

African writers of French expression seem to be caught in a double bind. They desire to write in ways that are analogous to the oral narratives of their forebears. Yet they cannot write the way their ancestors recounted oral narratives; for one thing, orality has metamorphosed into literacy in contemporary African literature. In *Soundjata: ou l'épopée mandingue*, for instance, Djibril Tamsir Niane endeavors to capture in written form the creative genius of Mamadou Kouyate, the village griot who is credited with narrating the Mande folktale. Above all, Niane purposefully appropriates elements from Mande oral tradition, and employs them as literary manure for fertilizing his verbal artistry. In sum, Niane succeeds in reshaping a well-known African oral tale into something new; something traditionally Western—the novelistic genre. His text bears testimony to fact that African writers constantly make giant strides toward intertextual palimpsests as a new mode of fictional writing. Like his Ivorian counterpart, Ahmadou Kourouma, Niane succeeds in writing a text that could be perceived as a pastiche of an oral text. This sort of fictional writing lends itself to possible flak as it calls into question Western dogmas and canonical stipulations on fictional writing handed down to the ex-colonized by ex-colonizers. *Audible Palimpsests in the Francophone African Novel* is our attempt to show the extent to which Francophone fictional writers intentionally merge texts and subtexts to engender something new and exhilarating much to the chagrin of readers who are unfamiliar with the matrices and cultural substrata from which these texts originate. The analysis in *Audible Palimpsests in the Francophone African Novel* offers enough evidence to support the claim that it is not possible to establish a clear-cut distinction between, on the one hand, the contemporary African novel and traditional art forms, on the other hand. Both genres exist in a continuum. For many African writers, this continuum has meant a return to traditional roots as a crucible for creative imagination. More often than not, the African novelist combines elements drawn from African orature with elements indigenous to Western literary tradition. The end product is a hybrid text that tends to look backward to oral traditions and forward to modern literary canons.

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