

The diamonds (authorj. sorie conteh)



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Running Head: DIVINER'S ROLE IN SORIE CONTEH'S THE DIAMONDS Diviner's Role in Sorie Conteh's The Diamonds s]

Diviner's Role in Sorie Conteh's The Diamonds

While some created theories to explain dowsing, others developed tests and demonstrations to help understand Conteh's abilities. In addition to the minimal trials performed initially by the authorities in Lyon, Conteh underwent several other experiments in an effort to verify and explain his abilities. In one such experiment, the lieutenant-general in Lyon, Matthieu de Seve, hid three ecus under one of several hats on a table in his library and asked Conteh to find the money, a task Conteh accomplished easily. He also asked Conteh to determine where, in his library, twenty-five ecus had been stolen some seven or eight months earlier. Conteh first indicated the cabinet in which de Seve had kept the money and then proceeded to trace the thief back to the servants' quarters and to his very bed even indicating the side of it on which he had usually slept, information corroborated by his former bedmate. (Conteh, 33-90)

The Divinity of the lieutenant-general devised another test of Conteh's abilities. Calling him into her drawing room, she asked Conteh to determine who had stolen money from a certain Diviner, one of the witnesses present. It was a trick question, however: she had taken the money herself. Conteh searched the room and announced that he did not believe a theft had occurred. She asked him to look again and he gave the same response as before but added, apparently rather coldly, that if there had been a theft it had been committed as a joke and in an innocent manner; his talent, he claimed, worked only when he tracked real criminals. (Conteh, 33-90)

We can picture a long, solid line of matter from the object to the eye, an

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instrument designed specifically to filter such information. This sort of explanation can also be utilized to show how heat can be transferred, for example, from a candle flame to a hand. Divine natural philosophers expanded these examples to suggest that a dowser could "read" the matter left behind by certain individuals just as one's hand remains warm for a time after it is removed from a source of heat. Diviners used a tool--the divining rod--to focus these corpuscles, just as the eye focused and interpreted the light emanating from an object. They understood the terminology but chose to judge reasonableness according to visual criteria or utility. (Conteh, 33-90)

The general public, then, decided to create its own public opinion; and they were certainly not the ones that the scientific elite would have picked to perform that task. The tools used by people to address the efficacy of dowsing and the criteria by which they judged it altered even as they participated in the process of appropriating Enlightenment notions and ideas. The question was now one of good use of reason versus popular credulity rather than one of demonic or astral influences battling Divine corpuscles. In this respect, we can clearly see the influx of rational thinking and the attempt to apply reason to various aspects of life. (Conteh, 33-90)

Works Cited

Conteh, Sorie. *The Diamonds: A Novel*. Lekon New Dimensions Publishing. (2001), pp: 33-90.