



Perspectives on Supernatural Power in Seydou Badian's *Noces Sacrées*: A Postcolonial Francophone Literary Discourse

Gabriel Olusegun Fasinu, PhD

Department of French

Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo

fasinuog@aceondo.edu.com

08034812624

Abstract

Supernatural power refers to the mysterious occurrences of spirit beings that habitually impinge upon human daily experience in the postcolonial francophone African novels. The chosen novel - Seydou Badian's Noces sacrées substantiates the universal and African core values on tradition, cultural heritage, and morality. This study, therefore, examines supernatural powers of the spirits in the struggle for freedom from colonial oppression with the view to discovering the dominant belief in spirits in postcolonial francophone African novels. The study adopted postcolonial theory, which emphasises the effect of cultural displacement and resistance to domination.

Keywords: Supernatural, Postcolonial, Francophone

Introduction

The term postcolonialism deals with the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies of ex-colonies. The term was used by literary critics in the 1970s to discuss the various cultural effects of colonisation (Ashcroft et al, 1995). Seydou Badian's *Noces sacrées* (1977) establishes the fact that supernatural power is a phenomenon concerning spirits as a related and interwoven aspect of the focus of this study. *Noces sacrées* revolves around the protagonist, a mask, the great N'Tomo that is stolen by a whiteman, Mr. Jules with the assistance of Nantouma whom he



coaxes as a junior officer. He is an indigene who knows how to go about and steal the mask that represents the spirit of his ancestors.

Nous avons enlevé N'Tomo du campement sans que personne ne s'en aperçoive. D'ailleurs, comme il y avait toujours quelqu'un dans la case où se trouvait N'Tomo, votre ami Besnier ou sa fiancée, M. Jules comprit qu'il ne pouvait réussir ce qu'il voulait. Il conçut alors, en dépit des mises en garde, l'idée d'éliminer M. Besnier. Il a cherché à agir par personnes interposées : le gardien Nantouma, le commandant ou les domestiques. Il croyait ainsi détourner la malédiction vers un de ceux-là. Malheureusement pour lui, on ne peut pas tromper les Dieux. (NS 1977:175)

We took N'Tomo from the camp without anyone's knowledge. Previously, as there is always someone in the hut where N'Tomo is kept, your friend Besnier or his fiancée, Mr. Jules understood that he could not have succeeded in his plan. He designed however, in spite of the securities, the idea of eliminating Mr. Besnier. He acted through someone who is an intermediary: the guard Nantouma, the commander or the cooks. He thought in a way to implicate those ones. Unfortunately for him, no one can fool the gods. (Our translation)

Elimination method (secretly killing an opponent/enemy) is an index usually employed by those stealing to hide their heinous crimes. This is rampant especially in government circles, more importantly when there is a witness who is privy to the secret, knowing well that only a living person can testify to either good or evil deeds. Undoubtedly, it will be difficult for anyone who knows the consequences of what awaits betrayers of the gods to believe the above confession without further interrogation to ascertain the wellbeing of Doumbia especially after he has undergone the initiation ceremony called sacred marriage (Noces Sacrées). *Noces sacrées* is a novel about the Protagonist, a mask, the great N'Tomo that was stolen by a Whiteman, Mr. Jules with the assistance of Nantouma whom he coaxed as a junior officer. Nantouma is an indigene who knows where the statue of N'Tomo is kept and how to steal this mask that represents the spirit of his ancestors. He betrayed his countrymen and women with this act of handing their god to a stranger. The novel is also about the African belief in the ancestors that is, the dead whom they believe were everywhere, especially the dead whose spirit is always with them.



A Supernaturally Induced Self-confession of N'Tomo's Victims

After further inquiries from the Doctor as they both converse, Doumbia keeps mute for some seconds, then continues: «À present, je peux vous le dire: Nous, ce sont les domestiques, le gendarme, le juge et moi» (NS, 1977:179) [Now, I can tell you: We were the cooks, the police, the judge and me (Our translation)]. After this dastardly act against N'Tomo, all the accomplices serve various degrees of both physical as well as spiritual punishments.

N'Tomo is inalienable as he is not a toy. Whenever this is told to some people, it sounds meaningless to them. Perhaps this is the reason why Mr Jules and his co-expatriates think they could do away with the great N'Tomo. Soon, without further explanation, they realise the metaphysical power possessed by this god stolen from Africa when it mysteriously disappears from their bag from as far as Europe, precisely France. Surprised at this disappearance of N'Tomo, the white lady who witnesses this bizarre occurrence affirms: “C'est pas vrai! dit Mlle Baune. Ah! Cette Afrique!” (NS, 1977:141)[This cannot be! Says Miss Baune. Ah! This Africa! (Our translation)] Unknown to them, Africa is a land of misery and mysterious happenings. David Diop adores Africa in his poem: «*Afrique mon Afrique*»

Afrique mon Afrique
Afrique des fiers guerriers dans les savanes ancestrales
Afrique que chante ma grand-mère
Au bord de son fleuve lointain. (Coups de Pilon, 1973:23 « Afrique »)

Africa my Africa
Africa of fearless warriors in the ancestral savannah
Africa whose songs my grandmother sings
Beside his faraway lake. (Our translation)

Consequently, in his quest to steal the great N'Tomo and transport it from Africa to Europe, M. Jules has to clear away all obstacles (that is, his co-expatriates and accomplice) from his way in order to succeed and cover up his misdeed. He, therefore, requests a poison to be prepared by one of the workers from a pharmaceutical company. They resort to this option when the first attempt to use a snake does not work. Mlle Baune kills the snake that would have bitten Besnier, thereby truncating the first assassination attempt. The colonisers' attitudes also portend danger



and absolute wickedness. The use of snake foregrounds belief in the supernatural where animals can be deployed as weapon to eliminate perceived enemies: “M. Jules lui avait ordonné d’introduire des serpents-cracheurs dans la chambre de M. Besnier. Il s’est exécuté une première fois. Mlle Baune a tué le serpent, le gardien a pris peur. Il n’a plus rien fait.” (NS, 1977:143) [Mr Jules had ordered him to sneak ferocious snakes into the room of Mr Besnier. He did that the first time. Miss Baune killed the snake, the guard was afraid. He could no longer do anything (Our translation)].

Nantouma, the guard, is assigned to surreptitiously put the snake in the room unknown to Besnier. After his eventual death, police investigation through the guard’s confession exposes his killer. This confession is made with the knowledge and belief he has in the saying that: «Par toi les hommes ont appris que les Dieux venaient à eux.» (NS, 1977:148) [Through you men we learn that the gods are coming to them. (Our translation)]

All over Africa and elsewhere in the world where there is a belief in reincarnation and spirits, it is believed that human beings are always in contact with the unseen forces:

L’homme est surtout entente avec l’invisible. L’homme a son double qu’il doit comprendre. Vivre avec l’invisible est la voie de la vie. J’ai connu quelques Blancs. Plusieurs vivaient comme des étrangers sur la terre parce qu’ils méconnaissaient l’invisible. (NS, 1977:157)

Man is always in harmony with the invisible. Man has his pair, that, he must understand. Living with the invisible is the voice of life. I know certain White men. Many lived like strangers on earth because they are ignorant of the invisibles. (Our translation)

The great N’Tomo as it is usually addressed as a god that is always at the tip of the fingers of its worshippers to either attend to their problems or pave way for them out of the woods. This is the reason for the saying that:

Ceux qui sont seuls ne sont plus seuls. Tu es présent: témoin, compagnon, complice. Tu secondes, tu protèges, tu entends ce qui est inaccessible à l’ouïe des hommes. Tu sens ce qui est inaccessible à l’odorat des hommes. Tu te refuses à juger: ni



pauvres, ni riches. Tu t'attaches aux pas qui viennent à toi, à la voix qui te donne un nom, au bras qui te bâtit un gîte, aux doigts qui courent sur ton échine, et les hommes s'insultent par ton nom! Ils ont peut-être oublié ton vrai nom: Fidélité. (NS, 1977:159-160)

Those that are alone are no longer lonely. You are present: witness, companion and accomplice. You second, you protect, you listen to what is not audible to men. You perceive what cannot be perceived by men you refuse to judge neither the poor nor the rich. You join the steps that advance to you, in the voice that gives you a name, to the arm that built a shelter for you, to fingers that runs on your spine, and the men exchanging insults in your name! May be they have forgotten your real name: loyalty. (Our translation)

Loyalty is a virtue that may be difficult for everyone to practise. A loyal person is trusted, entrusted with some valuables and he/she is believed to be trustworthy. When we consider it from this angle, one will agree that spirits which N'Tomo represents believed to be on the side of their people. If considered in another view, it has the power to render assistance to its own whenever they are in dire need of solutions to certain problems beyond human efforts. N'Tomo is said to be an impartial judge that does not take side between both the poor and the rich. N'Tomo is a god that protects, listens and hears inaudible voices and perceives odours that cannot be perceived by men. N'Tomo is said to be ever ready to defend its own.

Consequences of betraying a deity in Africa as explicated in *Noces sacrées*

Consequently, all that happens is not clear to Doctor Baune because he could not fathom that the kind of agony being experienced by M. Jules, Nantouma and their accomplices could be as a result of the supernatural power inflicted on them by what they considered, a mere stolen wooden statue that caused their eventual shameful and disgraceful death until Doumbia's confession after M. Jules had committed suicide. M. Jules earlier steals N'Tomo that is sold to Mr Besnier. This transaction is done through an intermediary known as Nantouma, the camp guard who later dies as well. One day, Mr Jules asks Nantouma to fetch him an authentic N'Tomo. Nantouma initially refuses as he is aware of the implication of such act of sacrilege. He is threatened by his boss and eventually, he steals N'Tomo for Mr Jules for pecuniary reward.



The day he (Mr Jules) receives N'Tomo in his hands, he starts experiencing setbacks in his entire endeavours:

Des deux camions de transport qu'il possédait, l'un a pris feu et l'autre est tombé dans la Grande Rivière Blanche. Son commerce périlait. Il perdit la gérance du grand Hôtel Campement de la capitale pour se voir relégué dans le campement de brousse où vous l'avez connu. (NS, 1977:174)

The two transport Lorries he had, one caught fire and the other fell into the Great White River. His trade was going downhill. He lost the management of the large Camp Hotel in the capital to relegate the Camp into a bush other than what we know. (Our translation)

This revelation is a reminder that there is a great repercussion for every act of untruthfulness. Whatever is acquired through dubious means will surely crumble one day, especially when it also has to do with the deities. *Noces sacrées* establishes the sacred idea of an average African's belief in the worship of ancestral spirit known for its deeds and prowess: «D'autres hommes m'ont dit: "Tes Dieux sont morts, seul le notre est en vie, viens à lui." « J'ai répondu: "Les Dieux morts sont puissants, un Dieu ne vit ni ne meurt. » (NS, 1977:168) [Some men told me: "your gods are dead, only ours is alive, come to Him." "I replied: The dead gods are powerful, a god neither lives nor dies." (Our translation)]

The belief that the gods are not dead makes their worshippers offer sacrifices to them from time to time. This is done either to appease them whenever sacrileges are committed or to praise them in appreciation of blessings bestowed on the living beings. Inadvertently, the gods considered dead have a way of demonstrating their living presence to those who doubt the efficacy of their power. This is attested to by Besnier when he and his African interpreter, Alassane, continue to hear strange, terrible noise of the gods in the 'dead' of the night. In any case, to prove that the gods can see and act, whoever betrays the initiation usually pays with his or her life. This is the case with Alassane as reported by Bersnier: «Le lendemain, au reveil, Alassane était mort...Komo est au sommet de la hiérarchie des Dieux. Lui ne pardonne rien.» (NS, 1977:31) [The next day, at daybreak, Alassane was dead. Komo is at the helm of the hierarchy of the gods. He forgives nothing. (Our translation)]



In contrast, N'Tomo does not kill, he torments. It later occurs to Besnier that the strange behaviours he exhibits are as a result of the statue of N'Tomo in his custody. He simply adheres to the advice of Mr. Mornet, then abandons him at Marseille and goes to Paris. Unfortunately, the evil that men do, as the saying goes, lives after them; N'Tomo is seen to be all around Besnier. In another confessional statement, Besnier admits that:

Parfois, j'étais à la chasse; mais au lieu de mon guide habituel, Souleymane, j'avais N'Tomo à mes côtés...Quelque rares fois, je me voyais seul à la chasse, j'abattais une bête, mais quand j'allais la chercher, elle avait disparu. A sa place, il y avait N'Tomo qui recanait. (NS, 1977:33)

Sometimes, I was on a hunting spree; but instead of my guide Souleymane as usual I had N'Tomo by my side...Seldom a times, I am alone hunting, when I hit a game, but when I went to search, she has disappeared. In its stead, there is N'Tomo that laughed to scorn. (Our translation)

Appearance, disappearance and re-apperance are characteristics of African deities. This showcases their supernatural power. This act is not strange to an African, whoever calls for rain should expect thunder and lightning with great torments. Moreover, it is said that N'Tomo has power to protect any of its own from harm:

Si d'adventure tu nourris l'intention de faire le moindre mal à celui qui détient N'Tomo, tu ne réussiras pas car il est protégé contre tous les hommes. Malheur à toi...Malheur à toi...tu perdras d'abord les esprits, la vie ensuite. (NS, 1977:174)

Par adventure you are nursing an intention to do the slightest evil to whomever is in care of N'Tomo, you will never succeed because it protects all men. Misfortune befall you...adversity befall you...you will initially lose your being, then your life. (Our translation)

The trope of death in the narrative

Death is usually the end result of all those who are dishonest to African deities after experiencing shame and calamities as inflicted by N'Tomo. N'Tomo, a rewarder of the loyalty of adherents, will defend and punish anyone who insinuates or intends to wreck havoc on any of his



loyalists. Such person will fail and will be doomed by, first, losing his senses, and thereafter, dying. Whenever there is a deviation from the norms and customs of the people, repercussions are faced and consequences may be borne as in the case of Besnier who laments:

Je ne me trouvais pas devant des masques et des statuettes, mais j'avais en face de moi des visages d'hommes et de femmes qui me parlaient. Rictus, sourires amers, grimaces de douleur et de dérision, rires cruels. Je me sentis pris dans un univers, au milieu d'une foule, qui criait, parlait, pleurait, et chaque mot, chaque cri, résonnait en moi, retentissait autour de moi avec une sonorité d'angoisse...Autour de moi, d'autres visiteurs. Ils ne devaient rien sentir, rien entendre. Pour eux, il n'y avait que des objets d'art...Je fermai les yeux. Quand je les ouvris, je me trouvais au milieu de dizaines de N'Tomo. (NS 1977:37-39)

I was not before the masks and statues, but I had in my presence faces of men and women that were speaking to me. Fixed, laughter of bitterness, funny faces of pains and horror, wicked laughter. I felt like a hostage in a universe, at the middle of a dance, that was loud, talking, shouting, wailing, and each word, each shout, sounded at me, revolves around me with a voice of anguish...Around me, other visitors. They have no feelings, heard nothing. To them, it is mere sculptural objects...I closed my eyes. When I opened them, I found myself in the midst of dozens of N'Tomo. (Our translation)

Horror becomes the companion of whoever is involved in evil deeds. Experience of horror is harrowing, only he who has connection with N'Tomo is hunted by the same spirit. Other tourists are innocent of what Besnier encounters; this is why when the same sculptures in the museum are seen by other visitors as ordinary works of arts and they are appreciated as such, these same objects become objects of torment and great fear to Besnier, the culprit.

Noces sacrées also depicts the political gimmicks of the colonisers who through domination and government hierarchy compel Africans who are of low cadres to carry out orders against their wishes. The displayed superiority and oppression make most Africans to commit sacrilege against their gods and ancestors, which in turn spell doom for them. Mr. Mornet recounts an eyewitness account of what Besnier causes to Madame Bernard thus:



Depuis le jour où il m'a laissé N'Tomo, ma vie s'en est ressentie. J'ai connu des nuits épouvantables. Ce masque, sous les traits de mes familiers, a troublé mon sommeil. Je le voyais en rêve, tantôt Président de la Chambre de Commerce, tantôt tel ou tel de mes collaborateurs, tantôt Directeur General de la Banque du Sud. Dans les discussions, j'étais en état d'infériorité. N'Tomo m'écrasait, me ridiculisait et, quand j'étais à bout, il avait un ricanement qui m'arrachait le cœur. C'est un avertissement. Si Besnier ne rend pas ce Dieu à ses fidèles, d'autres phénomènes plus sérieux interviendront et nul ne sait jusqu'où cela aller... Il y a quelque vingt ans, un de mes amis s'est trouvé dans pareille situation. Il avait acquis la statuette d'une reine bambara qui avait été décapitée pour sacrilège. (NS, 1977:43)

Since the day he left N'Tomo for me, I felt resentful in my life. I experienced dreadful nights. This mask, hid under familiar features, to disturb my sleep. I do see it in my dream, sometimes President of the Chamber of Commerce, sometimes one of my collaborators, sometimes General Director of Bank of the South. In discussions, I was in a state of inferiority. N'Tomo overwhelms, ridicules, and when I am at the end, there was a mockery laughter that uproots my heart. It is a warning. If Besnier did not return this god to its faithful, more other serious phenomena are coming and no one knows the extent to which that will go... It is almost twenty years, one of my friends was found in similar situation. He acquired a statue of a Bambara queen that was beheaded for sacrilège. (Our translation)

It is evident from the above that though the colonisers use their domineering power to make the blacks commit sacrilege against their gods, the gods in turn revenge by causing them sleepless nights, ridicule and making mockery of them when they are made to behave foolishly before notable men and women at important meetings and discussions. Several warnings are given, while other consequences are experienced by as many as have contact with N'Tomo:

Eh bien, Durant les huit mois que mon ami garda cette statuette, il souffrit de douleurs cervicales dont aucun médecin ne put le soulager. Un de nos anciens, plus versé dans les affaires africaines, lui conseilla de se débarrasser de la statuette. Il en rit tout d'abord. Mais il finit par céder et l'offrit à un de ses médecins. Ce médecin, un mois plus tard, accusait les mêmes maux. Instruit par ses relations, il remit la statuette à notre ami. Les douleurs que celui-ci ne connaissaient plus revinrent. Notre "ancien" qui l'avait



conseillé de se débarrasser de la statuette avait insisté auprès de lui pour qu'il ne soit pas tenté une seconde de la détruire. Mon ami fit le voyage en Afrique, rendit la statuette à ses gens. Il se trouva du même coup débarrassé de ce mal contre lequel la médecine moderne s'était avérée inopérante. Or N'Tomo est un Dieu, vous pensez! (NS, 1977:44)

Good enough, for the period of eight months that my friend kept this statue, he suffered cervical agony that no medicine could heal. One of our elders, very knowledgeable in African affairs, counsel him to do away with the statue. He however laughed. But ended by accepting and gave it to one of his Doctors. This Doctor, a month after, experienced the same calamity. Taught by his relations, he returned the statue to my friend. The agonies that this one knew no more returned. Our "elder" who earlier counseled the return of the statue insisted, stood by him so that he will not have a second thought of destroying it. My friend made a journey to Africa handed the statue to its owners. He was instantly found healed of the evil modern medicine confirmed non-operational. And yet do you think N'Tomo is a god? (Our translation)

Agony and unbearable pain are inflicted on those who defy and defile those who underrate Africa and African deities and heritage. This is the case of these imperialists who stole what they refer to as artifacts and flee to Europe, but when it dawns on them that they have really come, they have seen but they could not conquer, they make an overture thus:

M. Mornet à Marseille, moi à Paris et à Londres, les mêmes angoisses, les mêmes cauchemars. Je me mis pourtant à rire comme si je trouvais tout cela grotesque. Mornet me regarda, les yeux pleins de feu, puis haussa les épaules. Avez-vous mes masques et statuettes ? Oui, je les ai ramenés avec moi, car vous seul pouvez remettre les choses en ordre. Bien, je vais réfléchir. Réfléchir, cria Evelyne, réfléchir ? Qu'as-tu à réfléchir, c'est tout réfléchi, rends ce fétiches à ses adorateurs, ou alors ne me parle plus. Non, Madame Bernard, laissez-lui le temps de mettre ses idées en ordre. Promets-moi de rendre cet infâme objet. Je te promets de faire ce qu'il faut. (NS, 1977:45)

Mr. Mornet at Marseille, I at Paris and at London, the same anguish, the same nightmares. I am always laughing like as if I found all of these ridiculous. Mornet looked at me, his eyes full of fury, and then shrugs his shoulders. Are you with my masks and



statues? Yes, I brought them with me, because you alone can put the things in order. Good, I want to give it a thought. Thought, Evelyn shouted, thought? What do you have to think about, it's been all thought about, take that fetish to his faithful, or then do not talk to me again. No, Madame Bernard, give him time to put his ideas in order. Promise me to return that despicable object. I promise you to do what is expedient. (Our translation)

Expediency in act is needed to avert danger and saving many others from being victims of the evil they know nothing about. The ugly experiences of these evil collaborators against Africa and its heritage continue to be exposed when they realise belatedly the danger of continued incarceration of the great N'Tomo whom nobody can 'imprison' anywhere and anyhow. Moreover, in another dimension, the Director General recounts his ordeal this way:

Il était fabuleux, ce musée que vous avez visité à Londres, n'est-ce pas ? Son propriétaire, Lord Tenwood, est dans un asile psychiatrique depuis deux ans...Je considérais N'Tomo avec un autre œil. Je tournais en rond, allant à la malle où N'Tomo se trouvait, mettant la main dessus, puis me ravisant, indécis. Cette nuit-là, je me trouvai dans un village africain abandonné. Les ruelles vides, les cases fermées, pas un homme, pas un animal, Je criais : "Où êtes-vous ? Il n'y a personne ?" L'écho répondait : "Où êtes-vous ? Il n'y a personne ?" Je courais de ruelle en ruelle, de maison en maison, rien. Rien que du vide, du silence. Épuisé, je m'assis au milieu de la rue centrale. Tout d'un coup, une foule hurlante : "Saisissez-vous de lui ! Qu'il ne nous échappe pas ! Je m'élançais à toutes jambes. Mais, à chaque issue, se tenait un vieillard, brandissant un chasse-mouche : "Pas ici !" Volte-face : je prenais une autre piste, mais au bout le même personnage : "Pas ici !" Je me refugiai alors dans une case. Mais quand je me crus en sécurité, N'Tomo apparut avec son ricanement "Dehors !" Je repris ma course...Je me mis à hurler : "Épargnez-moi, épargnez-moi !" Mon domestique, Alphonse, me réveilla...Je fus heureux de me voir en France, chez moi, avec Alphonse. (NS, 1977:45-47)

It was fabulous, this museum you visited in London, isn't it? Its proprietor, Lord Tenwood, is in a psychiatric refuge since two year ago...I am seeing N'Tomo with a different eye. I turned in a cycle, going to the trunk where N'Tomo was kept, dipping hand underneath, and then changed my mind, undecided. That night, I found myself in one abandoned African village. Empty back streets, the huts were locked, not a single man, not a single animal,



I shouted: “Where are you? No one here?” The echo responded: “Where are you? No one here?” I ran from back street to back street, from house to house, nothing. Nothing, except emptiness and silence. Exhausted, I sat in the middle of the road. Suddenly, a yelling crowd: “Get hold of him! He must not escape from us! I jumped at full stretch. But at every effort, there is an old man, brandishing a mosquito catcher’s net.” “Not here! U-turn: I took another way, but at the end, the same character: Not here!” I then took refuge in a hut. But when I thought am secured, N’Tomo appeared with its mockery laughter “Out! I resumed my race... I started yelling: Spare me! Spare me!” My house-help, Alphonse, woke me...I was happy to have found myself in France, my country, with Alphonse. (Our translation)

Nightmare as Traumatic Strategic Experience

Nightmare is another traumatic experience that beholds anyone who dares the supernatural powers of the deities experiences. In *Noces sacrées*, it is obvious that in Africa certain diseases declared incurable by modern medicine have been cured by traditional medical practitioners working in harmony with their ancestors. “Pour le moment, ce que j’ai à vous dire, à vous qui êtes médecin, est ceci: des maladies déclarés incurables par vos prédécesseurs ont été soignés et guéris sous mes yeux par nos grands Maîtres.” (NS, 1977:177) [At this time, what I have to tell you, to those of you doctors are this: the diseases your predecessors declared incurable were treated and cured under my watchful eyes by our elders. (Our translation)]

The above submission seems to tally with the thought of Mr. Mornet after the Director General starts behaving schizophrenically, having experienced series of nightmares. He observes that:

À mon avis, la science n’est pas tout, ou, si vous aimez mieux, il n’existe pas qu’une science, la notre. Nous avons beaucoup à gagner en laissant aux autres la possibilité de nous instruire, car il est difficile que tout un monde, ayant vécu des siècles durant isolé, coupé du courant des échanges universels, n’ait pas quelques vérités à proposer, répétait-il autour de lui. (NS, 1977:49)

In my own opinion, science is not all, if you so desire, no science exist, except ours. We have a lot to gain when we give others the chance to teach us, for it is difficult that all is dominated by a



world, leaving others isolated, disconnected from universal exchange of **ideas** (emphasis ours), has no truth to advance, he repeated near him. (Our translation)

Some other display of supernatural and metaphysical powers could be seen in the healing of incurable ailments and diseases by modern medical practitioners because not all sicknesses can be diagnosed through the use of scientific method. Meanwhile, with the above declarations, all diseases and evil attacks can be diagnosed and cured with the help of the ancestors who can see beyond what ordinary eyes and science cannot see.

In the same vein, Badian in *Sous l'orage* (1972: 131) states that:

Le premier fut une épidémie de méningite cérébro - spinale. Elle avait commencé par les quartiers du nord et avait petit à petit gagné tous les quartiers de la ville. Cette maladie disait les vieux, n'avait été connu en Afrique que durant cette guerre. Ils disaient également que les soldats noirs l'avaient ramenée du pays des Blancs. Nos pères ne nous en avaient jamais parlé, c'est une maladie de l'ère européenne.

The first was a cerebro – spinal meningitis epidemic. It started from the northern region and little by little spread to the whole part of the city. This disease as said by the elders was never heard of in Africa as that war lasted. They said also that the black soldiers brought it from the Whiteman's country. Our fathers had never told us about it; it is a disease of the European era (Our translation).

These testimonies could be attested to by all Africans at home and in the diaspora. In the view of Nazi Boni as expressed in *Crépuscule des temps anciens*: “Du Nord au Sud, de l'Est à l'Ouest, les mêmes légendes, les mêmes croyances, les mêmes rites, le même fourmillement dans les cités populeuses, bâties de pisé.” (CDTA, 1962:28) [From North to South, East to West, the same legends, the same thoughts, the same sacrifices, the same mass of people in populous cities, built of adobe. (Our translation)]

Africans are united in thought and deeds when it comes to thinking of their customs and traditions. They share similar history of legendary acts across the divide. Badian through *Noces sacrées* and *Sous l'orage* shows that as the Westerners and Asians have their traditions and



beliefs so do the Africans. Therefore, no matter the effects of western civilisation or the new religions, Africa remains Africa. Awolalu (2014:14) is of the same opinion that:

Most African religions recognised a variety of supernatural beings who expressed both good and bad virtues. And that religious practice focused on contact between this world and the other world, typically through augury, divination, prophecy, and spirit medium ship. (*Religion in Africa and the Diaspora* 2014:14)

The foregoing substantiates the view that there is a dual world of the living and of the spirits where both good and bad virtues can be experienced. Badian's *Noces sacrées* also shows that African traditional belief system has been peacefully managed before the arrival of Europeans. It again demonstrates the efficacy of the traditional medicine over and above the modern medicine which seems to be lacking in curing certain sicknesses and diseases. The traditional medicine has the power to cure ailments without undergoing any surgical operation but only by invoking the spirits seeking the assistance of the ancestors. When compared to the selected texts, same elements of the supernatural are made manifest. It is of paramount importance to educate the upcoming generation of Africans in their culture wherever they find themselves through the instrumentality of literature to stem the tide of sacrilegious acts to avert generational curses (Fasinu, 2018:26). Upcoming generation of Africans must not be left in the dark concerning their culture through oral and written literature by inculcating in them the reading culture to imbibe the morals in African culture and heritage. This is corroborated by Ken Bugul (2004:162-163) in her book, *De l'autre côté du regard* where there is a dialogue between a dead but reincarnated invisible mother and her living daughter whenever there is rainfall:

Pourquoi pleures-tu? Ne pleure plus. Je ne suis plus là, mais je ne suis pas morte. Je suis de l'autre côté du regard. Je peux te parler, mais je ne peux te parler que dans l'eau de pluie. Donc n'aie pas peur, et surtout ne pleure plus. Tes larmes me brûlent et dans ce cas je n'arrive pas à te joindre. Ne pleure plus. Nous allons parler. Je vais tout te raconter. Toi aussi tu vas me dire. Tout ce que tu as ressenti, senti et que tu n'as pu dire à personne.

Why do you weep? Weep no more. I am no more there, but I am not dead. I am on the other side beyond the physical eyes. I can talk to you, but I cannot talk to you except in the rain water.



Therefore entertain no fear, and under no circumstances should you weep. Your tear hurts me and that prevents me from meeting you. Weep no more. We shall talk. I will narrate everything to you. You will also tell me all you felt, which you could not share with anybody. (Our translation)

The above scenario is also seen in Maris Conde's (1986:31-37) *Moi, Tituba sorcière...Noire de Salem* when Man Yaya et Abena, Tituba's reincarnated mother, visits:

C'était ma mère. Je ne l'avais pas appelée et je compris que l'imminence d'un danger la faisait sortir de l'invisible...Je ne trouvais rien à répliquer et Man Yaya disparut comme elle était venue laissant derrière elle ce parfum d'eucalyptus qui signale le passage d'un invisible.

It was my mother. I did not call her and I know that there is an imminent danger that made her come out of the invisible world... I had nothing to say and Man Yaya disappeared the way she came leaving behind her eucalyptus perfume that reveals the presence of an invisible. (Our translation)

Moreover, in Nazi Boni's *Crépuscule des temps anciens* when Terhe at the point of death encourages his wife Hakani not to cry, he knows that even if he is dead, he will be very much around to render necessary assistance when the need arises:

Ne pleure pas, Hakanni. Je suis un homme. Je ne crains pas Humu- la –Mort, car qu'est-ce la mort si ce n'est un simple transfèrement d'un monde à un autre. Je n'ai qu'un seul regret, celui de m'en aller avant la prochaine guerre annoncée par les devins. Je vais partir comme un déserteur qui fuit les champs de bataille. Malheureusement, nul n'est maître de son destin. (CDTA 1962:246)

Do not weep, Hakanni. I am a man. I do not fear death, even what is death if it is not simply a transfer from one world to the other. I have no regret except one, which is of going before the coming war which was announced by the diviners. I want to go like an absconder that runs away from battlefield. Unfortunately, no one is a master over his destiny. (Our translation)

The trope of supernatural also features prominently in Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) as regards Meme. Meme's mother observes that her daughter exhibits same traits



as those of her late father. She states: “...*Quel desastre! Gemit Fernanda. Cette enfant est aussi barbare que son père.*” (1967:274) [...What a disaster! Gemit Fernanda. This child is as barbaric as her father (Our translation)].

Conclusion

The study discovered that African traditional culture and practices have been made to play vital roles in this research. This paper has also shown that the perspectives in supernatural power - spirits which is a universally accepted concept has rightly found itself not only as a belief system into certain religions but it has also found its way into literary perspectives. The study showed how the theme has been used in protagonists' spirits to enter into the author's world and its effect on the postcolonial societies. Thus, the belief of a typical African is that in Africa everything is alive including our dead dear parents and there is repercussion on whatever one does in Africa.

References

- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., and Tiffin, H. 1995. *The post-colonial studies reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Awolalu, J.O. 2014. <http://www.Lucy.ukc.ac.uk/Yoruba> T/Yoruba belief systems and religious organisation. Retrieved Sept., 24, 2012. 2:55pm.
- Badian, Seydou K. 1972. *Sous L'orage (Kany) suivi de la mort de chaka*. Paris : Présence Africaine.
- _____. 1977. *Noces sacrées*. Paris: Seuil.
- Bugul, Ken. 2004. *De l'autre côté du regard*. Paris : Le Serpent à Plume.
- Condé, Maryse. 1986. *Moi, Tituba sorcière...Noire de salem*. Paris: Mercure de France.
- Diop, Birago. 1961. *Coups de pilon*. Paris: Présence Africaine.
- Fasinu, G.O. 2018. Reincarnation and nationalist struggles in selected postcolonial francophone African novels. M.Phil. Dissertation. Dept. of European Studies. University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Marquez, G. G. 1967. *One hundred years of solitude*, trans. Gregory Rabassa. New York.



Nazi, Boni. 1962. *Crépuscule des temps anciens*. Paris: Éditions Présence Africaine.

