

Research Africa Reviews Vol. 7 No. 3, December 2023

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Tendai Rinos Mwanaka, ed., *Fixing Earth: Africa, UK and Ireland Writers Anthology, Vol. 2*. Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe: Mwanaka Media and Publishing Pvt Ltd., 2022. ISBN: 978-1-77927-256-0, EISBN: 978-1-77927-255-3.

Reviewed by: Cecelia Lynch, University of California, Irvine.

This short volume of two essays, one short story, and many wonderful poems from 17 writers represents a poignant achievement in “re-mem-bering” (Ngũgĩ 2009) the spiritual and epistemological connections between land, sky, water and human and non-human life forms, and condemning their despoiling by industry, greed, human enslavement and land theft.

The volume’s somewhat eclectic collection of writing styles and writers is the second from the African-UK-Irish and Diaspora writers and poets’ collective. The group previously published volume I, a similarly capacious representation of writing (also including two plays) on the theme of knowledge production and circulation among these three sites, in 2018.

The call for papers for this second volume included the following:

The bottom line is we have to fix the Earth or the Earth will fix us. ... the climate issue needs to be framed from each individual, from the bottom up, from the subalterns, from the real interlocutors of real change, you and me fixing our relationship with Earth. ... We are always open to any type of inspirations and muses whether it’s fictions, stories, poetry, essays, plays, songs, letters, etc. ..., from writers residing in these regions: Africa, the UK, and Ireland, and their diasporas. This is a continuing interaction between writers in these regions... (pp.xii-xiii).

The resulting collection definitely addresses this call. From the opening essay by Andrew Nyongesa, which quotes Mercy Oduyoye to highlight the sacred nature of the Earth, to the last poem by Diane Pacitti, which holds forth the promise of “silent transformations... healing us all with rhythms slower than our human time,” the volume invites us to move into the cosmologies of multiple forms of indigeneity.

More specifically, the authors are united in their cosmological orientations that “extract their religious beliefs from their ecological settings” instead of from “homocentric attributes” (Nyongesa, p.2). Earth, Mother Nature, and her offspring

and creations (the Sea Whale of Maori origin, the Sacred Grove of Gikuyu teaching) view humans as her servant rather than her master (Nyongesa, p.7). Similarly, alienation, estrangement, exile and homecoming – all themes of major African writers, as Sitehembele Isaac Xhegwana points out (p. 33) – come from dispossession and despoiling of land and sea.

The subtitle is somewhat deceptive as the geographic scope both exceeds and does not completely extend from Africa and the UK to Ireland. While I did not find an Irish or Ireland-based writer in this particular volume, the writing itself extends beyond these geographic spaces, as Pacitti writes in her poem, “Cain”:

The land is loud with the indigenous lament
of kin murders, opening wide its mouth
from Newfoundland to Australia to receive
the blood of its first-born, gunned down and herded
to reservations. Old land-wisdom lost
in the spew of quick profit. (p. 115-6)

The volume’s power—clearly present across each and every selection it includes—lies in how its precision and evocation of earth’s beauty, spirituality, and sustenance across the Earth’s expanses of land, water, and sky, are juxtaposed against its harsh depictions of the despoiling and violence enacted against each of these by humans who have betrayed their indigenous knowledge forms and ways of life. It leaves the reader with a deeper understanding of the connections (or the currently trendy term, “relationality”) required for understanding how Earth became wounded and how she can be healed.

Cited reference:

Ngūgī wa Thiong’o. 2009. *Something Torn and New*. Civitas Books.

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ISSN 2575-6990.