



Caught in The Interface: An Ecofeminist Analysis of Eveline Mankou's *L'instinct De Survie (The Will to Survive)*

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ABSTRACT

This paper does an analysis of L'instinct de Survie (2012), by Eveline Mankou, focusing on Africans who are caught in the interface of the traditional represented by animism and civilization. The struggle to retain the traditional and the desire to completely embrace development and all its benefits in the African society has resulted in the degradation of the natural environment which is now at the peak due to the activities of capitalist businesses in the continent. The traditional conversely is weighty on the people. Despite positive sides, some aspects of culture still being practiced today have grievous consequences on selected members of the society, like the killing, burning of certain animals, and albino children and their mothers due to the animist belief amongst others, that evil spirits inhabit them, these actions are contributory to human and environmental degradation. Ecofeminism a term coined by Françoise D'Eaubonne states that there is a correlation between the domination of women and the exploitation and degradation of the natural environment by patriarchal forces. It is used to examine how the protagonist's survival instincts and determination help her navigate her way. Findings reveal that though Africa in this 21st century has embraced globalization, it is still deeply entrenched in animism which forms a large part of the cultural beliefs and practices and women and children and certain animals are the victims. The paper concludes with the submission that the reality of the situation must be admitted and a reappraisal of what should remain their in traditional beliefs addressed.

Keywords: Animist Practices, Albinism, Ecofeminism, Environmental Degradation, Capitalism.

INTRODUCTION

This paper does an ecofeminist reading of Evelyn Mankou's *the will to survive*, focusing on the issues that impact on women, children and the environment. Ecofeminism is a concept in literary studies that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. The term ecofeminism was first used by Françoise d'Eaubonne in her book titled: *Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (1974). Ecofeminism focuses on issues affecting the environment, and the woman. It is believed to be the third wave of feminism by theorists like Ynestra King, Alice Walker, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Vandana Shiva, Susan Griffin are among ecofeminist writers. Ecofeminism believes that all forms of oppression are interconnected; therefore the oppression of the natural world, by extension the environment, and the oppression of the woman by patriarchal structures, cultures, traditions, religious practices cannot be addressed in isolation without the other,

because they both experience oppression and domination by patriarchal forces in all their varying forms. Greta Gaard in *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (1993:1) asserts that: “ecofeminism calls for an end to all oppressions, arguing that no attempt to liberate women (or any oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature”.

Ojiebun (2019) did feminist reading of Evelyn Mankou’s *the will to survive* spotting the issues of rape and widowhood. However, the ecofeminist representations in the novel was not addressed. Against this backdrop therefore, this papers studies how this ecofeminist concept is portrayed in the Ivoirian society used in the setting in the novel, through the tropes of animist practices male supremacy, oppression and capitalist activities and their impact on women, children and the members of the natural environment, which represent the doubly oppressed group in the society.

Rape, Pregnancy and Isolation

L’instinct de Survie (2012), by Eveline Mankou, narrates the story of Maddy, a young girl who was raped at the age of 13 by her maternal cousin, as a result of the rape, she becomes pregnant.. It is Maddy who tells us about the cultural dos and do nots, of her society. She reveals that the culture favours men more than women:

“le poids de la tradition force en général la femme à s’abaisser devant les hommes. C’est ainsi que les femmes sont éduquées.p.36 the demands of tradition generally forced women to be subordinated to men. This is how women are educated” (My translation).

In terms of marriage, cousins are allowed to marry each other so long as the relationship is on the paternal lineage, however, it is considered a taboo for cousins related maternally to marry or be sexually involved. Nonetheless, being a society that favours men. They close their eyes to such incest whenever it occurs and the female alone bears the cultural punishment, such is the case of Maddy who at age thirteen is raped and impregnated by her maternal cousin Niama who is in his thirties.

After the rape, Niama, makes some incantations evoking the gods of the land, forces Maddy to take an oath of silence, that she would never reveal his identity, adding that any day she decides to reveal the identity of her violator she would die, p. 42. In her innocence, she takes the oath of silence under duress and fear of death and of the gods striking her dead, and she is made to face the punishment alone. Niama being a lot older and more experienced than Maddy exploits her innocence and inexperience to cajole her into taking the oath of silence with him. This reveals how many rapists and pedophiles exploit the innocence of their victims with various kinds of threats, including death, in order to force them into silence and get away with their crime.

Another kind of female oppression recorded in the narration, is that of fathers sexually abusing their daughters. It has become a developing occurrence in African societies of fathers having sexual knowledge of their daughters, and these fathers do not see it as a taboo anymore like it use to be. Rather, they justify their actions of incest with modern thought. The case of Ta Samba, a male character who had incest with his own daughter:

Chacun se souvenait de Ta Samba qui avait justifié un inceste sur sa propre fille par une maxime: «Quand on plante un bon safoutier, il faut en goûter les fruits p.56.

Everyone remembered Ta Samba who justified incest with his own daughter by a maxim: when one plants a fine African plum, it is necessary to taste its fruits. (My translaton)

In the community a young girl is not supposed to be pregnant before marriage, if they do, they are and their family members are stigmatized and the girl subjected to isolation. This accounts for why many ladies who have been raped are forced to keep silent over their situation for fear of either the violator's reprisal attack or being stigmatized in the society. Maddy internalises her pain, she never speaks about it she only expresses them through her thoughts. Through her thoughts, she expresses her pain as she lay on the ground where she was raped, she notes part of the ugly and smelling semen of her cousin that had dried on her laps, her inner self had been wounded, not only that, stinging insects had successfully found their way into her vagina and stung her painfully, p.43. Here, we see nature in part as a source of pain to the girl.

Maddy is banished from the community and isolated in a hut far away from the village as punishment for her behaviour and as a deterrent to other girls:

Les dignitaires décidèrent de m'isoler dans une case, non seulement pour me punir d'avoir transgressé les lois, mais aussi pour éviter une mauvaise influence sur autres filles. Je vivais ma grossesse dans une solitude complete. Ma baraque était loin, très loin des autres. L'esprit de honte s'installa à jamais dans ma famille , p.55-56

the dignitaries decided to isolate me in a hut, not only to punish me for having transgressed the law, but to also to prevent a bad influence on other girls in the village. I carried my pregnancy in complete isolation. My hut was far, very far from others. The spirit of shame rested on my family forever. (My translation)

But the man responsible for her condition is not penalized, and the reason is because, he had already threatened her with death. Maddy, still afraid of the effect the oath she took with Niama might have on her refuses to disclose the identity of the rapist behind her pregnancy. This illustrates how many females have allowed their violators to go scot free of their heinous crimes because the victims refuse to expose. So, it is evident that the use of threat for victims works effectively in most cases for sexual violators, or rapists or pedophile to evade punishment. Maddy does not only she loose the privilege to have a proper marriage, her reputation and that of her family is tarnished.

Women/Nature Relationship

After giving birth in the middle of the night all by herself, Maddy makes natural disinfectant with herbs to clean up and treat herself:

Elle désinfecta sa larme avec du citron vert et du tioko- une decoction de feuilles tenders d'arbustes et de racines, don't je connaissais les vertus, savoir hérité de ma grand-mère-que j'avais laissé en évidence. J'avais préparé ce médicament afin de parer à toute éventualité. p. 63.

She disinfected her lancet with green citrus and tioko – a concoction made with tender shrubs and roots, which, I knew their medical value, a knowledge I got from my grand-mother, that I had left in the open. I had prepared the concoction in case of any eventuality. (My translation).

Here we see nature serving as a source of life and healing to Maddy.

ALBINO BABY

Maddy discovers that her baby is an albino. Having an albino child is an abomination and a bad omen in her community:

Dans son village, un albinos était considéré comme un être surnature surtout, un être maléfique. Comme leurs aieuls, les Mavoulois avaient la terreur des albinos.p.22.

In her village, an albino was considered to be supernatural being. Especially, an evil being. Like their ancestors, the mavoulois had a fear of albinos (my translation).

Also, the body parts of an albino child is considered as a very potent ingredient in charms and amulets for riches or spiritual powers, therefore albinos children's lives are at high risks within the community, as it is also stated in the novel's introduction page. This leads to the fact that Africa is still very much entrenched in animist practices and these practices endanger lives both human and nonhuman.

On the 4th of March 2019, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), announced that

“65 witchdoctors were arrested in Tanzania over the killing of children. It says that: there is a particular belief that the body parts of people with albinism are especially potent in rituals”.

Also the Los Angeles Times of June 15, 2017 equally reporting from Johannesburg in South African affirms that:

“Slayings of people with albinism are common in Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique, where their body parts are used in witchcraft rituals because of superstitions that they can bring riches, success, power or sexual conquest. Children are especially vulnerable”.

The narrator notes too that:

un jeune albino de 12 ans a été tué jeudi dans la localité Kiganda dans le centre du Burundi. Les autorités soupçonnent les personnes versées dans des pratiques de sorcellerie d'être à la base de ce crime. Le bilan est à présent 14 albinos tués au Burundi depuis 2008. En Tanzanie voisine, 53 albinos ont été tués depuis 2007. Source: Reuters. Les articles du genre foisonnent dans la presse, p.11.

a young albino 12 years old was killed on Thursday in the Kiganda locality in the center of Burundi. The authorities said they suspected people who practice sorcery to be behind this crime. The number had increased to 14 albinos killed since 2007. In Tanzania, the neighboring country, 53 albinos have been killed since 2007. Source; Reuters. This kind of news filled the press

Olaoluwa (2015) asserts that beyond animist intimidation, some African practices termed as being animist by the West are actually African environmentalism which aid in environmental preservation using Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as case study. This study agrees to some extent; however, the focus is that there are still several animist practices across African societies that impact negatively on humans, women, children and the members of the natural environment are the most affected. The killing and burning of albinos as an animist belief and practice on the ground that they are evil, witches and spell bad omen have negative impact on these people as their lives and existence are threatened.. The act of burning albinos impacts on the environment negatively. The smoke from burning them causes pollution which is not good for the environment as the air is polluted and people inhaling this air unconsciously can result in adverse effect on their health.

Another issue is the belief that albinos are endowed with supernatural powers. This belief makes their lives to be more at risks. They have become endangered species to people seeking to make quick money or possess spiritual powers. Herbalists or native doctors request their clients to bring the blood or the body parts of these albinos to make charms for wealth, power or protection for them.

The lives of animals are also threatened, as some specific animal blood or parts are needed to mix with the blood of albinos to prepare these charms. This leads to the incessant killing of those animal species. A situation if not checked, with time, can lead to their extinction. The narrator notes that.

Knowing the threat of life and imminent death of her baby, Maddy decides to beat tradition and the gods and save the life of her baby. She decides to run away before the community is aware of the birth of her albino baby and kills it and be banished. Coating her albino baby with charcoal, She escapes to the city of Vuela.. Ecofeminism as stated already is against all forms of oppression including that of nondominant group like the albino people as is the case here.

Othering

The superstitious beliefs about albinos do not only exist, albinos are also othered in the society. Apart from the fact that it is believed that they possess supernatural powers, they are also placed on the level of the 'other' and animalized in their society. The reference to an albino person as 'a pig' animalizes them and places them on a lower social rank than their other fellow humans. They are placed on the same level with the animal, with a disdainful tag 'pig'. The colour of their skin makes them qualified to be compared to that of 'a pig', an adjective that resonates with derogation. The narrator speaking about Buesso, one of the male characters in the novel, notes how he was socially qualified by his own family member:

Il aurait été un homme ordinaire si ce n'était pas son caractère de cochon, << Cochon >> est le mot adéquat pour le decrier. Comme le cochon, sa peau était Claire, estrangement Claire et fragile. ses cheveux platine et ses yeux rouges donnaient un air extraordinaire à son faciès négroïde. P. 15-16.

He would have been an ordinary man if not for his looks like that of a pig. <<Pig>> that is the adequate word to describe him. Like a pig, his skin was white, strangely white and fragile. His hair and red eyes gave an extraordinary air to his appearance. (My translation)

The qualification of albinos as 'pigs' or 'geckos', no doubt has negative effect on them psychologically, as we can see in the case of Buesso who resulted to heavy smoking and suffered from bulimia p.16. Equally, they are also qualified as geckos, and it is believed that they do not live long; they disappear, p.65. Apart from their lives being threatened by death or harm by others, they also face isolation because majority of people do not want to associate with them.

Environmental Degradation

Maddy is happy to have successfully escaped to the city with her child, but she is very surprised at the level of environmental degradation in the city. She notes the polluted waters, drainages that are filled with stagnant greenish and smelling water; which have become brooding spots for mosquitoes which are ravaging the populace with malaria.

Des caniveaux étaient creusés de part et d'autre du trottoir dans le but de drainer l'eau use. Mais ces tranches n'étaient reliées à aucun cours d'eau pour faciliter leur évacuation. Alors, prise au piège, cette eau stagnait et prenait avec le chaleur cuisante, une teinte verdâtre. Une odeur de

moisissure se dégageait et polluait l'environnement. Pour les moustiques, c'était le milieu proper pour proliférer. La malaria faisait des ravages, elle était la première cause de la mortalité dans ce pays p. 95.

Gutters were constructed along the roads with the aim of draining waste water. But these gutters were not connected to any outlet to facilitate their evacuation. Hence, trapped, this stagnant water affected by the extreme heat becomes greenish. An odor of mould emitted from it and polluted the environment. For the mosquitoes, it was a very good place for breeding. Malaria was ravaging, it was the first cause of mortality in this country. (My translation)

Maddy also notes the role of the government agent in contributing to environmental pollution and degradation of the environment in different ways. One of such ways is corrupt officials accepting bribes from foreign companies to come dump their industrial waste products on the soil and shores of African countries.

L'Afrique était devenue, une gigantesque décharge. Débris d'ordinateurs sur lesquels on pouvait encore distinguer d'origine traînaient dans les immondices, détruits quedes malheureux essayaient de trier pour les recycler. Parfois, il y avait dans ces poubelles des métaux dangereux pour la santé. Un jour un fonctionnel véreux accepta à titre personnel beaucoup d'argent pour qu'un bateau venu d'Europe décharge des fûts toxiques dans le port d'Abidjan. Ensuite, le contenu de ces tonneaux fut déversé dans un quartier périphérique. Peu de temps après les riverains commencèrent à tomber malades, du nombreux cas de cécité furent décelés. Néanmoins, les victimes de cet acte odieux ne furent jamais indemnisées. p.94.

Besides, Africa had become a gigantic unloading location. The debris of computers on which one could still see the made in followed by the name of the country of origin filled the heap of debris that scavengers scavenged for to recycle. Sometimes, there were in these waste bins metals that are dangerous to the health. One day, a corrupt government officer accepted for his personal pocket a huge amount of money for a ship from Europe to discharge its toxic waste in the port of Abidjan. Afterwards, the contents of these barrels were disposed off in quarters in the outskirts. Soon, the people at the riverine areas began to fall sick; a lot of cases of blindness were recorded. However, these victims of this heinous act were never indemnified. (My translation)

The act of inconsideration for the good of others including the environment shows how government officials contribute to the pollution and degradation of the environment.

Another issue is that of war.

Government engagement in many years of warfare leave the members of the natural environment degraded or destroyed that narrator mentions the effect of war on the city of Mavoula when Maddy arrived there:

Mavoula était une ville impitoyable. Elle ressemblait à une jungle dans cette ville où le désordre dû à la mauvaise gouvernance et aux années de guerre civile régnait en maître. Le chaos se mêlait à l'opulence des riches hommes

politiques. La ville ne possédait qu'une seule route. La ville manquait de dispensaires.p.97.

Mavoula was a pitiable city. It looked like a jungle. In this city where disorder as a result of bad governance and years of civil war has been the order of the day, chaos mixed with opulence of the politically rich people. The city had only one road and did not have dispensary.

The embezzling of public funds contributes to environmental degradation.

Female, Children and environmental Oppression

Ecofeminism frowns at female oppression in any form. It advocates partnership relation where all partners are treated with respect. In the novel, it is noted that some of the female characters oppression in different forms; from their spouses, relatives and members of their communities. Sita is oppressed by her husband Buesso, who beats her, lynches her but also gives her gifts:

Il la lynchait, à ses yeux, au même titre que les meubles du salon, elle faisait partie du décor il l'avait sortie de l'extrême indigence dans laquelle elle patuageait. Ma mère aussi muette qu'un tombeau, oui, ma mère n'existait pas. p.21,26

He used to lynch her. In his eyes, she had the same status as the furniture in the house, hence, she was one of them to him. I have heard them several times quarrelling. (our translation).

Within family relationship, Maddy also experienced oppression as she is raped by her cousin Niama (paternal). The rapist threatens to kill her if she ever mentioned his name as her violator. He even forced her into taking an oath of silence. That whatever day she revealed the secret, she would die. She recounts her rape experience:

Soudain, le sentais une presence derrière moi et me retournai. Jen'eus pas le temps de voir mon agresseur. que déjà celui-ci comme une masse se jeta sur moi mon agresseur m'aracha mon corsage. Je débatis tant que je pus À present, J'étais toute nue J'implorai Niama de toutes mes forces et priaït avec toute ma foi pour qu'll me laissait, mais mes l'oreille d un sourd et ne purent arrêter. Mon cousin. Niama continua d'opérer, n'obéissant plus à aucun raisonnement humain. J'endurai d'abord une douleur physique qui s'intensifia l'orsqu il mé pénétra détruisant ainsi mon hymen. Le sol aride absorbait le filet de sang qui s'échappait d'entre mes lambes gail ées p.36,37,38,39

Suddenly, I sensed a presence behind me and turned back I didn't have the time to see the face of my aggressor before this person jumped on me. I begged Niama with all my strength and with all my faith that he would leave me, but my supplications fell on someone whose ears were deaf and could not stop. My cousin continued to operate, not obeying or listening anymore to any form of human reasoning. I endured first of all a sharp physical pain that intensified when he penetrated me thus destroying my hymen. The arid soil soaked the blood that flowed from between my legs.

Because of the threat from her violator, she could not mention the incident to anybody. As she notes that:

Après avoir prononcé quelques formules ancestrales, Niama exigea que je prête serment de ne répéter à personne le qu'il venait de me faire. En clair, je devais taire mon viol. Je rapportai l'eau au village sans soufflé un mot à mère du cauchemar je venait de vivre. p.42-43

After he made some ancestral incantations, Niama forced me to take an oath never to mention what he did to me to anyone. In fact, I was to keep my rape silent. I returned to the village with the water without mentioning a word to my mother about the nightmare that I had just experienced. (my translation).

The use of threat and force is part of the masculine instrument employed to oppress the female as seen in the case of Niama and Maddy.

The rape not only gives Sita physical pain and injuries, it also gave her internal injuries, which can be termed as emotional and psychological injuries:

Je saignais comme un soldat dont la tempe était perforée par une balle. Sauf que, dans mon cas, il me fallait aussi supporter l'humiliation d'être encore en vie après avoir été symboliquement tuée par le biais d'un viol. La douleur psychologique fut encore plus intense que la blessure charnelle. p.39

I sighed like a soldier whose temple was hit by a bullet. Only that in my case, it was required of me to bear the humiliation of me still being alive after having been symbolically killed through rape. The psychological pain was more intense than the physical injury (my translation).

The members of the natural environment also experience oppression and rape. The blood that flowed out from Maddy's broken hymen flowed on the soil by the stream side where she was raped. The soaking of this blood of the destruction of the innocence of a young girl makes the soil and termites or insects to be partaker in the oppression meted out by Niama:

"Le sol aride absorba le filet de sang qui s'échappait d'entre mes jambes gâchées". "The insects also perched on her legs to lick the blood there as she laid on the ground".

Killing of animals out of sheer superstition that they bear bad omen contributes to their exploitation and degradation. The narrator notes how Mbala a male character in the novel goes about killing animals with the excuse that they are evil animals:

Mbala avait discrètement tué la chatte de la Voisine Ma Nkengué. Il avait dépecé l'animal domestique sous prétexte que la bête miaulait juste avant qu'un habitant du village ne décède. Le marabout avait décrété que l'animal était l'auxiliaire du diable, qui appelait la mort et qu'il était l'incarnation d'une sorcière p.38

Mbala had discreetly killed his neighbour Mrs Nkengué's cat. He had dismembered the domestic animal under the pretense that the animal always miauled just before someone died in the village. The native doctor had there declared that the animal was the devil's assistant and the incarnation of a witch. (my translation).

This belief system put the lives of these animals at risk of death. Ecofeminism asserts that the way women are oppressed and dominated that is how the environment is also oppressed. Hence, there exists a connection between them because their oppressions or exploitations are associated with patriarchal, cultural and traditional ethos and capitalist activities.

Ma Nkengué not only loses her beloved cat to the brutal act of Mbala, we learn that she is also suspected of witchcraft by members of the village:

On accusait aussi parfois Ma Nkengué de rentrer mystiquement dans sa chatte afin de régler leur compte à tous ceux qui entravait ses projets. Ma Nkengué aimait sa chatte; elle fut totalement désorientée après son assassinat p.38

Sometimes, Ma Nkengué was accused of entering into the cat mystically to carry out vengeance against those who offended her. Ma Nkengué loved her cat; she was totally devastated. (My translation).

The animist belief in society puts some categories of children and women in the position of suspects. The children that lose their mothers during their birth are perceived as being responsible for the death of their mothers. Hence, they are seen as evil children and are therefore isolated from social interactions. As is the case of Dékoule, a motherless abandoned by his family because his mother died during his birth:

Les villageois accusaient ce marmot de qans, don't la mère était décédé à sa naissance d'être né sorcier et d'avoir ensorcelé sa mère. Personne ne voulait s'en occuper. Pas meme sa grandmère maternelle qui était censée l'adopter. Elle avait peur d'être envoûtée par le mauvais esprit qui l'habitait. p.49.

The villages accused this young boy of 9 years whose mother died during his birth, of being a wizard and had bewitched his mother. Nobody wanted to take care of him. Not even his maternal grandmother who should adopt him. She had fears of being attacked by the evil spirit that inhabited him. (My translation).

For this reason, the innocent child is left to his fate, growing up in the community as an indigent, with every one avoiding him and women praying not to have a child like that:

Les femmes du village l'évitaient. (elles qui croissaient son chemin feignaient de l'écouter, puis elles s'empresaient de prier le ciel pour ne pas mettre au monde un enfant comme lui. Aucune ne voulait lui torsader.

The village women avoided him. Those who crossed paths with him pretended to listen to him but immediately they begin to pray to the heavens not to give birth to a child like him. (My translation).

The consequence of this social neglect and exclusion make these children to grow up with physical deformities, malnourished and dirty. Just like the narrator notes about Dékoulé the orphan:

Dékoulé l'orphélin passait pour un marginal. Toujours pieds nus, il avait une démarche de canard à cause d'une déformation des pieds. Il arborait depuis des lustres le même débardeur inadapté à son gabarit et qui mettait en exergue son gros ventre bien tendu. Dans le ventre grouillaient certainement une multitude de parasites. p.50.

Dékoulé the orphan passed for a marginal. Always barefooted, he walked like a duck because of a deformity in his feet. He wore the same misfit cloths for such a long time; cloth that exposed his big stomach. In this stomach certainly, there were parasites. (there were certainly parasites in this stomach (My translation).

This narration reveals the state of these indigent children in many African societies. They clearly lack care, love, affection or acceptance due to no fault of theirs.

Also included in the list of those excluded socially are women who could not give birth to their own children. Because of their inability to give birth, they are termed to be witches. This is the case with Ma Dzoungou:

Malgré la légen daire solidarité au village, quelques personnes étaient exclus de la vie communautaire et cela souvent pour des raisons de sorcellerie. Comme le jeune Dékoule, Ma Dzoungou fut elle aussi réjeté du clan. Cette veuve avait été répudiée du foyer conjugal avant même la mort de son mari par les parents de ce dernier, car elle n'avait réussi à donner un enfant à son époux. Dans ses vieux jours, elle vivait dans une extrême solitude. Elle habitait dans une hutte dont le bâtisseur n'avait pas prévu de bouches d'aération. Alors, quand elle allumait jour après jour son habitat, elle suffoquait. La fumée qui trouvait difficilement une issue pour s'échapper vers l'extérieur avait au fil des années donné à ses yeux déjà bouillonnés par le temps une teinte rougeâtre qui la faisait passer pour une sorcière. Un jour, elle fut même lynchée alors qu'une jeune femme venait de perdre son bébé en couches, car le marabout l'avait désignée comme coupable. Elle avait été immédiatement lapidée, et jetée à l'écart de la société. p.50-51.

In spite of the legendary solidarity in the village, some persons were excluded from this communal life, and it is often for reasons of witchcraft. Like Dékoulé, Ma Dzoungou was also rejected by the clan. This widow had been sent out of her husband's house by her parents-in-law even before her husband died; because she could not give birth to child for her husband. In her old age, she lived in extreme loneliness. She lived in a hut that the builder did not fashion aeration in its construction. Hence, when she cooked in her hut, the smoke found it difficult to escape outside. So it was trapped in the hut and it made her eyes reddish over the years, which made her to be called a witch. One day she was lynched just after a woman lost her baby at birth, because the herbalist had declared Ma Dzoungou as being responsible for it. She had been immediately gagged and stoned to death and thrown outside the society. (My translation).

The narration reveals forms of oppression of women and children which is mainly spearheaded by masculine forces represented in the novel by the marabouts' the witch doctors who call the shots in the society. Operating under the guise of animist beliefs has condemned many to suffering and oppression.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that though African societies have embraced modernism, it is still deeply entrenched in animist practices which is claiming lives by the day especially that of albinos, animals, women and children, as seen from the text studied. These animist practices also constitute a form of oppression of these various members of the environment including the human and the non-human; this is part of what ecofeminism preaches against.

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