colonizers and the colonized. It tries to apply some postcolonial concepts such as mimicry, hybridity, double consciousness, binary oppositions, cultural colonization, double oppression, stereotypes, resistance, and silence. These terms are used and developed by some Postcolonial critics, including Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. The study takes into consideration the psychological side of the characters as well. It ends with a conclusion that sums up the findings of the study.

**Keywords:** (Mimicry, Hybridity, Stereotypes, Double consciousness, Analysis).

**Clash of Cultures in Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman**

**Asst.prof. Dr.Sanaa Lazim AlGharib & Tala Saleh AlDhiab**

*Death and the King's Horseman* is a unique postcolonial play due to its panoramic presentation of the colonizers. The play offers greater opportunity for the audience to live the life of a colonized country which makes it a timeless universal play. It records the tremendous changes in an old Yoruba<sup>1</sup> empire as a direct result of colonization. Wole Soyinka<sup>2</sup> sets *Death and the King's Horseman* where colonization covers all of Nigeria. The play focuses on a Yoruba indigenous custom which is that of the ritual suicide. One may define the ritual suicide as an old Yoruba spiritual and religious tradition. It happens when the king dies, he should be followed by his horseman, favorite horse, and dog within a month. The ritual suicide aims to help the chief to reach heaven and avoid getting lost which will come with a curse for the tribe (Matsuo 116). It is also mentioned in the play, as follows:

JOSEPH: It is a native law and custom. The king die last  
month. Tonight is his burial. But before they can bury him,  
the Elesin must die so as to accompany him to heaven.  
(Soyinka 28)

In his introduction to the play, Wole Soyinka mentions that the main event is based on a real story in "1946" in Nigeria but the playwright returned three or four years while the Second World War continues, allowing him to mix other events, such as the royal "visit of the British prince to the colony" and "a British captain's self-sacrifice in wartime" for dramatic needs (Cole, Manuh, and Miescher 210). Oluwakemi Atanda Ilori states that Soyinka was inaccurate in his reference to the real story of the ritual suicide (42).

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<sup>1</sup> Yoruba is "one of the three largest ethnic groups of Nigeria, concentrated in the southwestern part of that country. Much smaller, scattered groups live in Benin and northern Togo. The Yoruba numbered more than 20 million at the turn of the 21st century. They speak a language of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family" (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica).

<sup>2</sup> Wole Soyinka is a well-known Nigerian dramatist, poet, novelist, political activist. He devoted his pen criticize dictatorships and the impact of colonization. Although, his native language is Yoruba, he became the literary voice of Africa through English (Odelberg).



Ilori adds that the events happened in the first month of 1945 when “the British Colonial District Officer, Captain J.A. MacKenzie” (53) interfered to stop local heritage in Oyo. The officer arrested Olokun Esin who is a close associate to the king of Oyo, Alaafin. When Esin failed to commit suicide, the oldest son takes his place to get rid of the shame. In this case, Murana discharged this function (53). Oyo is described as an ancient Yoruba city of Nigeria by Wole Soyinka. The word “ancient” may refer to that the city with its historical roots could not avoid the influence of the colonizers and by the end, it became a mirror of diversity and a modern one (Agozino 167).

Soyinka starts *Death and the King's Horseman* in a “market” which is almost over with a number of girls, coming back home. That way, the playwright focuses on the heart of the city in order to show a comprehensive view of the present cultural and social situation. In other words, the market is a symbol of life, but it should be noticeable that it is “in its closing stages”. Followed by “drummers and praise-singers”, Elesin Oba appears on stage. He is ready to accomplish his mission, but there is a hint that the horseman is much obsessed with life than death as mentioned in the stage directions; “*He is a man of enormous vitality, speaks, dances and sings with that infectious enjoyment of life which accompanies all his actions*” (9). Also, he tries to satisfy his desire in wearing expensive clothes which is fulfilled when the women had not refused his requests: he “*stands resplendent in rich clothes, cap, shawl, etc. His sash is of a bright red alari cloth<sup>3</sup>. The women dance around him...*” (17).

Furthermore, Soyinka sheds light on Elesin's delusion or arrogance and attempts to defer fate, although he declares that he is “master” of his “fate” and his “soul is eager” to fulfill what is demanded without delay (14). In *Writing and Seeing, Essays on Word and Image*, Homem and Lambert state that Elesin stressed on

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<sup>3</sup> Alaari is “crimson or magenta coloured. It was traditionally woven with locally spun silk yarns or traded waste silk dyed in red camwood several times to achieve permanence in colour fastness. Today most producers of Alaari use pre-dyed machine-spun cotton thread” (Bunn).

the pleasures of life more than anything else, especially when he asked to marry an engaged woman. Thus, his actions and even the bright color of his dress do not indicate death. Psychologically, Elesin follows his id which is concerned with self-desires (285). The appearing of a pretty little girl changed the situation which is a turning point that could be Elesin's tragic flaw. The king's horseman drew attention to the girl without knowing whether she is betrothed or not, but he knows that the world is his oyster. Elesin's speech about being remembered as a hero is not enough, but he seeks to plant his seeds. In other words, he looks for the beautiful girl as indicated in the play:

ELESIN: ... Then let me travel light. Let

Seed that will not serve the stomach

On the way remain behind. Let it take root

On the earth of my choice, in this earth

I leave behind. (Soyinka 21)

From the above, Elesin does not only want to satisfy his pleasure senses when he wishes to "sleep" with the market women, "touch feet with their feet in a dance..." and inhale "their flesh, their sweat, the smell of indigo on their cloth..." (10), but he also wants to marry the engaged girl. From a psychological perspective, Ogaga Ifowodo believes that "fear of death" plays a role in Elesin's actions in which he tries to delay his death. He is in a traumatized state despite his belief of controlling his will. Or at least, Elesin is driven by his pleasure principle. Ifowodo adds that Elesin's idea of marriage echoes the humanity fear of life ending at that time (39-40). Robert Jay Lifton writes conflicts of people come into being "not to merely remain alive but to *feel* alive" (qtd. in Ifowodo 41). In this case, Ifowodo states that Elesin represents the colonized people who want to feel the life, not only to live. His activities look toward senses, which are a drastic change in his character due to the impact of colonialism. One should mix the anxiety of death with the pleasures of life in to face reality and "become whole" (41).

Achieving Elesin's wishes is a matter of traditions. Especially, when the characters know that the dog is already murdered and the horse on its way to being killed. What remains to follow the king is the king's horseman, as stated in the play "The King's dog has been killed. The King's favourite horse is about to follow his master" (Soyinka 40). When Elesin asked the hand of the beautiful girl, a woman tried to warn him, as indicated below:

WOMAN: But Iyaloja...

IYALOJA: the matter is no longer in our hands.

WOMAN: But she is betrothed to your own son. Tell him.

IYALOJA: My son's wish is mine. I did the asking for him, the

loss can be remedied. But who will remedy the blight of closed hands on the day when all should be openness and light?... (21)

The market woman, Iyaloja is ready to sacrifice the fiancée of her son for the sake of traditions. It should be remembered that her own sacrifice is similar to Elesin's ritual suicide, in which both of them seek the benefit of society. Psychologically speaking, Iyaloja works according to her superego, which is concerned with the social rules (Guerin et al 157). In their book, *Yoruba Creativity: Fiction, Language, Life and Songs*, Toyin Falola and Ann Genova explain two major Yoruba philosophies related to the discussion. They express "Ajogbe" which means that society members are strongly tied and united regardless of family relationship. Whereas, "Ajobi" refers to "blood relation" which is based on a familial relationship. According to Yoruba traditions, "Ajogbi" is more valued than the other. This system should be safe which means that Iyaloja should not break the system. Thus, she prefers to get rid of her son's fiancée for the sake of "Ajogbe" (40). If she refuses Elesin's demands, she will be punished as shown on the play "Only the curses of the departed are to be feared" (Soyinka 21). Even, it is observed that the bride had raised no objection in the face of the

new condition which means that all of the characters go with the traditions.

The union of Elesin and the engaged girl is going to be unique in which it belongs to “neither of this world nor of the next. Nor of the behind us. As if the timelessness of the ancestor world and the unborn have join spirits to wring an issue of the elusive being of passage” (22). Scene one ends with preparing everything for marriage and there is nothing wrong. Women bring the girl who is going to kneel in front of Iyaloja, indicating her agreement.

The second scene introduces the colonial authority in Nigeria represented by the District Officer Simon Pilkings and his wife, Jane. It also provides the audience with two Nigerian natives: Amusa and Joseph, who work under the command of the colonial power. In the stage directions, Soyinka refers to that Pilkings and his wife wear traditional Yoruba dress, as shown “*The are wearing what is immediately apparent as some form of fancy-dress*’ (23). The aim of wearing such clothes is attending “the ball”, which is a festival that takes place in honour of the British prince.

In his book, *Relocating Agency: Modernity and African Letters*, Olakunle George pointed out that the “*fancy dress*” is “*Egungun*<sup>4</sup>mask” which represents the old heritage and spirit of Yoruba culture, especially of the dead. Amusa is a police officer who works with the colonial authorities. He comes with a report of Elesin’s ritual suicide, but he rejected the idea of informing Pilkings and Jane at that time due to the contradictory between the report and their clothes. Amusa’s problem comes into being because the report aims to stop a ritual death while the district officer and his wife wear a symbol of death. The scene reflects Amusa’s solid relationship to his native traditions despite the requirements of his

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<sup>4</sup>Egungun is “a performance that is ritualistic in intent and purpose or as a performative ritual. There are various types of Egungun, including satirical masks, elegant masks that exhibit the beauty and elegance of costumes and dance, and masks that dramatize masculine strength. However, the most significant among the Egungun are the ancestral masks” (Falola and Akinyemi 219).

career, which could go the other way (157-58). Or even as a Moslem, Amusa shows some respect to the pagan traditions which run counter to the Islamic principles. The following extract presents Amusa as a Moslem and the ritual costumes as pagan. The quotation was a reply to Amusa's wish of removing the ritual dress, as stipulated in the following lines:

JANE: I think you've shocked his pagan heart bless him.

PILKINGS: Nonsense, he's a Moslem. Come on Amusa, you don't believe in all that nonsense do you? I thought you were

a good Moslem. (Soyinka 24)

Although Pilkings commands Amusa to give the report or he will be held accountable as demanded by the colonial law, the debate continues to enrich the play. Amusa does not seem to oppose ritual traditions at all but he is against the idea of death, as he stated "Sir, it is a matter of death. How man can talk against death with a person in uniform of death?". For this reason, Jane Pilkings tried to embarrass him when she told him that he participated in ending some traditional rituals about a month ago. Moreover, she points out that "he helped arrest the cult leaders" of "egungun" (25). His response gives consideration to native Yoruba traditions and confirms that he does not stand against peaceful rituals, as explained below:

AMUSA: (*without looking down*) Madam, I arrest the ringleaders

who make trouble but me I no touch egungun. That egungun

inself, I no touch. And I no abuse 'am. I arrest ringleaders but

I treat egungun with respect. (25)

On this basis, it may be concluded that Amusa works according to his religious and sociocultural background. He refuses

### **Clash of Cultures in Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman**

**Asst.prof. Dr.Sanaa Lazim AlGharib & Tala Saleh AlDhiab**

suicide which could be highly connected to his Islamic beliefs, while he shows some respect to “egungun” which comes out of his native traditions. The colonial factor has no great influence on shaping Amusa’s identity or character, except his imperfect English which was observed by pronouncing some English words and names in an African accent, as shown in the following examples: “Mista Pirinkin”, “inself” (25), and “dat ... ting” (36). Insisting on his opinion could be a kind of resistance in the face of colonization. The debate ends up with writing the report on a pad as stated in the stage directions: “**Amusa...** *Completes his notes and goes*” (25) which will allow both characters, Pilkings and Amusa to save face.

After reading the report, Simon Pilkings calls his African houseboy, Joseph to get more information about what is going on. Thus, Joseph could be a tool in Soyinka’s presentation of the ritual Yoruba traditions to the world in details. Initial words between Pilkings and his Joseph introduce the houseboy as a “Christian” who does not care about his native traditions, as indicated below:

PILKINGS: Joseph, are you a Christian or not?

JOSEPH: Yessir.

PILKINGS: Does seeing me in this outfit bother you?

JOSEPH: No sir, it has no power. (27)

On the contrary, Joseph pays no attention to the costumes of his ancestors. Homi Bhabha (1949- ) focuses on such issues in his studies of Postcolonialism. This dialogue may reflect Bhabha’s use of “cultural colonization” which negatively affects the colonized people, leading them to psychological problems and cultural segregation. Olakunle George argues that Joseph’s identity is shaped under the impact of colonization. Thus, Bhabha’s concept of “mimicry” is applicable on this situation in which he imitates the west, which was characterized by “Christianity” as well as “secular-scientific sophistication” (157). George concludes that Joseph’s identity is neither the first nor the second, but it is a mixture between both. The impact of the “missionaries” and “the colonial,

“rationalist” administrator” on Joseph leads to his loss of identity (157).

Trilateral talks among Jane, Pilkings, and Joseph shed light on Elesin’s eldest son, Olunde who apparently broke the traditions when he went to Britain in order to finish his study. Pilkings plays a part in achieving Olunde’s dream of being specialized in medicine when he helped him to travel. Such step was revolutionary in the face of Elesin who tried to prevent his son to go abroad, as outlined in Pilkings’ speech, “He fought tooth and nail to prevent it” (Soyinka 28). Elesin’s reason behind the attempt of prohibiting his son is concerned with Yoruba traditions. According to these traditions, “the eldest son is not supposed to travel away from the land” because “if this Elesin had died before the king, his eldest son must take his place” (29). The colonial factor interfered directly to change the traditions which led Elesin to “curse” the district officer. The scene of the curse is significant because it shows how the colonizers mock the beliefs of the native in an insulting way, and it presents the superiority of the whites among other races through the voice of the black, Joseph as stated below:

JANE: (*giggling*) Is that true Simon? Did he really curse you good and proper?

PILKINGS: By all accounts I should be dead by now.

JOSEPH: Oh no, master is white man. And good Christian.

Black man juju can’t touch master. (29)

As he did not give the matter of the traditional dress enough importance, Joseph mocks the use of “juju” which is one of the spreads classical kinds of witchcraft that is known in West Africa. It aims to fetch bad luck and “curse” to the victim by any mean in order to compel him to obedience (Spence 51). In Postcolonialism, Joseph’s feeling of the superiority of the whites could be a result of the cultural colonization which is based on Eurocentric view which effectively defined the other as inferior. The colonized may reach the highest level of cultural colonization which is the colonial subjects. In such a situation, Joseph tries to imitate the colonizers

**Clash of Cultures in Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman**

**Asst.prof. Dr.Sanaa Lazim Al Gharib & Tala Saleh AlDhiab**

for the sake of nothing except a psychological need for identity. By striking the major chord of the “white” and “black”, he falls into the scope of double consciousness or double vision which could be the last episode of the postcolonial chain of analysis (Tyson 419-25).

Simon Pilkings and his wife try to take advantage of their “native guide” (Soyinka 331), Joseph, who is preparing to “clean the kitchen”. They asked him about the drum beat, leading the conversation to point out two significant issues. First, Joseph’s answer as “I don’t know master” reflects the loss of the cultural identity in which he could not recognize the sound of one the native tools which is the drum although he gave details about other legacies. Secondly, Pilkings’ reply tends to be secular, as stated “Don’t tell me that holy water nonsense also wiped out your tribal memory” (30). Jane did not like her husband’s response in which it has a negative impact on Joseph’s future life, as shown in the following lines:

JANE: ... Calling holy

water nonsense to our Joseph is really like insulting the Virgin

Mary before the Roman Catholic. He’s going to hand in his

notice tomorrow you mark my word. (30-31)

Talking about Christianity in that way does not affect Joseph in any way. Thus, the spectators may conclude that he is neither a devoted Christian nor a man of traditions, which brings them to question his identity. In this condition, Joseph is under the impact of the postcolonial concept of “hybridity” which refers to a state of transition between two different cases, as an effect of colonization. This transition is negative because the colonized people should stand for their own identity, not stand “in-between”. In other words, he is fragmented because the conflict between “binary oppositions” which could be happen between past and present, civilized and savage, or enlightened and ignorant (Bhabha 13).



Although Simon Pilkings does not know whether the drum beat is a wedding or a ritual suicide, he sends Joseph to give orders to Amusa to arrest the chief. The following words support that claim as indicated by Simon “And suppose after all it’s only a wedding? I’d look a proper fool if I interrupted a chief on his honeymoon, wouldn’t I?”. To be sure does not take much effort, but Wole Soyinka may try to shed light on the case that the colonizers do not care about the life of the colonized. What is important for Pilkings and his wife is attending “the ball”, as shown in the conversation between them: “Simon, it’s obvious we have to miss the ball”. His reply was as the following “Nonsense... I’m damned if I’m going to miss it. And it is a rather special occasion. Doesn’t happen every day” (Soyinka 31). Moreover, the scene ends as its beginning, with their dance to the beat of the tango.

Amusa received the instructions to arrest Elesin Oba and moved directly to the market where he met the women. The stage directions mention that Sergeant Amusa is followed by two policemen who carry truncheons in order to threaten the women, as stated “... *Sergeant Amusa and his two constables who already have their batons out and use them as a pressure against the **Women***” (34). In Postcolonialism, the role of woman in literary texts is a major concern. It introduces “double oppression” to describe women who are under the domination of both the colonizers and the restrictions of their indigenous culture (Tyson 423). It is evident from the above that the women are “double oppressed”. They are victims of both the colonizers and their own patriarchal society. To make it clearer, Amusa who takes orders from the colonizer is ready to use force against the women, which is a clear image of the colonial oppression. The other oppression is seen through the women’s defense on traditions that marginalize the woman as happened with the betrothed woman in *Death and the King’s Horseman*.

The discussion between the women and Sergeant Amusa sheds light on Olunde again in the play. The conversation repeats that the son succeeds his father traditionally. Therefore, it is a matter of inheritance and traditions that will not be affected by the colonizers influence. The women’s speech foreshadows Olunde’s

return to the homeland and stresses the significance of his place in society. Thus, the people blindly trust Olunde which increase his liability in order not to frustrate their demands (Na'Allah 87). The next quotation supports that claim:

WOMAN: Is it not the same ocean that washes this land and  
The white man's land? Tell your white man he can hide our  
Son away as long as he likes. When the time comes for him,  
The same ocean will bring him back. (Soyinka 35)

The woman also trusts Elesin implicitly who "will prove himself greater than the laws of the strangers". The speech aims to challenge the colonial authority which is typical of Frantz Fanon's postcolonial philosophy of revolution which was taken from Marxism. According to Fanon, the colonized should resist the colonial agenda. The debate reaches the point of the conflict between two duties. The first is presented by Amusa as "...but duty is duty. I am here to arrest Elesin for criminal intent". The second is shown through the words of Iyaloja as the following "What gives you the right to obstruct our leader of men in the performance of his duty" (36). In fact, it is a conflict between traditions and the new way of life. The indigenous people are not ready yet to accept the new colonial decisions.

As the situation on the ground evolved, the women started to insult Sergeant Amusa as indicated in the play, "Then tell him to leave this market... We don't want the eater of the white left-overs at the feast their hands have prepared" (39). It is worth mentioning that Amusa was insulted by Simon Pilkings as well. In another form, Amusa has suffered the humiliation of colonialism when he refused to talk to the Pilkings while they wear the dress of "dead cult". That happened when the situation on the ground got worst. Pilkings attacks Amusa by stating "I'll throw you in the guardroom for a month and feed you pork!" (48). Pilkings' choice of "pork" to feed Amusa is quite significant because it touches Amusa's beliefs as a Moslem.

According to Islam, eating pork is taboo as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, "You are forbidden to eat carrion; blood; pig's meat ..." (*The Holy Qur'an* The Feast 5:3). The scene shows that the colonizers do not care about the religious and cultural sanctities of the Other. Amusa could be an image of the colonized who works under the colonial authority. Preventing the ritual suicide and the failure to respect the religious rights of others could be taken under the concept of identity politics<sup>5</sup>. In this case, Simon Pilkings tries to apply the colonial policy and agenda on the colonized people without paying attention to them.

The matter of disrespect is explained directly through the voice of Elesin's son, Olunde. The latter returned to his native land in order to witness the funeral of his father and the king. Hopefully, he will come back to England to finish his study, as indicated "I intended to return and complete my training. Once the burial of my father is over" (Soyinka 55). Olunde's first appearance happened while the District Officer and his wife were attending the ball. Eagerly, Jane was surprised to see the "fine young man" who supposedly will be against the ritual suicide as an educated person. Thus, he could help the authorities to stop the ritual suicide, but initial lines of their conversation prove the contrary.

Jane's first words show the colonial approach that is based on "The White Man's Burden". In his book, *African Discourse in Islam, Oral Traditions, and Performance*, Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah emphasizes that the tone of Jane's speech indicates the colonial superiority and the belief of the West in transforming the Other into a better way of life. Na'Allah adds that Jane's use of "become" and "look" to describe Olunde, implies that there is change in Olunde's character. Both quotations "What a fine young man you've become" and "But you do look well Olunde. Really!" are based on the

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<sup>5</sup>Identity politics refers to "politics in which groups of people having a particular racial, religious, ethnic, social, or cultural identity tend to promote their own specific interests or concerns without regard to the interests or concerns of any larger political group". In the second half of the 20th century, identity politics became a significant modern term which aims to liberate the oppressed people both psychologically and politically, including blacks, women, American Indians, etc. (Patterson).

imperial idea of “We have saved you from the savage costume, we have helped to civilize you” (90).

Olunde's cleverness of suggesting his ideas indirectly was noticeable. For example, he asked Jane whether she was suffering of labored breathing or not, as indicated “Your skin must find a difficult to breathe” (Soyinka 50). Actually, it was an indirect reference for wearing the “ancestral mask”. Understanding the idea, she replied that there is a compelling reason to wear the mask which is attending the ball. All of the above paved the way for Olunde to criticize the West because they do not respect the Other whether in Europe or in the colonies, as stated below:

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, Mrs Pilkings. 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. (50)

To Jane Pilkings, the above discussion demonstrates a big trauma in which the colonial plan did not success to make Olunde leave his traditions. In other words, Olunde stands for the author's point of view that people may leave home but they should never leave their native heritage. This image is the opposite of Joseph, who left his traditions despite that he did not go abroad (Na'Allah 50). Again, Soyinka's voice appears through Olunde's scientific debate with Jane about the “captain's self-sacrifice”.

It is notably that the theme of the Second World War was first highlighted by Jane when mentioned the captain who sacrificed himself sinking his own ship for the sake of his people. Jane was not pleased for what happened to the captain or in some other way she did not value or appreciate his sacrifice by stating that “Nonsense. Life should never be thrown deliberately” (Soyinka 51). The scene shows Jane's lack of understanding of epic proportions of the

sacrificers. The importance of the incident lies in comparing the African sacrifice with the Western one and foreshadowing Olunde's self-sacrifice. These heroic deeds could happen in both societies with the same significance for the sake of community. The difference in both sacrifices is perfectly clear in which the European sacrifice has a "physical" aim which is that saving people's lives, while the African sacrifice is concerned with spirituality, leading to prevent cursing the people. In *Research on Wole Soyinka*, James Gibbs and Bernth Lindfors give a sufficient answer in comparing both of them:

...the sacrifice of the captain is entirely secular and practical. He dies to preserve the physical rather than the metaphysical safety of his community, and his action can be appreciated with no act of faith. The sacrifice of Olunde which it foreshadows is, in contrast, essentially religious. (133)

Olunde starts to advise Jane that her husband's attempts to stop the ritual suicide will gain no fruits. For this reason, Simon Pilkings has to stay away from the case. Jane was deeply disappointed and began to attack the ritual suicide by stating that "it is still a barbaric custom. It is even worse – it's feudal!" (Soyinka 53). According to postcolonial theory, the image of the Other was already shaped in the minds of the West. Edward Said (1935-2003) used the term "vision" to describe this issue. It is a negative concept in which the West focuses on the dark side of the East, denying what is positive. Said suggests that "vision" should be replaced by "narrative" which the panoramic presentation of the Other (Bressler 240). To conclude, Pilkings and Jane had already adopted the Western "stereotypes" as shown through Jane's word in next conversations with Olunde when she gave a general view about the Other "You're just a savage like all the rest" (Soyinka 55) which is a typical example of the Western stereotypes.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha adds that these "stereotypes" led to the loss of identity of the colonized people, as they described as "savagery, cannibalism, lust and anarchy" (72). Olunde's reply was a kind of resistance and it was embarrassing for

**Clash of Cultures in Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman**

**Asst.prof. Dr.Sanaa Lazim AlGharib & Talal Saleh AlDhiab**

Jane by referring to the white race who created the barbaric war. He compares the ritual suicide to the Second World War, as indicated "Is that worse than mass suicide? Mrs Pilkings, what do you call what those young men are sent to do by their generals in this war?" (Soyinka 53-54). Thus, the playwright challenges the Western concepts of "civilization" and "barbarism" by shedding light on the War. Olunde supports his claim with evidence when he was training in Britain as shown below:

OLUNDE: Mrs Pilkings, whatever we do, we never suggest that a thing is the opposite of what it really is. In your newsreels I heard defeats, thorough, murderous defeats described as strategic victories... (54)

From the above, Olunde defends his costumes by embarrassing Jane with her own culture. She was unable to reply in a scientific way. In this case, she provides the audience with illogical excuses which is that it is a matter of "time". The time was unsuitable for Olunde to see the real Europe, as stated "*(after a moment's paus)* Perhaps I can understand you now. The time we picked for you was not really one for seeing us at our best" (54). Olunde's practical experience in medicine paved the way for him to see the reality and suffering of the war. Thus, the plan of sending Olunde to Britain backfired. The next lines emphasize Olunde's consciousness of what is reality:

OLUNDE: ... Don't forget I was attached to hospitals all the time. Hordes of your wounded passed through those wards. I spoke to them. I spent long evenings by their bedsides while they spoke terrible truths of the realities of that war. I know now how history is made. (54)

The debate ends with Elesin's shouts to let the "White man" release him. In his book, *Perspectives on Wole Soyinka, Freedom and Complexity* (2006), Biodun Jeyifo states that the scene was

disappointing for Olunde in which his father could not commit the ritual suicide which is a tremendous shame. The fiasco of achieving the ritual costume has negative consequences on the indigenous people. Jeyifo adds that the lack of success led to another failure in “Yoruba” traditions which is kind of role reversal between the father and the son. Consequently, the audiences see that Elesin kneels down before his son, although it is supposed to be the contrary. This kind of reversal foreshadows that Olunde will achieve the ritual traditions instead of his father (229). The son disowns his father as indicated “I have no father, eater of left-overs” (Soyinka 61). Olunde gets out, leaving his father to accuse the colonizers of changing their style of life as shown “You stole from me my first-born, sent him to your country so you could turn him into something in your own image” (62-63). Elesin adds that “the white skin covered our future”.

The last scene is set in a prison. Elesin is chained which symbolizes the chains of his grandfathers who were sent abroad as slaves. The metal bars between Simon Pilkings and Elesin stands for the cultural barrier that separates them (Gibbs 121). Instead of taking the responsibility, Elesin accuses the colonizers, his “gods”, and the Bride of being the reason behind unfulfilling the ritual suicide, as stated in *Death and the King's Horseman*, “First, I blamed the white man, then I blamed my gods for deserting me. Now I feel I want to blame you for the mystery of the sapping of my will” (Soyinka 65). From a psychological perspective, Elesin is aware of his sin. Such case is known as “guilt complex” which occurs when “an overactive superego creates an unconscious sense of guilt” (Guerin 185). Accusing others of being the reason behind his failure is a kind of “defense mechanism” which refers to an unconscious process to reduce anxiety by distorting reality (Atkinson et al 433).

In this regard, it is important to note that Wole Soyinka explains his own view about Elesin’s failure to achieve his people wish. Soyinka mentions in his introduction to the play that “the Colonial Factor is an incident, a catalytic incident merely. The confrontation in the play is largely metaphysical, contained in the human vehicle which is Elesin and the universe of the Yoruba

mind..." (7). By stating that it is "a catalytic incident", Soyinka focuses on the tremendous change in Yoruba traditions. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, Elesin was really "master" of his "fate", but it is not in achieving the ritual suicide. He is "master" of his "fate" in fulfilling his earthly desires. Thus, the play shows the decline of the metaphysical world which becomes no more useful for Elesin. To put it in another way, the physical side is more significant.

Not only Olunde was disappointed, but also Iyaloja who gave Elesin what he wished. Elesin's behavior led to frustrating his people, which paved the way to criticize him through the voice Iyaloja, "You have betrayed us. We fed you sweetmeats such as we hoped awaited you on the other side. But you said No, I must eat the world's left-overs" (68). As a result, Elesin is no more an inspiring figure for his society. No apologies are allowed to erase the shame. Elesin's hesitation led to the catastrophic ending of the play. The son who supposed to be proud of his father, committed suicide to link the world of the "living" and the "dead". It is the only way for Olunde to keep the reputation of his family (Bello 53). It may be concluded that Olunde saved the cultural identity of his community without being affected by the various ways of the colonial interfering. This is typical to the postcolonial term of "resistance". In this case, Olunde resisted the colonial agenda for the sake of his identity.

To stop "one death", the colonial policy led to more tragic "deaths" which described by Iyaloja as "the wisdom of the white race" (Soyinka 73). Elesin ends his life by strangling himself with his own chains. The bride who never spoke in the play, closed the eyes of Elesin and put soil on them. The play ends with Iyaloja's hopeful advise for the bride as shown "Now forget the dead, forget even the living. Turn your mind only to the unborn" (76). Throughout the play, the bride is shown as a woman who surrendered to her fate. It is similar to Gayatri Spivak's philosophy of the subaltern woman cannot speak which is the conclusion of her long essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (104). This is Spivak's postcolonial reading of woman.



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**Conclusion**

Soyinka's characters suffer from mimicry, double consciousness, diaspora, hybridity, cultural colonization, and fragmentation. This has led to the collapse of the ego and loss of identity. The playwright tries to criticize such issues and raise awareness about his cultural traditions and revive the African identity through his theatre. It is worth mentioning that dissemination of Yoruba culture and redefining the African identity were the ultimate goal for Soyinka. His play gives a sign of revolt towards what is imported and foreign and a call to support the local and traditional, but this call has limits and reasons for that limitation. He did not dismiss modernism as a whole, he sought reviving the traditional within a framework of human rights. Soyinka succeeded in expressing himself as an African. He introduced to us the true spirit of postcolonial Africa, portraying the main issues the African individual faced.

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**Clash of Cultures in Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman**

**Asst.prof. Dr.Sanaa Lazim Al Gharib & Tala Saleh AlDhiab**

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صراع الثقافات في مسرحية موت وفارس الملك للكاتب وول سوينكا

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المستخلص

يعدّ الكاتب المسرحيّ والروائيّ والشاعر النيجيريّ وول سوينكا (١٩٣٤ - ) أحد أعمدة الأدب الإفريقيّ المعاصر، ولد سوينكا في مدينة أبيوكوتا التي عرفت بعاداتها وتقاليدها الخاصة؛ إذ ترتبط بقبائل اليوربا، ممّا جعل لهذه البيئة الخاصة أثرًا على تشكيل هوية الكاتب الثقافية، وانتقل إلى بريطانيا عام (١٩٥٤) وأكمل دراسة الأدب الإنجليزي في جامعة ليدز سنة (١٩٥٧)، ونال الجنسية البريطانية. ثم أكمل مسيرته الأدبية ليكون أول كاتب إفريقي يحصل على جائزة نوبل للأدب عام (١٩٨٦). وكرس وول سوينكا كتاباته لإحياء الهوية الإفريقية ودعم أنشطته السياسية لمحاربة الأنظمة الدكتاتورية ممّا جعله يواجه الكثير من المشاكل التي قادته فيما بعد إلى السجن، يعكس مسرحه تأثير الاستعمار على إفريقيا بشكل عام وعلى نيجيريا بشكل خاص. ويبرز صراع الأجيال ما بين التمسك بالتقاليد وبين الحداثة كأحد أهم المواضيع التي يتناولها الكاتب في أعماله، ويهدف البحث إلى دراسة الشخصيات المسرحية من منظور ما بعد الاستعمار في مسرحية موت وفارس الملك (١٩٧٥)، التي تركز على فشل فارس الملك إلسن، في إنجاز أحد الطقوس التقليدية لقبائل اليوربا بسبب التأثير المباشر للاستعمار والذي أدى إلى تغيير نمط الحياة والابتعاد عن الهوية الإفريقية. وكذلك تحاول الدراسة إظهار الصورة غير التقليدية لإفريقيا التي صوّرها الكاتب في عمله. ثم ينتهي البحث بخاتمة تلخص أهم ما توصلت إليه الدراسة .

الكلمات المفتاحية: (تقليد ، تهجين ، قوالب نمطية ، ازدواج الوعي ، تحليل).