



Forest of A Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga

By D.O. Fagunwa

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"His total conviction in multiple existences within our physical world is as much an inspiration to some of the most brilliant fiction in Yoruba writing as it is a deeply felt urge to 'justify the ways of God to man.'"—**Wole Soyinka**, translator and Nobel Laureate

A classic work of African literature, *Forest of a Thousand Daemons* is the first novel to be written in the Yoruba language. First published in Nigeria in 1939, it is one of that country's most revered and widely read works, and its influence on Nigerian literature is profound, most notably in the works of Amos Tutuola.

A triumph of the mythic imagination, the narrative unfolds in a landscape where, true to Yoruba cosmology, human, natural, and supernatural beings are compellingly and wonderfully alive at once: a world of warriors, sages and kings; magical trees and snake people; spirits, Ghommids, and bog-trolls. Here are the adventures of Akara-ogun—son of a brave warrior and wicked witch—as he journeys into the forest, encountering and dealing with all-too-real unforeseen forces, engaging in dynamic spiritual and moral relationships with personifications of his fate, projections of the terrors that haunt man.

Distinguished Nobel Prize–winning author Wole Soyinka offers a supple and elegant translation and provides an essay on the special challenges of translating Fagunwa from the Yoruba into English, along with a glossary of Yoruba and unfamiliar words.

With illustrations by acclaimed Nigerian printmaker Bruce Onobrakpeya.

Daniel Orowole Fagunwa was born in western Nigeria in 1903. He died in a motorcycle accident in 1963.

Praise for *Forest of a Thousand Daemons*:

“A deep tale of the spirit; a classic of the African imagination.”—**Ben Okri**

"Fagunwa is as important to the Nigerian imagination as Grimm's tales to the Western imagination. Except that Fagunwa's book is not a collection of oral tales, but an original modern novel, one that sets out to test the limits of the form of the novel, the range of myth and its overlap into daily life. Soyinka offers us not a simple translation but a complex and truly respectful re-rendering. With this tender touch by Soyinka, Fagunwa's book comes alive - reanimated in this new language. Beautiful, important and endlessly fascinating. A must read."—**Chris Abani**, author of *The Virgin of Flames* and *The Secret History of Las Vegas*

Praise for the contributors:

"The work of Fagunwa stands at the head of creative writing in the Yorùbá language and exerts the most pervasive influence on every category of Yorùbá literary expression. . . . He responded early to the need for a literature in the vernacular, at a moment when a new cultural consciousness began to emerge out of changing social conditions."—**Abiola Irele**, scholar of African literature

"Among the Africans who deserve some kind of secular sainthood is Wole Soyinka."—*The New York Times*

"Mr. Onobrakpeya . . . is one of the best known and most prolific African printmakers."—*The New York Times*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Fagunwa's book was written in 1939 in Nigeria. It is credited as the first novel to be written in the Yoruba language and the only of Fagunwa's books to ever appear in English. Here, Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka presents the English version along with an essay on the Yoruba language and the process of translation. The prose reads like a campfire tale. Akara-ogun, sits with our unnamed narrator who is referred to as "the author" and begins to tell of his life. That life involves a forest full of monsters, a witch-mother who turns into an antelope, and a king who is an ostrich. At each turn, Akara-ogun leaves for the night, only to return and finish the next day. A sort of Yoruba 1001 Nights emerges. This is mythology building for a continent torn apart by colonization, one whose history was upended. This is starting over, foundational writing and as such it is easy to understand how the novel gained its influential reputation. The book opens by asking the reader to "Dance my friends, in harmony, with joy and laughter..." to allow the author to weave his story. Then the reader is asked two things: that we put ourselves in the characters place, and that we take wisdom with us from the story.

Review

"Fagunwa's language has a rolling energy that serves it well."—Rudi Dornemann, *Rain Taxi*

"Readers can only be grateful that Soyinka used his prison time to bring this important Yoruba novel into English."—Geoff Wisner, *The Quarterly Conversation*

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Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Catherine Crider:

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