

Anthology covers 10 years of work

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EARTH-CIRCUIT is an anthology of surrealist poetry, crafted into three sections: creation, death and evolution. The author, Iyra EM Maharaj, 30, said the poems spoke to re-imagined ideas of religion, God and gender.

The book will be launched on October 4 at The Book Shoppe in Plumstead, Cape Town.

Maharaj matriculated in 2011 from Sastri College in Durban, and was the recipient of the Francis and Jessica Brett-Young Memorial Prize in 2012.

The prize was for pupils who attained 90% and higher for the English essay in the English Higher Exam.

She went on to study biological sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, majoring in microbiology and genetics.

Maharaj has a doctorate in paleobiology from UCT, which she received in 2022. She teaches life science at a high school in Cape Town.

She is also a writer at Krest Publishers, working on a collaborative fictional novel.

"Many of my poems speak to a range



IYRA EM Maharaj and her book. | Supplied



of experiences, ideas and images that also show our connection to an ancient Earth," said Maharaj.

She said her writings were inspired by poetry she had read in high school.

"When I first encountered WB Yeats' poem *The Second Coming* in high school,

I was completely consumed with the idea that poetry can create such a stark sense of power, beauty, and horror. I was determined to harness those ideas and feelings through writing my own poetry.

"I have built a body of work over about 10 years, through various experiences and unconventional ideas of religion and spirituality as a woman. I then decided it was time to piece these together into an anthology."

Maharaj said the poetry book was for anyone interested in surrealism, dream-life, and the power of women navigating those spaces.

"There is no defined target audience for this collection, as I wrote these poems as a result of ideas and issues I wished to explore. I hope readers are inspired to consider new perspectives on conventional constructs, especially Western society's idea of religion and gender."

Maharaj said her sources of unconventional writing inspiration included musicians and lyricists such as Tori Amos, Joanna Newsom and Bob Dylan.

"I also drew inspiration from the short stories of Dylan Thomas. My most powerful source of inspiration for this collection is the 1996 album *Boys for*

Pele by singer/songwriter Tori Amos. It expressed an incredible idea of energy and spiritual current radiating from a woman navigating patriarchy."

Maharaj said the cover art of her anthology reflected the surrealist, dream-like, witchy power of the pieces themselves.

"The title of the collection is also the name of one of my poems, *Earth-Circuit*. It talks about a biological connection between all life on Earth, and the Earth itself; as well as a surrealist, spiritual circuitry between the ideas of creation, death and evolution."

She said writing poetry was an enlightening experience.

"Fine-tuning the pieces in the editing and revision process, under the guidance of my incredible editor, taught me so much about poetry and the power it holds."

The anthology, which costs R180, was published by Dryad Press, an independent South African publisher.

"It can be purchased online through the Dryad Press bookstore, and delivered to your door. It is also available at bookstores nationwide. You can request them to order it, through the distributors, Protea Distribution."