

Lifting the Page

Resources for Teaching Writing

 Michigan Quarterly Review



Ode to Home(s)

Image-Based and Ekphrastic Writing

The Great Lakes: Love Song and Lament. Vol. L, No. 3, Summer 2011 Issue

Created for MQR by Carlina Duan

“Do they leave
together, the
language and the
last breath?”

—Margaret Noori

“[...] Dogs
& kitchen lamps switch on.
The moon rises higher
or the planet turns. Keep reading.”

—John Repp

Half Moon

John Repp

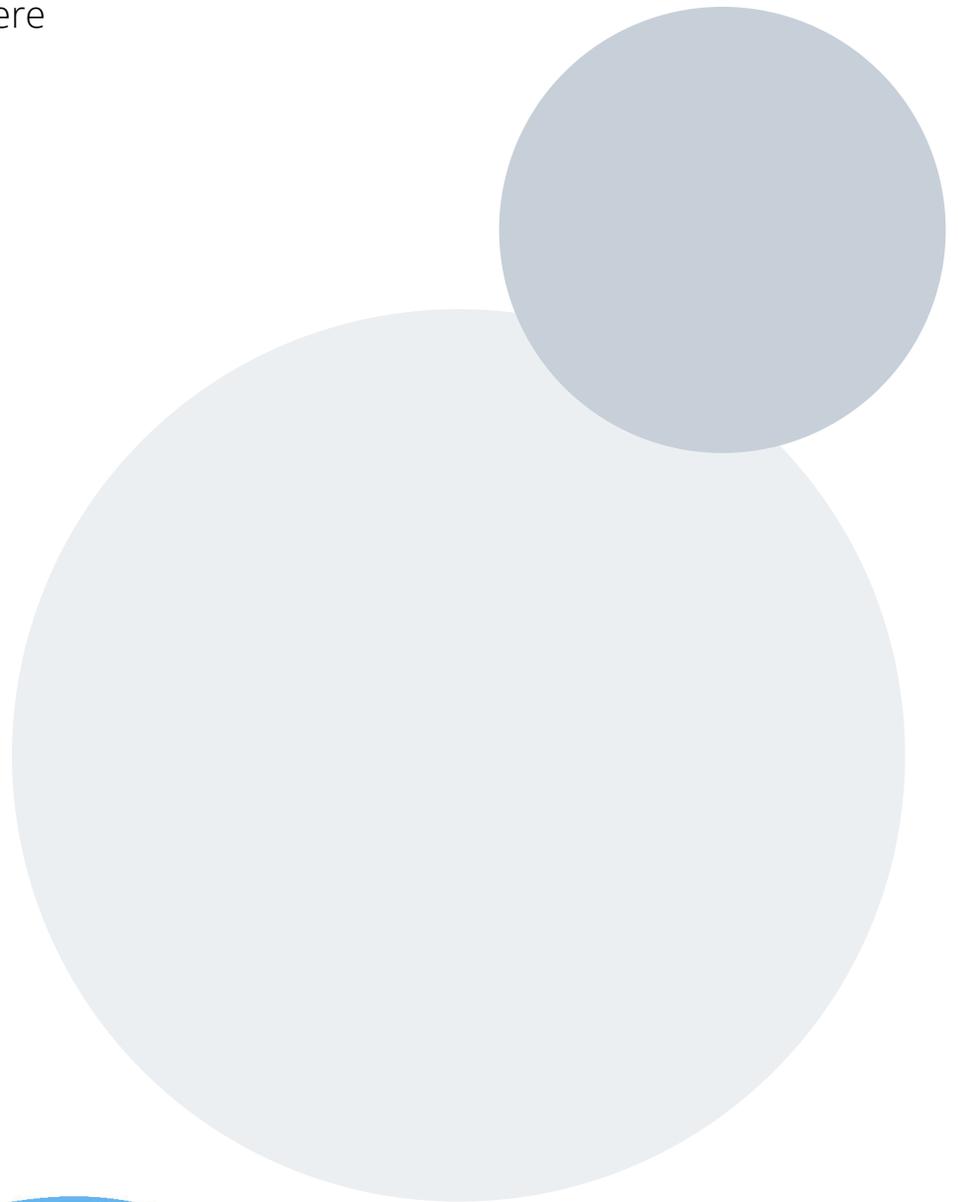
Dawn moon half-bright, held
there by forces no
equation can tame, held

here by what cannot be
thought through, no matter trope,
no matter measure. Where

are we? The orange snow-
fence glows. The marina
glitters. Someone runs

across the bay ice. Dogs
& kitchen lamps switch on.
The moon rises higher

or the planet turns. Keep
reading. Air goes only
so far.



Lifting the Page

Resources for Teaching Writing

N'Gii Zhibiamaag Niijaanisag Chigamigong

Margaret Noodin

*Bíonn dúil le béal farraige ach
cha bhíonn dúil le béal uaighe. —Nibwaakawin Ulstering*

Chigaaming shkitoyaanh bagosendamyaaanh,
jiibaaygamigong anamiyaanh chikeyaanh.
Wenesh waa ezhiwebag pii baasadengak kaanan?
Pii niibishensan mitigens bid?
Pii gokoshag taawagag ziitaaganing?
Maamwimaajaan ina Anishinaabemoyaanh miinwaa neseyaanh?
Enya gonemaa enya
mii wii boonendaamaang
mii wii waanendamaadizoyaang
pii chigaming gaawin noondoosiimaang.

A Poem for the Children of the Great Lakes

Margaret Noodin

*There is hope from the mouth of the sea but not from the mouth of the
grave. — Ulster proverb*

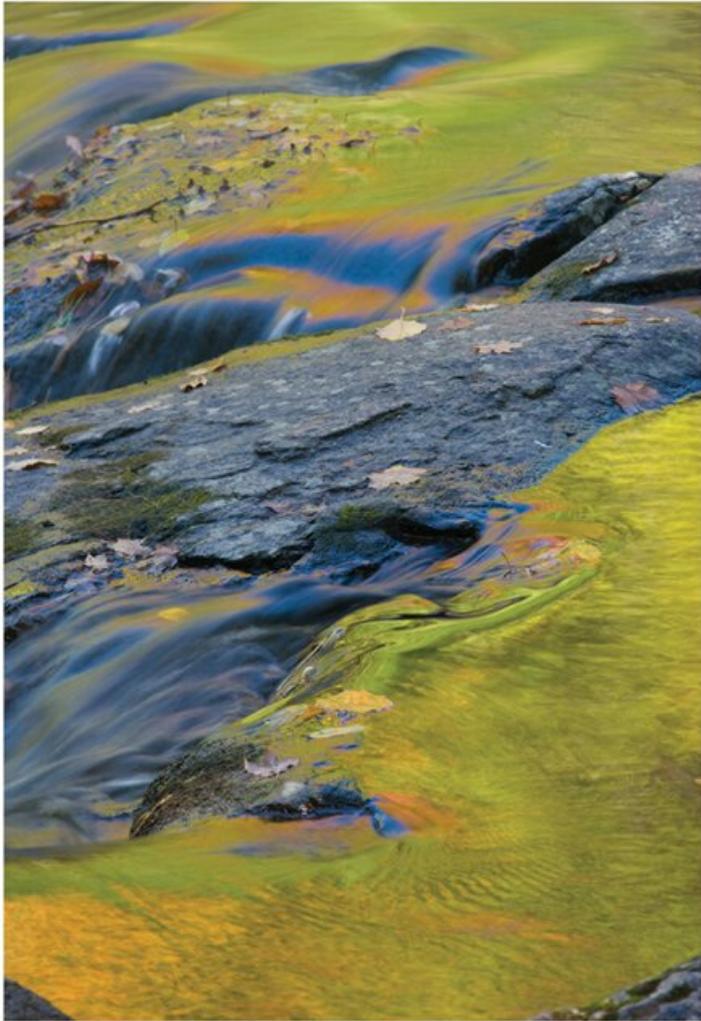
In the sea I can hope
in the grave I pray alone.
What happens when the bones are dried?
When the little leaves have become sticks?
When the sow's ears are in salt?
Do they leave together, the language and the last breath?
Yes maybe yes
it will be forgotten
we will forget ourselves
when we no longer hear the big waters

Lifting the Page

Resources for Teaching Writing

Love Song and Lament: A Graphics Portfolio

Curated by Keith Taylor



Reflections, Bond Falls, Michigan, Nancy Hopwood



Droplets of Life, Greg Czarnecki

Lifting the Page

Resources for Teaching Writing

High resolution images from this portfolio are available in the [MQR digital archive](#)



Twelve Mile Beach with Pool, Curtis Miller



No Lifeguard, Pamela Rothbard



Ice Caves, Apostle Island #1, Keith Matz



Reflections, Kara Krause



Flyfish Detroit: Big City, Big Stick, P.A. Rech



Enbridge Clean-Up Workers, Kalamazoo River, Ceresco Dam, John Ganis

Lifting the Page

Resources for Teaching Writing

Entering the Poems:

1. READ & LISTEN. I love entering poems by giving them voice – reading them multiple times. First, to myself, silently and on the page. Next, out loud. Sometimes, I even record myself reading a poem – then play it back, paying attention to what I hear, and what I see.

Begin with Noori's poem.

First, read "A Poem for the Children..." out loud. Be a witness to your own curiosity. Jot down notes on what excites you, or stumps you. Note, too, the original language of this poem, which is in Anishinaabemowin.

As you read and/or listen, highlight or underline the moments that stick with you – your personal "heat points" of the poem(s). These could be moments where your tongue trips, your heart thumps, a moment you're puzzled by, or want to spend longer with. Pay attention to what/where these moment(s) are. Ask yourself questions: Where's the stories in these poems? Who's speaking? (Who's not speaking?) What's conjured? How does this poem invite comfort and/or discomfort? What other emotive energies does it bring in?

Repeat this process with Repp's poem. Which verbs glint underneath your gaze? In your understanding of the poem, what stories unfold?

As a supplementary listening activity, [listen to Noori's recording of another poem](#), from MQR's "From the Great Lakes to the Global Water Crisis" reading, in the original Anishinaabemowin.

2. WITNESS. Browse through Keith Taylor's compilation of Great Lakes graphics, by various photographers and visual artists. Pay attention to what catches your eye. Take notes on what you see, and what you don't. What's happening in these portraits? What's happening outside of them? What more could you find?

Lifting the Page
Resources for Teaching Writing

Note: "Entering the Poems" is scaffolded for at-home learning, but could be used for collective and in-person learning settings, too.

3. BE INSPIRED & REMIX, FREE-WRITE. This next prompt is a practice in re-imagination, inspiration, and the spirit of creative lineage.

Choose:

- one image in Taylor's curated collection , or
- one line, phrase, or word in Noori's poem, or
- one line, phrase, or word in Repp's poem.

Begin free-writing (write without stopping, with free reins!) based on your chosen selection from each writer/artist's work. How might you remix an image? Tell its new story? How might you adopt and re-vision a line, a phrase, a word from Noori's or Repp's poems? What's your interpretation – your own voice – bringing to these pages? How are you being inspired?

Make sure you credit the author/artist. You can do so by adding a byline to your free-write, "after _____," and insert the author/artist's name in the blank.

If you choose to be inspired by an image you are experimenting with ekphrastic poetry: a form of poetry that describes, reflects, and/or (re)imagines a work of art.

Discuss:

- 1.** In Noori's poem, she asks: "What happens when the bones are dried? / When the little leaves have become sticks? / When the sow's ears are in salt?" **What is the purpose of using a list of questions in this poem?**
- 2.** **How do both poets (Noori and Repp) use images in order to conjure a story?** Which images jump out to you – and why?
- 3.** **Do you see connections between Taylor's portfolio and the poets' words?** If so, what —and where – are they?

Lifting the Page
Resources for Teaching Writing

Create:

An ode is a lyrical praise-poem– a celebration poem.

In the spirit of ode-making, think about a place you call home that you'd like to celebrate.

Now, make a list of specific, visual details of home – a tree twisted with holiday lights, a rugged brown chair, a river. Think of using imagery – as Noori, Repp, and the artists in Taylor's portfolio all do – to tell a story of home. Write an ode to home, or to a detail of home, with imagery as your primary tool.

To borrow from Noori's poem, try to ask at least one question in your work.

Feel free to take this prompt and translate it to any creative genre, beyond that of a poem: an essay, a poem-video, a collage, a visual object.

Share: Use tags #MQR and #LiftingThePage when you share your writing with the world. You can also tag us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). We look forward to reading what you create.