The Composition of Poetry

Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye

University of Nairobi Press
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Preface

This book is based on a series of lectures on creative writing that I was invited to give at Egerton University in 2003.

The lecturers gave me an opportunity to hold discussions with students interested in writing, whether or not they were studying literature. I am grateful to them, as well as to the University Administration, the staff of the Department of Literature, especially Professor Emilia Ilieva for her unfailing wisdom and generosity.

I am not sure that it is possible to teach creative writing, but it is certainly possible to study how other writers create and how the resources of language – as exemplified not only in the language of instruction but also in the individual languages and dialects available to us collectively – can be explored and set to work.

Reading, listening and writing are inextricably bound together. There are no set books here, but I hope that every volume of poetry quoted in the reading list will lead the reader on from the poem referred to as an example to others that compel attention as they catch the eye.

I shall be happy if any reader finds some help here in the long labour of bringing a new poem to birth. But I shall also be happy if those existing poems that nest and lurk in our minds are illuminated and activated by a study of how they were made.

Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye
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