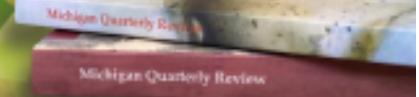


# Lifting the Page

Resources for teaching creative writing from the pages of MQR



## MQR's Anniversary Issue

"...recognition,  
telling me that  
they belong to  
me..."

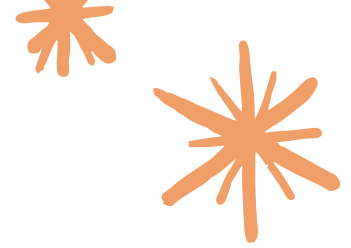
"Inland" by Zhu Zhu, translated from the  
Chinese by Dong Li

Created by Isabel Neal for MQR

"...asking me to  
become a shelter, a  
floating bottle of  
morrow."

MQR  
60

This poem first appeared in MQR's Summer 2017 Issue and was part of MQR's Winter 2021 Anniversary Anthology



# Inland

Night so desolate, it takes lamps and fires of a dozen villages  
to light up a map before the eyes. Here,  
the stove is lonely, cooking smoke raises only a wisp of dignity.  
In the big dried-up river sands drift,  
like a thousand dialects telling of monotony and stasis—  
when I snatch a corner of the map, the faraway metropolises  
are like balloons in a cluster swept seaward from a hand  
that has loosened its grip on the strings, ancient names before me demand my  
recognition, telling me that they belong to me,  
before I was born, their echoes rumbled in my blood—  
they come from the same cast-off homeland,  
through the needle hole of the setting sun, across the wild,  
asking me to become a shelter, a floating bottle of morrow.

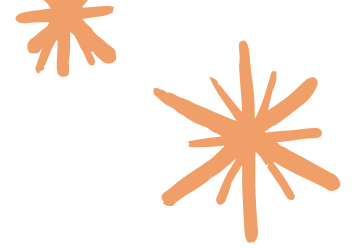
## 内陆

夜晚如此荒凉，要用十几座村镇的灯火  
才能照亮一幅眼前的地图。这里，  
炉灶是寂寞的，炊烟仅仅升起一种尊严。  
干涸的大河里流动着沙，就像  
一千种方言述说单调和停滞——  
当我攥住地图的一角，远处的大都市  
就像从松开了绳子的手中飘散到海边  
的大串气球，眼前这些古老的地名  
要求我认领，说它们属于我，  
早在我出生之前，血液中就涌动着它们的回声——  
它们来自同一个被遣散的家园，  
穿过落日的针孔，遍野而来，  
要求我成为一座收容所，一只未来的漂流瓶。

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Resources for Teaching Writing



# Encountering the Poem



Begin by reading aloud, listening with open ears to all the sounds of Zhu's language in this translation by Dong Li.

The next time you read, read with a pen or pencil in hand. How do the images take shape on the page? Circle or underline where a sound, a word, an image, or open space surprises you.

Where does the poem throw sparks? (Carlina Duan calls these moments your "personal heat points"!)

What questions come up?

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# Image Study & Discussion

The poet Natalie Diaz proposes building the emotional image, rather than using emotional language, as one important tool in a writer's kit.

This poem is filled with such images – precise moments where the senses and emotions, the “mind's eye,” are vividly engaged. We'll focus our attention there!

Read the poem once more. If you can, listen as a classmate reads and close your eyes. Which images stand out most strongly? In your notebook, list three.

Now, for 5-10 minutes, free-write **or** sketch your version of these images. Whether you choose to write or to draw, begin with what's there in the poem, and then keep going.

Share your image study with classmates or in small groups. What similarities can you find? Points of difference? What emotions do the images in your study evoke?



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# Diving Deeper

Mapping is one way to approach illustrating our personal or emotional landscapes using imagery. This might be in language or in color, line and shape.

Pick one of these three maps to spend some time with, noticing each part.

- What do the colors, shapes and lines suggest to you?
- What story or stories might occur on this map?
- Free-write for 5-10 minutes.



Image #1

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Image #2



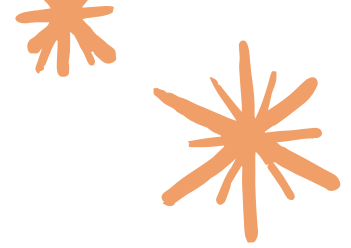
Image #3

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# Drafting



In “Inland,” the speaker builds a vivid scene of interacting with – sensing, hearing, seeing, and touching – a map of both places and emotions:

*“ancient names...demand my recognition, telling me that they belong to me”;  
“faraway metropolises/ are like balloons in a cluster swept seaward”*

Using some prompting questions inspired by “Inland,” and with the visual maps fresh in your mind, draft your own map poem.

*Prompting questions:*

- What source of light illuminates your map?
- What images are part of your map? Are they strange or familiar? Are they close to home or far away? List 5 images, being as specific as possible.
- What does your map include *lots* of? List 3 elements.
- What does your map include very little of, or what is missing?
- What does it feel like to touch your map?
- What sounds are part of your map?
- What is your map used for – getting home? Dreaming? Finding treasure? Remembering someone or something?

Remember that as the poet, you are the “time mechanic” – your map poem can invite and include any voices, textures, and images you choose.

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# Sources

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<https://tinhouse.com/building-the-emotional-image-with-natalie-diaz/>

Duan, Carlina, <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/mqr/2020/05/voyage-making/>

Image #1:

<https://artsbenicia.org/mapping-as-source/>

Image #2: <https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/11/30/you-are-here-nyc-mapping-the-soul-of-the-city/>

Image #3: Susan Hiller, Dream Mapping, 1974. Composite group dream map for the night of August 23-24, 1974 © The Estate of Susan Hiller  
Visit: <https://elephant.art/susan-hillers-dream-mapping-awoke-me-from-the-solitary-terror-of-my-nightmares-28042020/>

To view more of MQR's

"Lifting the Page" lesson plans, visit

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/mqr/category/lifting-the-page/>.

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