



Inspiration: Treading the Poetic Path

The Online Reading Group for English Language Teachers Worldwide

Editor: Chris Lima

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You will find poetry nowhere unless you bring some of it with you.
Joseph Joubert

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Thanks, above all, to the all our Group members who have been posting to the discussion board and also following the exchanges there with interest.

Chris Lima, Editor

To the reader

He who draws noble delights from sentiments of poetry is a true poet, though he has never written a line in all his life. *George Sand*

Contributors (in alphabetical order)

Chris Lima. Editor

Chris Lima is the coordinator of the ELT Online Reading Group. She was born in Brazil, but is based in the UK. She holds a degree in English Literature from Goldsmiths College, University of London and a Masters of Education from the University College Plymouth of St Mark and St John, where she studied as a Hornby Trust Scholar. She also holds a Masters of Research from the Open University, where she is currently a Doctoral Student and research consultant. She is one of the winners of the 2007 British Council Innovation Awards with the *Critical Literacy in ELT Project* and a 2010 nominee for the British Council/ Macmillan Education Award for Innovative Writing. She is a Committee member and the discussion list moderator of the IATEFL, Literature Media and Cultural Studies Special Interest Group, and a member of the Extensive Reading Foundation executive board. She is also currently an EAP tutor at the English Language Teaching Unit at the University of Leicester. Her areas of interest are English literature and language learning, teacher education and online professional networks.

Francisco Daniel Langa (Tanguene)

Francisco Langa, was born in Maputo, Mozambique, where he is currently studying Auditing and Accounting at ISCAM College. He is passionate about creative reading and writing. He was a co-facilitator and member of the Book Club reading group at British Council, also one of the founders and co-facilitator of the Reader's Corner reading group. He participates in radio reading sessions, enjoys writing poems and stories in English. His poem (At the Bus Stops) was published in the grade 10 English course book 2011, edited by the Plural editors in Mozambique.

Marcos Nhapulo (Mon Ami)

Marcos Nhapulo was born in 1982 in Manjacaze, Gaza province - Mozambique. He is currently living in Maputo, where he is a Psycholinguistics' Assistant at the Linguistics and Literature Department at the University Eduardo Mondlane - UEM since 2006. In 2009 he finished his Master in Applied Linguistics - TESOL at The University of Newcastle, in Australia. So, he is also an English teacher. Now he is a PhD Student at Ghent University, in Belgium, in a Sandwich regime. He is the Reader's Corner Project coordinator in Mozambique and the Youth Council President (2010-2014) at the KaMubukwana District, the biggest district in the capital city, Maputo. He is a community projects' manager and trainer in leadership, project cycle management, social work and projects' monitoring and evaluation. He is also a translator and an interpreter, given that he is almost a polyglot, now that he speaks Portuguese, French, Italian, Spanish, English, Cicopi, Ronga and Changana.

Maria do Céu Pires Costa

Maria do Céu was born in Pinhel, Portugal. She is based in Évora, a World Heritage Town where she has been living for thirty years. She graduated in “Germanic Philology” from the Lisbon Faculty of Letters. Before taking up her teaching career as an EFL teacher, she experienced for one year an activity related to the film industry for the Portuguese corporate “Filmes Lusomundo”. There she practised on writing features about film previews. The teaching career in the field of the English language and literature has been her major occupation for thirty seven years. Now she is retired, but very actively engaged in educational and cultural matters. She collaborates with Portuguese Association of Teachers of English (APPI), enjoys blogging at BBC online platforms being a member of “Global Minds”, and collaborates with the British Council TE Newsletter. She is a member of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) being a member of the Literature, Media and Cultural Studies Special Interest Group (LMCS SIG).

Sanghita Sen

Sanghita Sen lives in Kolkata, India and works in the Department of English, Presidency University (erstwhile Presidency College, Kolkata) as an Associate Professor of English. She acts as the joint coordinator of the ELT Online Reading Group for TESOL students along with Chris Lima. She has done her first Master's in English Literature from University of Burdwan and her second Master's in TESOL from Institute of Education, University of London where she studied as a Centenary Scholar. She has a Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching of English and M. Phil in English Linguistics and Phonetics from English and Foreign Languages University (formerly CIEFL), Hyderabad. She has also done an online certificate course in Testing and Evaluation from Indiana University, Bloomington, USA. She served in the capacity of lecturer and senior lecturer in English in the department of English in different Institutions in West Bengal since 1997. She also acted as the Director, Institute of English, Calcutta from 2004 to 2006. Her research area includes, Culture and Media Studies, Postcolonial Literature & Identity Politics and In-service Teachers' Professional Development. She is also a Resource Person with Oxford University Press, India for ESL Teacher Training. She published 6 books with OUP, India. She's currently working on an action research project supported by the Regional English Language Office, Embassy of the USA, New Delhi for preparation of Resource Pack and training of teachers teaching in low-resource vernacular medium schools in India. She is passionate about poetry and creative writing in Bangla [her first language] and English.

Foreword

...imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name

A Midsummer Night's Dream V.i.14-17

This is one of my favourite quotes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and I have also chosen it to open my Masters of Education dissertation in which I trace some of the philosophical concepts that have influenced the way we perceive Imagination in the West. In my paper I also suggest that Imagination should have a unique place in English language teacher education and professional development. For me, this publication is the embodiment of a theoretical exploration; the living proof that when engaging with creative material human beings are not only able to respond creatively and productively but are, above all, able to start seeing things from novel angles which may bring changes to their lives and the lives of the ones around them.

For the teachers who wrote these poems, this publication may mean just another step in their creative path; but it also may mean something that will influence the roads taken and not taken from now on. The objective of this collection is simply to open new ways for teachers to engage creatively with poetry of their own and others' imaginations.

The poems collected here were originally contributions of the authors to the *ELT Online Reading Group* posted to the online asynchronous discussion forum.

The *ELT Online Reading Group* was created in August 2007 with the technical support of the British Council. It aims at encouraging ELT professionals to read literature in English, helping to build bridges between cultures and contributing to build tolerance and intercultural competence through the discussion on literary works. The group meets online and participants post their comments to a discussion board, sharing their points of view on short stories and poems written in English. It was created having especially in mind those English language professionals who work in special conditions, with little access to libraries and books in English; who count on little support to start a reading group in their workplaces; and/or teachers who work in remote areas or conflict zones where it is difficult to guarantee safety and the right to public gatherings.

Over the past few years the popularity of Reading Groups has dramatically increased in the UK and around the world, becoming places where groups of friends and colleagues cultivate dialogue and discussion along distinct themes. However, the difficult access to reading material faced by some English language teachers and educators working in different countries prompted us to create an online reading group instead of a group meeting in a specific place or time. Our *place* is the British Council/ BBC Teaching English website. To make the reading material widely accessible, the texts are chosen from free online sources. A link to the text of the month is posted to the group discussion board and participants can download it. Texts are chosen based on their accessibility, interest and potential to raise debate on complex and relevant issues.

The *Poets' Corner* is by far the most popular of all forums in our Group. The initial idea was simply to open a thread where members could post their favourite poems and comment on them. Although this is still one of its main uses, the imagination of our members soon put it to other uses than the originally intended one as people started posting their own poems there. It became a space where the poetic voices of the teachers themselves can be heard. As one member put it, 'I have seen that all of the poems shared here are wonderful and they inspire me in several ways to share my own poems with you'. Another one said, 'Thanks for your kind appreciation on my creative writing (poetry). In fact, I've been using the forum as a growth tool which has enabled me tap on my talents.'

I believe this interactive aspect is one of the most interesting to observe in the forum. Some of the poems in this collection were actually spontaneously written as a response to another poem posted by a fellow Group member. Perhaps we can legitimately say that that we have in the forum are instances of poetic dialogue.

Reading is a dialogic process. Reading and discussing poetry and literature in the Group forum is actually an ongoing conversation between the literary texts and the readers, as well between all our readers and writers. The poems here are fruits of this dialogue and are also meant to be the seeds of new conversations.

All these poems are unique in the sense that they express different emotions and ideas. At the same time the pieces coming from each teacher do form a coherent poetic body in the sense that through them we can clearly hear the voice of their writers. As someone acquainted with the other posts written by their authors, I can honestly say, '*This is Maria or Sanghita*' and '*This is Tanguene or Mon Ami*'. My criteria for selecting them, I have to admit though, was completely subjective and, therefore, very personal. I chose the ones that most appealed to me and which I thought displayed a more skilful use of the language as well as a more subtle and open ended treatment of the themes they proposed.

I do hope this publication will motivate our teacher-poets to keep writing and sharing their creations with us and also motivate other teachers around the world to give form and shape to their own imaginations. Moreover, I hope it will serve as an invitation for other teachers who are still looking for someone with whom to discuss literature and the use of literature in ELT to join us at the *ELT Online Reading Group* at <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/group/elt-e-reading-group>

Chris Lima,
Editor / Project Coordinator
Leicester, UK
March 2011

Reference

Shakespeare, W. (1988) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In S. Wells and G. Taylor (eds). *William Shakespeare. The Complete Works*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

The Poems

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Francisco Daniel Langa (Tanguene)

Mozambique

The sunrise

The sun has risen,
there's no much,
the children are playing,
we thank to see it rising
as we live, we live in hope
we'll thank if we see it sets.

We too, we live in hope,
there's no much
They- the children are playing,
thanks we've seen it rising
as we'll thank if we see it sets.

My Childhood

I remember
when in moonlight nights

when another ran in front
another was running behind
trying to step on each other's shadows,

I'm stepping on your shadow!
I'm stepping on your shadow!

We giggled
we crazily laughed,
running towards nowhere

The Unannounced Rain

While sitting in the open,
The night darkening close,
Drop, drop, drop
It started dropping.
And, suddenly
The unannounced rain!

The little boy screaming,
The mother running,
In trying to save him from
The unannounced rain drops!

The little one screaming loud now,
For the little ones fear rain,
We don't know where it comes from
Although, some little ones on TV scream
Fearing something else,
They say it's Sudan or Palestine, we don't know!

While watching,
Mothers about running you see
In trying to save them
From the metal deadly small things
They don't know where they come from
The same is like
The unannounced rain!

The Candlelight

Through the dark night
With its light light
She stands on her foot
The only one foot she was given
Two feet humans were luckily given...

To provide us with light
And help us see through the night
She stands with that foot
The only one foot
On which she stands on to keep her light

Woman out of man's rib came to see such light
Male and female, the bottom and top
The flame on her thread consumes her from top
While you see the wax melting
The candle slowly dies, she dies standing!

Simple words

And strong meanings
from the poet's heart
is the Oasis for the reader
in which simple words
together in a sort of agreement
they dance and sing together
and bring strong meanings
from simple words
Simple like these words.

In the streets

There are those
You hear about,
There those you see,
Those you think about.

Things you talk about,
Things you keep in,
In the depth of that
Which breaths,

Things stored
Like paper boxes
In a storeroom,
Men sleep without sleeping!

talking to a candle

how long have we been
taking care,
your light always shining
on my pillow
and your shadow
always braking and breakin'
my horizon!...

my poor candle,
sometimes is the wind
shaking your light,
sometimes raindrops
blessing the ground,

the time you forget yourself
and live a dream!,
feeling lost in the endless
winds of change,

no matter where you are,
my hands are the
shelter of your light!

with my hands,
I will carry you
around the world
and praise your name like
a crazy man talking
to his candle:

why are you fading away?
why are you getting blind?
why are you becoming a stupid?
why are you going astray?
why don't you stick
to my hands?...

tell me,
why are you always
unsatisfied?!

no fears... no tears...

words and worlds
in the world
of meaningless
words,

one says I love you
and throws a sarcastic look,
you fake you don't see
and you kiss away...

one cries I hate you
in a bright
laughter,
you miss yourself and wish
you were not the same,

one swears I love peace and freedom
and the next day is another... shit!,

one says goodbye
and then follows
your lonely way,

one shares your bed
and the next morning
becomes bad,

one carries commandments
in the right hand
and red wine
in another,

... and now that you
have seen the one!,
don't shed tears
in this endless world
of words...

waiting for an angel

the wind shakes my roof
and the silence grows in my room
like a beast in my hopeless eyes
spread over the open door!

I peep at the window
and see birds flying away... and
back inside nobody breaks the silence
rolling like a stone in my heart;

I fall down on my knees
and crawl to the door
like a lost child looking for a breast
in the empty wild air!

I wait, wait and wait...
and I fall asleep
waiting someday in my dreams
an angel will come and take me in
a long flight to paradise!

our time

time goes by
and I'm late again, you say!
footprints away
you fake you forgot
I love you like
the last sunset and
the morning beats
you danced and broke my bed!

and so, why
humans stick to blindness
fierce smiles and
stupid kindness?...

here we are... spending our time
and dreaming of lands
Kings and Queens
stepping triumphantly
and flying without wings
above the clouds
in children nightmares...

ah ah ah...
there's nothing sweeter than
such a thing called time!,
and now that there's no time,
we know every time
can be the first time!

dumb lover

if you can talk,

you can sing;

if you can walk,

you can dance;

.....

if you can see,

I can foresee!

if you can talk,

I can listen!

if you can listen,

I can hear ancient voices
celebrating the end of carnivals...

the unification

of both sides of History!

if you can be what you are,

I can be what I am!

If you can sleep,

I can hold you!

if you can try,

I can never cry!

if you can write,

I can read!

if you can smile,

I can laugh!

if you can sing,

I can dance!

If you can jump,

I can swim,

If you can swim,

I can dive...

If you can crawl like a crab,

I can walk like a fisherman!

if you can walk,

I can run!

if you can run,

I can fly!

If you can fly,

I can fly with you!

Simplicity

simple as the sunrise
and birds singing
songs of freedom,
is the meaning of peace!

simple as sharing a bread
and leftovers,
is the meaning
of prophecy,
socialism or capitalism!...
if not this barbarism!

simple as looking
at differences as simple
meaningless blind-alleys,
is the meaning of color!

simple as drinking water
in hunger and draught,
is the meaning of kindness!

simple as one minute of silence
listening to other human voices,
is the meaning of common sense!

simple as an open smile
showing an human touch,
is the bridge across the meaning of
black and white,
rich and poor,
man and woman,
you and me,

simple as a morning flower
going down with the sunset...
is this the meaning of love?!
who cares!

Maria do Céu Pires Costa

Portugal

A Brief, Encouraging Note

It surely was a hard time

For you to have to say “goodbye”!

Did she really care about your plans,

Your talks, your efforts, your dreams?

Tell us what happened, honey, and why?

Try and overcome it by all means.

Keep your faith, live your days wisely,

Face your plight,

And things will certainly end up

Getting right!

So Is It

It is to have and not to have

It is joy and sorrow

In everyday since dawn

It is to work, to act, to remember

It is to know how to forgive, it is to love.

It is time clockwise moving

In every moment an awakening

It is life we respect

It is this complex walking

It is work coming next.

It is the divine light shining bright

It is the soul strength cheering

It is to accept, and wish to understanding

It is to build, to act, to look ahead

So is it... to live!

For Mozambique

We've stared at their faces – desolate, devastated-

By flowing tears flooded.

Every image portrayed

Their lively dreams suddenly disappeared.

Huge catastrophe

Had abruptly fallen down!

Revolted? Not at all.

Filled with faith and courage

Crossing the skyline, and...

Grounds that had been damaged,

Brave teams struggled

To help those people in need.

Now they are rebuilding at every cost

A vast fertile land that had been lost!

On a Rainy Day

The morning air was very cold,
And the sky was extensively grey
On that heavy rainy day.

It invited me to write...
Some heartfelt common lines
From the bottom of my heart.

As the rain was heavily touching the ground,
I thought of thousands of homeless around
Without a shelter, food and care
In the urgent need of a family,
Which would be fair.

The rain had already stopped
When someone knocked at my door.
I saw a young couple barefoot,
Who, for so little, blessed me and my family galore.

Painted Landscape

An intense mist
Covered the background.
Animals and children
Hardly were found...

Trees and bushes dressed the park
Alongside yellow tulips,
Harebells, cinquefoils,
Enjoying the singing skylark.

Smile

It comes as a light
It beholds us tight
It helps us revive
And keeps us alive.

It easily softens pain
It never comes in vain
It is sheer delight
Which spans day and night.

It stems in one's heart
It floods every part
It is a blessed ray
We cherish and let stay...

RESOLUTION

I'll not let go my right to be
In spite of your disapproval
In spite of your frown
Instead I'll walk along the way
yet untrodden

I'll not let go my right to sky
The sky may be enough high
for my reach
the clouds may scaffold my right to sun
'cos the sky's right is mine too

I'll not let go my right to say
the language, if proves inadequate
I'll invent new words
I'll adorn it with new meanings
yet unintroduced!

I'll not let go my right to be
let the world have its own tradition
let the word sway towards you
I'll toss the world to my way
yet unseen.

CELEBRATION

In sharing the beauty of your thought
I share your world
your heritage
your inheritance of Africa

Africa is mine too
for I share the earth with you
My India is yours
for you share the earth with us

This world is ours

the world that is owned by
forced boundaries
Is not the world that is one through
communion of hearts

Some say 'tis imagined
I say boundaries are imagined
therefore forced.

Let's join hands
Let's break the imagined boundaries
Let's celebrate union
Let's celebrate cultures
languages
loves, faiths and dreams.

TEARS

Tears trickle down the cheek,
Ending its journey of woe
Leaving just the salt behind.

The tear tastes like blood –
Blood without its crimson,
Liquid yet heavier than a rock.

The indelible mark remains
- exposing the scar inside.
Tears trickle down the cheek
Or oozes deep inside sans manifestation.

WHAT IS THE BEST FOR ME...

The fire inside
Burns my flesh outside
The charred body moves about
From well-wisher to whale-wisher.

I loved you
You told you loved me!
Your words touched my untouched mind.
Your eyes touched my yet untouched body.
I wanted your hands to touch me.

Your hands touched someone else
Someone whom your father chose for you.
Someone who wanted somebody else.

Our fathers did what was best for us.
Our fathers did what was best for OUR life.
You, the father, will do the best for your girl.
All the girls will wait for the best to happen to them
Decided by somebody else.

BIRTH

Cruel Time! You abort the possibility of my fruition.

Yet I bent upon to achieve the motherhood.

The unborn foetus in my womb will carry the torch

I light today –

I nurse my hope

- my revolt

- my dream to be

To be with full right

To be with brave might

To continue the unfinished fight

Through my blood this desire runs deep

I rise above my nightmare to a new sunny morning.

A mother is born unnoticed!

INCUBATION

Its long since we've been taking care
Its very long since we've been taken care of
my lights are mostly overshadowed
by bigger lights.
am stripped off my shadows
for I was made a shadow of the Other
My horizons are receding beyond my reach
with advances made by the Other

the taper of my flame is fluttering
with strong wind
raindrops bless me too
for I have fire hidden in my bosom
Fire, that can overpower all bigger lights.
Fire that tends future lives

I cannot forget my self
Am not allowed to forget my meagre self
the lesser sex
the mother of the bigger sex
the mother of the bigger lights

From church bells to market squalor
Remind me of my sacred duty
Of tending my "flame"
Despite bigger lights
Despite bigger shadows
Despite strong winds.

I'm waiting for my flames to go bigger
To grow bigger into pyre fire
To emanate a phoenix
From ashes of burnt out life.

SNOWFLAKES

Falling snowflakes I held
At my palm
Moistening my moments of happiness
They melt into memory

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Useful Links

Here are some links for those interested in reading, discussing and using literature in English language learning and teacher education.

The ELT e-Reading Group

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/group/elt-e-reading-group>

BritLit

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/britlit>

WordPowered

<http://www.wordpowered.org/>

British Council. Arts – Literature

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts-literature>

IATEFL Literature Media and Cultural Studies Special Interest Group

<http://lmcs.iatefl.org/>

The Project Gutenberg

<http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/>

Poems on the Underground

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/corporate/projectsandschemes/artmusicdesign/poems/>

BBC Poetry

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/poetryseason/>

The Poetry Society

<http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/>

For further links on literature and literary criticism, also visit

<http://thebookworms.wordpress.com/>

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Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words.

Robert Frost

ELT Online Reading Group

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/group/elt-e-reading-group>

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