

READING GROUP GUIDE

LA BASTARDA by Trifonia Melibea Obono

Translated from the Spanish by Lawrence Schimel

978-1-936932-23-8 pbk • \$15.95 • 112 pages • April 17, 2018



1. The term “bastarda” is an integral part of Okomo’s origin. How does the use of the term, both by the protagonist and by others, change throughout the story? How does this reflect Okomo’s character development?
2. The protagonist’s search for her biological father drives the story, yet by the end, she is happiest amongst those rejected by Fang society. How has your family influenced your growth as a person? Do you believe we are shaped more by the family we are born into or the people with whom we choose to surround ourselves? How do the two intersect?
3. Okomo is treated as insignificant because she is “the daughter of an unmarried Fang woman” (20). What does her experience indicate about the roles Fang women are expected to fulfill? What are examples of ways in which prescribed roles or labels are used to dismiss people in society?
4. Marcelo is referred to as a “man-woman” (10) because he does not conform to the ideals of masculine behavior in Fang society. What does it mean to “be a man” in your society? How do these expectations shape the way children are raised?
5. When the protagonist encounters the merchants, she reevaluates what it means to be of the Fang; her grandfather had brought her up believing in the solidarity of the Fang, regardless of class or language, but being dismissed by the French-speaking Gabon Fang makes her question this worldview. Have you ever been in a similar situation that has made you question your identity or the stories you were told growing up?
6. Throughout the story, the protagonist resists her family’s attempts to make her “beautiful” (9). What is considered “beautiful” in Fang society? What do you consider beautiful? Is it the same as what your society considers beautiful?
7. Okomo struggles with her sexuality, but eventually finds the freedom to express herself in the Fang forest. Is there a place where you’ve felt comfortable expressing something that may elsewhere be treated as taboo? Was it a physical space, or a more abstract place?

8. The text of *La Bastarda* leaves certain words untranslated into English. How does this affect your reading experience? What do you think was the translator's intention in leaving these words in the original language?
9. Through her narration, Okomo reveals facts about Fang community and Equatorial Guinea that seem obvious to her and redundant to even mention, yet may appear novel to us. What are some of these details? Does this make you reconsider the presumed universality of certain aspects of your life?

For review copy requests or to arrange for an interview, contact Jisu Kim at jisu@feministpress.org