

This is not the earth

Inga Ravna Eira • Mathis Nango (ill.)

This is not the earth is a collection of poems with climate-change as its theme. What makes the poems in this collection unique is the author's intimacy with nature, and the powerful emotions that permeate her writing. In these poems, present day human activity and its effect on the natural world are set against the backdrop of the ruling family of Gods of the old Sámi religion – figures who protected the earth, its people and life itself. The poems present the Goddess Uksáhká's desperate plea to the children of the sun – today's inhabitants of the earth, who are no longer listening to her.

Uksáhká is the guardian of the earth in Sámi mythology. The Gods have now sent her to earth to find out what state it is in, and how the creatures of the earth have managed the gift they were once given. Uksáhká sees that there is a lot that has gone wrong. She no longer recognizes her surroundings, has difficulty breathing, gets wet from too much rain and sweats from too much sun and heat.

Battering gales, flooded lands, melting glaciers and snow of a sort that makes transport over it difficult. Animals, birds and fish searching for their habitual spots, and plants and flowers altered in an ever more poisonous atmosphere.

In the poems, Uksáhká turns to the children of the earth – to the children of the sun, to get advice on what to tell the ruling family, – the Gods and the spirits – about the state of the earth. In each stanza, she points to various environmental problems, in one stanza it's air pollution, in another it's water quality, and in yet a third, the condition of the sun, the moon, the stars and the northern lights. Uksáhká then repeats that she doesn't know where it is that she's come.

Inga Ravna Eira, who grew up in a reindeer-herding family in the interior of Finnmark, also shows her concern for the plight of the reindeer, at the same time drawing on Sámi mythology, Sámi and universal weather lore, belief and superstition as well as meteorology. She uses the poetic genre to express her concern for the negligent way we manage the earth, with whose protection and care we were entrusted.

In a poetic and lyrical language, using contrast and alliteration, the author succeeds in transmitting her fear of what might result from the current treatment of the planet.

This book has been nominated for the Nordic Council's prize for literature 2019.



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Inga Ravna Eira was born into a reindeer-herding family in Karasjok, Norway, where she still lives. She writes poetry, short stories, and children's books in northern Sámi. She worked her whole life as a teacher, but is now retired. Her first book was published in 1979, since when she has published dozens of books in various genres.

"This is not a book that could have been written by anyone, anywhere. Rather, it could be written only by someone who was born into Sámi culture more than seventy years ago, who knows and has experience of what the climate and the weather used to be like and how much has changed. The author provides examples, from many decades ago through to the present day, from the perspective of someone who is part of Sámi culture."

Nordic Council