



Research Article



Check for updates

Section: African Literature and Criticism



Published in Nairobi, Kenya by Royallite Global in the *Hybrid Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*.

Volume 4, Issue 2, 2022

**Article Information**

Submitted: 18th April 2022

Accepted: 30th July 2022

Published: 25th August 2022

Additional information is available at the end of the article

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ISSN 2707-2150 (Online)

ISSN 2707-2169 (Print)

To read the paper online, please scan this QR code

**How to Cite:**

Ben-Daniels, F. (2022). Discussing the subject matter of the supernatural in African literature: Old and new. *Hybrid Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*, 4(2). Retrieved from <https://royalliteglobal.com/hybrid-literary/article/view/881>

Discussing the subject matter of the supernatural in African literature: Old and new

Faith Ben-Daniels

Department of Languages Education, Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development, Ghana

Email: faithbd41@gmail.com

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6564-9300>

Abstract

This essay sought to examine the supernatural as a matter in African literature discourses and the degree to which it manifests itself in the political, socio-economic, and cultural systems of Africa. In order to achieve this, the essay further investigated the significance of the supernatural in contemporary African societies thus attempting to answer the following questions: does African literature old and new (where old and new refers to the year of publication of the novels as well as setting in the novels with regard to time) make room for the supernatural subject matter? Is there a favorable or bad portrayal of supernatural belief in African literature? These questions are addressed by evaluating and interpreting selected writings (literary foreground) dealing with supernatural subjects. The essay concludes by discussing methods in which the supernatural could be portrayed in order to favorably impact African societies.

Keywords: African literature, ghosts, spiritism, subject matter, supernatural



© 2022 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY-NC-SA) license.

Public Interest Statement

This paper focused on discussing the subject matter of the supernatural in African literature as a significant aspect of the African way of life. The aim was to draw attention to the argument that whereas African contemporary literature seemed to have moved away from plots driven by the supernatural, it is still a key aspect in defining African societies. The argument was focused on the fact that in order to fully appreciate African literature and its societies, the supernatural ought to be interrogated from different viewpoints rather than quickly dismissed.

Introduction

In his opinion, Eastwell (2011) delineates, the supernatural/metaphysical is characterized by descriptors such as outside the observable universe, violating natural laws, and pertaining to god or a deity and is commonly associated with things like spirituality, occultism, spirits, the divine, the miraculous, fairies, vampires, ghosts, goblins, and other unearthly beings, including angels” (p. 18)

As Eastwell (2011) puts it in the above definition, the supernatural is defined by descriptors that do not form part of the ‘observable universe.’ This definition suggests that anything that does not fall within what humans can see with their eyes or can explain logically is boxed as part of the supernatural. As such, the descriptors such as goblins, ghosts, vampires, fairies etc., that Eastwell provides are more present in western folktale cultures than in their daily life. This suggests that with regard to western culture, elements of the supernatural are confined to folktales. As such, this definition presents the supernatural as an isolated concept far separate from daily life. However, among many African cultures, the supernatural is not defined or described as an isolated concept. The supernatural is believed to dovetail into daily lives and activities. As such, this raises the question, how is the supernatural defined from the African context?

From an African view point, the supernatural is defined as the linear world that exists alongside the physical world of men. This world has both good and evil and has for its leadership the Supreme Being, God as its head. There are lesser entities in this world that cooperate with God, work against God or both. This world is not accessible to humans using just their physical eyes. This world is accessible through dreams, the gift of visions as well as the solicitation of disciples such as medicine men and diviners who have the gift/ability to traverse both worlds. And because the African believes that this world coexists with the physical world as we know it, the African does not go about his or her daily live without reverence to the world of the supernatural. For instance, among come cultures in Ghana, when motorists are crossing a bridge, they honk their horns before crossing the bridge. The belief is that water bodies are governed by spirit beings. So as a sign of respect, motorists must honk their honks as a way of seeking permission to cross.

This is just one illustration of the numerous ways in which the supernatural is accommodated in African culture. The African believes that not everything can be explained using empirical data. As a result, when an event or occurrence contradicts known scientific rules, then, such events are attributed to forces beyond the natural world. Spirits, ghosts, gods, demons, are a few examples of such powers that exist outside of the natural world.

Again, African people and societies that believe in the existence of the supernatural believe that the physical world as we know it is influenced by a spiritual world or a world that cannot be seen by the physical eyes. This spiritual world can be engaged through dreams, visions, trance state or human spirit transportation. The human spirit transportation involves the belief that there are those who, through certain incantations and laid down procedures, can project their spirits into the spirit world in order to communicate with spirits. Among certain Akan communities, for instance, there is what is

referred to as the third eye. Individuals with a third eye can see what others cannot see. These third eye individuals are referred to as *Okomfo* or *Dunsinee*. Certain North American and Asian cultures refer to these same individuals as Shaman. And members of the communities in which they are found as well as members of external communities visit or solicit the help of these supernatural mediators for varied reasons. So, this raises the question, does consulting such individuals or believing in the existence of such supernatural elements make the African religious?

In fact, in order to answer this question, it is important to acknowledge the existence of the misconception about the African religiosity – since many African communities and cultures believe in the supernatural, other cultures are quick to sum up Africans as religious. However, the belief in the supernatural does not necessarily suggest religiosity. For instance, Mbiti (1991) explains that when historical heritage, cultural heritage and religious heritage comes together, the umbrella term, spirituality is created. And Mbiti (1991) stresses on the fact that these three heritages are intertwined and create the African way of life. As such, a blanket statement that points at an African community as religious cannot be easily made.

Hence, it is suggestive that the African way of life is a crucible of beliefs, practices and ideologies that spell out the trajectories of African socio-economic and political thoughts, actions and patterns of which a belief in the supernatural is present. However, this does not necessarily mean that a particular African society or members of a particular African society are religious. For instance, a member of an Akan community, visiting home after staying away for a while, might decide to buy bottles of schnapps for the family head. The schnapps are for the purpose of libation to thank the ancestors for a safe journey and ask for blessings for the clan or family. The member of the community who brings home the schnapps does not necessarily have to believe in the efficacy of pouring libations or even in the existence of ancestors who are listening to prayers. However, the member finds it expedient to do so just to fulfill a cultural practice. Therefore, an overly generalized statement that Africans are religious would leave room for endless debates.

Notwithstanding, Mbiti's exposition on how the three heritages (historical, cultural and religious) dovetail in creating spirituality, shows how elements of the supernatural and beliefs in the supernatural are intertwined in everyday African life. As such, African literature, mirrors this already existing cultural practice in diverse forms. It is for this reason that writers like Elechi Amadi, in his novel, *the Concubine*, (1966) Ukamaka Olisakwe's novel, *Ogadinma*, (2020) Faith Ben-Daniels' *A quarter past midnight* (2014) and *Mimosa*, (2015) Jennifer Mansubuga Makumbi's *Kintu*, (2018) and Atu Yalley's *Possessed* (1984) respectively, rely heavily on elements of the supernatural to drive certain aspects of their plot, if not all aspects of their plot. In actuality, the existence of these literatures that touch on the subject matter of the supernatural from divergent perspectives demonstrates the value that African writers place on the supernatural. However, it is possible to approach any topic from a variety of perspectives when giving it significance, though. For instance, a writer can give a subject matter a lot of weight by ridiculing it in their writing in order to challenge the veracity or authenticity of a claim made about the subject. Equally, a writer can project a subject matter by presenting its positives as a way of stressing its relevance.

Therefore, the aforementioned writers have presented in their works the subject matter of the supernatural in diverse ways. By doing so, they have reaffirmed the importance of the subject matter of the supernatural. As such, in order to ascertain the level of importance they place on the subject matter, this discussion hereafter will explore how the subject matter is presented in their works.

The subject matter of the supernatural in African literature

It is important to note that writers like Elechi Amadi, whose novel, *the Concubine*, was first published in 1966, and set in pre-colonial Nigeria, builds his plot on the supernatural. As such, he weaves through his narrative the role of spirit beings, gods, dreams, medicine men and a host of other supernatural elements. When the novel opens, the reader encounters Madume who confronts Emenike in the quiet forest track, over a land dispute that had already been settled by the elders of the village; who in their wisdom cautioned Madume to stay away from the land because it belongs to Emenike. However, Madume still gets into a fight with Emenike in the forest over the land. Although Emenike fights well, his: "caution deserted him and he gained confidence. He charged at Madume but the latter stooped, carried him shoulder high and dashed him to the ground with elephantine fury. Emenike's side hit the jagged stump of a tree and he lay wriggling weakly." (p.2) And after that altercation with Madume, Emenike falls sick. The writer explains Emenike's ill health, connecting his unfortunate situation to the supernatural when he explains that: "but a man's god may be away on a journey on the day of an important fight and that may make all the difference. That is clearly what happened in the last fight between Madume and Emenike." (p. 5) This justification offered by the writer demonstrates that he is portraying in his novel a society that is deeply rooted in the belief of the supernatural. As a result, every aspect of their daily lives and events in the community is linked to a supernatural force of some kind. As a matter of fact, in the novel, Emenike loses the fight and is mortally injured by his opponent because his god was not available to save him. This god that the writer refers to is known among the Igbos of Nigeria as the *chi*. The Igbos believe that every person has a personal god who they refer to as their *chi*. For instance, in Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things fall apart*, (1958) he makes mention of the *chi*. According to the writer, Unoka, Okonkwo's father, was known in the community as a failure. The writer explains that: "Unoka was an ill-fated man. He had a bad chi or personal god, and evil fortune followed him to the grave, or rather to his death, for he had no grave." (p.14) The mention of the *chi* in Achebe's novel confirms the Igbo belief in the existence of personal gods and consequently, the belief in the supernatural.

Aside the personal gods, Elechi Amadi equally places a lot of importance to the presence of medicine men or diviners. An ever-present medicine man in the novel is Anyika. Anyika is sent for when a day after Emenike's fight with Madume, his family realize that his condition is serious. The writer narrates that: "no one quite knew where Anyika had come from. True he said he came from Eluanyim but that was nowhere as far as the villagers were concerned...to the villagers he was just a medicine man and a mediator between them and the spirit world." (pp. 5-6) And the writer uses his plot to relay the importance of Anyika as a medicine man to the villagers. As far as the villagers are concerned, Anyika's origins are not as important as his profession as a medicine man. He is accepted by the community because of his profession. As such, it is Anyika who is called upon when Madume incurs an injury on his toe from a hoe lying around Emenike's compound. Anyika is able to reveal Madume's inner thoughts and how he even came by his injury without Madume giving him any information. Anyika after casting his cowries tells Madume that: "you got the injury at Emenike's." (p.58) And Madume replies that: "you know everything, so there's no point my denying it." (p.58) Anyika also informs Madume that he is lucky to have left Emenike's compound alive, because there were malignant spirits who wanted to kill him when he went to Emenike's compound. Anyika's ability to reveal what is hidden and also consult with the spirit world, as he does for Madume, consolidates his position as a medicine man and the important role he plays in the community.

In fact, medicine men like Anyika do not only exist in novels. They have a respectable place in African history and culture. For instance, the history of the Asante people provides a historical

illustration of the significant role that medicine men/women and diviners play in African communities. The diviner, Okomfo Anokye, is believed to have been an integral part of the formation of the Asante Empire. He is also thought to have played a significant role in the successful reign of King Osei Tutu I as King of the Asantes.

The example of Okomfo Anokye goes to show the extent to which medicine men/women and diviners abound in many African societies. They form an integral part of the African communities in which they find themselves and they wield almost as much presence and power as the community's chiefs or leaders. A typical example of the power and respect such medicine men and diviners wield is present in the novel. The writer presents another diviner by the name Nwokekoro. According to the writer, "Nwokekoro is the priest of Amadioha the god of thunder and of the skies." (p.8) Nwokekoro is described as: "friendly with everyone and was highly respected. His office as high priest of the most powerful god lent him great dignity." (p.8) As the priest of Amadioha, Nwokekoro plays the role of the rain maker or rain stopper. It is his job to prevent the rain from falling during wrestling matches. This role Nwokekoro performs in the community reveals how deeply rooted supernatural beliefs are in the community. Many African communities believe that nature does not exist on its own. Nature is controlled by gods and these gods serve as the forces behind nature. An example of gods who control nature is Assase Yaa, the Akan god of the earth who farmers must pay obeisance for good harvest. Also, among the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria, there is Shango, the god of thunder. As a matter of fact, it is believed that elements of the supernatural and how they work intertwine with daily life and activities. The two are joined in ways that make one inseparable from the other. Although not all members of the community might be believers/followers of a particular deity and his/her diviner, there is that clear understanding that they are part of the society and as such, must be accorded the necessary respect by all members of the society. And this is adhered to.

Also, it is believed that when medicine men/women and diviners are not accorded the necessary respect and their divinations not adhered to, there are consequences to be borne. For instance, when Wigwe informs Anyika of his son, Ekwueme's intention of marrying Ihuoma, Anyika decides to consult his gods to inquire if the marriage would be possible. It is during this consultation, in the presence of Wigwe and his wife, Adaku, that Anyika reveals:

Ihuoma belongs to the sea. When she was in the spirit world, she was a wife of the Sea-King, the ruling spirit of the sea. Against the advice of her husband, she sought the company of human beings and was incarnated. The Sea-King was very angry but because he loved her best of all his wives, he did not destroy her immediately she was born...As soon as Emenike married Ihuoma his life was forfeit and nothing would have saved him... There are few women like that in the world... It is death to marry them and they leave behind a harrowing string of dead husbands... (pp. 195-196).

The above divination by Anyika makes it clear that Ekwueme cannot marry Ihuoma and expect to stay alive. However, Ekwueme does not heed to Anyika's divine warning. He and his parents consult another diviner, Agwoturumbe, who they believe is more powerful than Anyika. And Agwoturumbe assures them that he can deliver. He tells them that he can appease the Sea-King and get the spirit to accept the marriage between Ekwueme and Ihuoma. As such, he gives them a list of the items for the sacrifice and also travels down to their village on the agreed date to perform the sacrifice. But unfortunately, the Sea-King turns out to be just as cunning and malicious as Anyika describes him. As Ekwueme steps out of his room to check on how Agwoturumbe is getting ready for the sacrifice,

he comes face to face with the little boys who are using their bow and arrows to kill colorful lizards to be used as part of the sacrifice and unfortunately:

an arrow flying parallel with the wall just missed a big red lizard. It hit the upper part of Ekwueme's belly and he fell back against the doorway with a cry...the spirit of death was known to take away people's souls shortly after midnight. That was when Ekwueme died. (pp. 215-216)

In the end, Anyika turned out to be right but it is too late for Ekwueme to retrace his step as he has already paid with his life for his disobedience and lack of respect.

Thus, this proves that the supernatural is venerated in African communities. It is believed that when an individual or group offends a deity, punishment could be swift and intense as witnessed in *the Concubine*. Equally, these deities can be summoned to administer justice on behalf of the weak in society because they also serve the interest of men/women. One way that an individual can solicit the help of deities to act on their behalf when they feel wronged is through the invoking of curses on those who have wronged them. Additionally, it is anticipated that the deity who is called to seal the curse will act on behalf of the one who invokes the curse. And as a matter of fact, Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's novel, *Kintu*, shows the swiftness with which the gods can act when one invokes a curse.

Now how does the novel show this swiftness of how a curse works? This begins with Kintu's journey to: "Lubya to pay homage to Kyabaggu the new kabaka." (p. 4) According to the writer, Kintu, who served as governor of his area needed to make this journey to pledge his allegiance to the new kabaka who: "had grabbed the throne and announced Lubya Hill as the new capital." (p. 4) Kintu takes his son, Kalema, on this journey. However, Kalema is not Kintu's biological son, but the biological son of Ntwire, a stranger who arrived in Kintu's village carrying his newborn son whose mother had died giving birth to him. So, while Kintu takes charge to the boy Kalema as his own son, Ntwire worked for Kintu. Kalema journeys with Kintu to see the kabaka was at the request of his biological father, Ntwire. But unfortunately, Kalema never reaches Lubya due to an unfortunate incident that happens on the journey and leads to Kalema dying at the hands of Kintu. Kalema is then buried and the men continue their journey. However, on their return home, Kintu does not gather the courage to inform Ntwire of Kalema's death but lets him believe that Kalema is safe at the palace of the new kabaka as had been discussed and agreed upon. But Ntwire continuously suspects that something bad happened on the journey. According to the writer, Ntwire:

had known immediately when the party returned. That initial eye contact when he smiled his gratitude at them for taking his boy to the capital and they looked away. When he greeted them, they were abrupt, their bodies saying, 'Don't ask.' Often times, members of the party tensed when he walked past or they pretended not to see him. (p. 49)

And when Ntwire finally musters the courage to demand his son's return and Kintu tells him: "that will not be possible." (p. 49) Ntwire realizes that his son is probably dead and as such, curses Kintu:

'You see these feet,' then he pointed at his feet. 'I am going to look for my child. If he is alive, I'll bring him home and apologize. But if I don't find him — to you, to your house and to those that will be born out of it — to live will be to suffer. You will endure so

much that you'll wish that you were never born.' Ntwire's voice shook as he added, 'And for you Kintu, even death will not bring relief.' (p. 50)

Although Kintu does not pay heed to the curse, it begins to work against his family after ten years. His son, Baale, dies just before his wedding. Then his wife, Nnakato takes her life out of grief and Kintu himself, according to the writer: "was seen in Lwera in the cave near Kalema's grave, but his mind was in disorder. He said that Nnakato, Baale and Kalema were in the cave with him and he could not abandon them. After that he was never seen again. Kintu would get neither a grave nor funeral rites." (p. 81)

The purpose of the above narration is to trace the reasons for a curse and to follow the path this curse takes in the lives of the family who was cursed centuries earlier. When Ntwire curses Kintu, it is in the year 1750. And based on the wording of the curse, it transcends generations. Once it takes Baale's life and that of his mother. The curse continues to weave its path through the fabrics of Kintu's other seven children, including other children from other women and following their descendants through the ages. This type of curse, within the Akan traditional belief is referred to as the generational curse. There are several other cultures across Africa that equally believe in the potency of a curse and a generational curse. This suggests that bad or good events in the life of an individual who is known to have been cursed in the past or whose ancestor was cursed is not linked to his actions or inactions or even to nature. Bad or good events in the life of such an individual is always connected to the curse. This belief in the potency of curses lays emphasis on the belief in the existence of the supernatural.

Nonetheless, this belief in the existence of the supernatural does not die in the 1700s. It is still an ever-present belief in contemporary African societies and as such finds its way into contemporary literature. The writer of *Kintu* writes her novel in 2018 and sets some aspects of the plot in the 1700s and other aspects of the plot in 2004. The time span of the setting significantly lays emphasis on the belief of the existence of the supernatural even in contemporary society. And by so doing, answers the question that yes, African literature, old and new makes room for the subject matter of the supernatural. And this is regardless of how much contemporary knowledge seeks to debunk any belief that does not show empirical evidence. And in fact, this contemporary knowledge and belief in rational thinking which must be supported by empirical evidence is completely a western ideology. As Petrus (2006) puts it: "the western conception of science and rationalism has been imposed upon the rest of the world as being the unequivocal "messiah" of what science is supposed to be. The way in which science is defined and practiced is a monopoly held by the West..." (p. 2) And if Petrus' argument is anything to go by, then of course, one can argue that no particular group or culture can claim to be the repository of all knowledge and what can be defined as scientific knowledge.

As such, there is the need to understand and accept that even though one might not agree with the belief and practice of other cultures and societies with regard to their definition of science and how the world works it would be detrimental for any group to kick such opposing beliefs that leans towards supernatural explanations to the curb. After all, one can still not take away the fact that somethings cannot be fully understood and explained. And as such, African societies and cultures lean on their respective beliefs in the supernatural for meaning and insight into such phenomena. For instance, one such phenomenon has to do with childbirth. There are some women who have been medically declared as unable to have children, but then, such women end up getting pregnant without any evidence of medical assistance. Since it cannot be explained medically such a phenomenon when it occurs within a society or community that believes in the supernatural attributes the occurrence

as a miracle. The mention of miracles does not subtract from the community's ability of rational thinking but rather highlights that the particular society or community has a place within its belief systems for the occurrence of the supernatural.

For instance, Ben-Daniels' novel, *A Quarter Past Midnight*, connects the birth of the protagonist, Pearl Asare, as a supernatural occurrence. Pearl, unlike her sister Mariam, is a gift from a deity. And as such, her life is tied to the deity. And in order to be able to live a normal life and follow her dreams, she must break the bond between her and the deity who gifted her to her mother. Likewise, in Atu Yalley's novel, *Possessed*, the young protagonist, Mary, is taken over every Sunday afternoon by supernatural forces. In order to be free, she must appease the deity she is tied to. However, whereas Pearl finds her freedom in the church, Mary finds her freedom in the shrine of Akonodi. Yalley's novel was published in 1984 and Ben-Daniels' novel in 2014. Both novels are not exactly popular when it comes to the formal study of literature as a subject due to the fact that their subject matter is the supernatural. And one reason for the unpopularity of novels of the supernatural in the mainstream study of literature is based on the earlier reference to what Petrus (2006) argues as the western definition of what is scientific. And this 'monopoly' of the definition of what is scientific has in many ways affected consciously and unconsciously what African writers churn out in their subject matter as far as elements of the supernatural are concerned. This raises the question—Does African literature present the belief in the supernatural in a positive or negative light? In order to answer this question, one must take a look at how the subject matter of the supernatural is presented when writers showcase it in their plot.

As an example, in Ukamaka Olisakwe's novel, *Ogadinma*, the writer presents the negative aspect of the belief in the supernatural. The reader is faced with the negative aspect of belief in the supernatural when Tobe meets his financial ruin due to his own stubbornness and mistakes. Rather than sitting him down to point out his mistakes (and these mistakes are scattered all over the plot) which has caused his downfall, his sister, Auntie Ngozi, decides that they should seek spiritual guidance. And they end up seeking spiritual guidance from a charlatan and a sexual predator, Onye Ekpere, of the 'Breakout Miracle Ministry International.' Onye Ekpere accuses Ogadinma, Tobe's young wife, of being the reason for her husband's financial downfall. When Ogadinma greets Onye Ekpere, he does not respond but begins his accusations: "I am talking to this other man standing by your right side. He said he is your husband and I ask you to confirm: is this man your husband?" (pp. 185-186) The writer explains that when Onye Ekpere makes this accusation, he takes Ogadinma by surprise because according to the writer Ogadinma had: "been so engrossed with the state of the church, with observing Onye Ekpere, that she pushed her initial worry about preachers away from her mind." (p. 186) This discomfort Ogadinma initially had is based on disdain for religion and this disdain has been passed on to her by her father who has no use for religion. As a result of this disdain for religion, a disbelief or disregard of the supernatural occurs. This is equally as a result of the fact that most people fail to understand that there is a vast difference between religion and the supernatural. Religion is a laid down process on how to approach the belief in the supernatural. However, like Mbiti (1991) posits, the supernatural can easily be decoupled from religious practices or beliefs. This is why one can believe in the existence of the supernatural but might not be religious. Therefore, this disdain for religion comes as a result of the fact that unscrupulous individuals like Onye Ekpere employ the dogmatic nature of religion to instill in their followers the belief of the supernatural. In fact, what happens in *Ogadinma* is nothing new. In *The Concubine*, Ihuoma is said to have a spiritual husband, the Sea-King. But unlike Ogadinma who is humiliated and raped by the priest who is supposed to save her, Ihuoma remains safe and away from ridicule. And this is because

the elements of the supernatural is not being manipulated by unscrupulous religious figure heads. In this instance, the novel, *Ogadinma*, presents the belief in the supernatural in a negative light because negative religious practices find ways into the plot.

Conclusion

So far, this study has demonstrated that the supernatural remains a topic of interest in modern African literature. And this is as a result of the fact that elements of the supernatural and practices that acknowledge the supernatural are intertwined in the daily lives of some African communities. And as such, the onus to tell the African story (and in this instance the place of the supernatural in daily African lives) lies on the African writer; and as Ben-Daniels et al. (2020) put it, the African writer has, among his/her duties, the duty of the historian. As the writer tells the story, the history of the community is intentionally or unintentionally intertwined. Ben-Daniels & Co. (2020) Some African cultures, as given in earlier examples have enshrined in their history certain elements of the supernatural. This supernatural belief has travelled as part of their history and culture through time, and as such, ought to be represented when stories are told. Therefore, and as a matter of fact, the belief in the existence of the supernatural does not make any particular group of people less intelligent as compared to another group of people. However, this belief simply shows the diversity of culture with regard to societal ideologies and science. It is therefore imperative that mainstream African literature academics pay attention to the subject matter of the supernatural just as it is done for issues on race, gender, environment, etc. After all, to understand any group of people, one must approach them with the intent of learning about them from a wholistic point of view. Hence, African literature cannot be interrogated wholistically if the subject matter of the supernatural is ignored.

Funding: this research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest: the author declares no conflict of interest.

Disclaimer Statement: this work is a new research area that the author is exploring and is not part of an already existing research.

Author bionote

Faith teaches African and World Literature at the Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development. Her research interests are in the African traditional art of storytelling, representations of masculinities in African and world literature as well as emerging movements in African theatre.

References

- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things fall apart*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- Amadi, E. (1966). *The concubine*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- Ben-Daniels, F., (2014). *A quarter past midnight*. Kumasi: Flozzies Publications.
- Ben-Daniels, F., Essuman, J., & Ohene Adu, B. K. (2020). Defining the African writer's duty-Efo Kodjo Mawugbe's Grave Yard people. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, (10)7. <https://doi.org/10.7176/RHSS/10-10-04>
- Eastwell, P. (2011). Supernatural explanations: science or not? *The Science Education Review*, 10(1)
- Farias, M., van Mulukom, V., Kahane, G. et al. (2017). Supernatural Belief Is Not Modulated by Intuitive Thinking Style or Cognitive Inhibition. *Sci Rep*, 7, 15100. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-017-14090-9>
- Makumbi, J. N. (2018). *Kintu*. Lagos: Oneworld Publications.
- Mbiti, J. S. (1991). *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd ed. Long Grove: Waveland Press.
- Olisakwe, U. (2020). *Ogadinma*. Lagos: Masobe Books and Logistics Ltd.
- Eastwell, P. (2011). Supernatural Explanations: Science or not? *Science Education review*, 10(1), 17-26.
- Knoetze, J. J. (2019). African spiritual phenomena and the probable influence on African families. *In die Skriflig*, 53(4), 1-8. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v53i4.2505>
- Petrus, T, S. (2006). Anthropology, Phenomenology and the Limitations of Scientific rationalism in the study of the supernatural. *The indo-pacific journal of phenomenology*, 6(1).
- Yalley, A. (1984). *Possessed*. London: Macmillan Education.