

# Ben Okri's *Wild* (2012): The Muse of Archaeology

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## ABSTRACT

This article focuses on three related poems inspired by the geology and archaeology of the Rift Valley, using them to develop an argument about Ben Okri's humanism, optimism and symbolist technique. All three poems are connected by an imagined locus in Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania and stimulated by the discoveries of fossils of the earliest hominids. Each is distinguished by focus on a particular type of rock, standing in for periods of human development, and thence with the idea of Africa as the origin of humanity generally. These are meditations on human history and imagination from the earliest appearance in Africa of the predecessors of *Homo sapiens sapiens* to urgent present-day concerns. Okri suggests that through poetry humankind can leap across a postcolonial self/other divide to straddle the polarities of darkness and light. I suggest that his belief is that, through the *Imaginatio Creatrix*, we can re-dream the world and so access our higher nature.

## KEYWORDS

African cosmogony, cultural connections, decolonial turns, *ius dominandi* [urge to control], Ben Okri, ontopoiesis, the poetic muse, *Wild* (2012)