THE FOUR HOMES OF POETRY

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SETTING

1 GEOGRAPHY  5 ERA
2 TOPOGRAPHY  6 OCCUPATION
3 PHYSICAL  7 MENTAL LANDSCAPE
4 SCENERY
Mother
by Ted Kooser

Mid April already, and the wild plums bloom at the roadside, a lacy white against the exuberant, jubilant green of new grass and the dusty, fading black of burned-out ditches. No leaves, not yet, only the delicate, star petalled blossoms, sweet with their timeless perfume.

You have been gone a month today and have missed three rains and one nightlong watch for tornadoes. I sat in the cellar from six to eight while fat spring clouds went somersaulting, rumbling east. Then it poured, a storm that walked on legs of lightning, dragging its shaggy belly over the fields.

The meadowlarks are back, and the finches are turning from green to gold. Those same two geese have come to the pond again this year, honking in over the trees and splashing down. They never nest, but stay a week or two then leave. The peonies are up, the red sprouts burning in circles like birthday candles, for this is the month of my birth, as you know, the best month to born in, thanks to you, everything ready to burst with living. There will be no more new flannel nightshirts sewn on your old black Singer, no birthday card addressed in shaky but businesslike hand. You asked me if I would be sad when it happened and I am sad. But the iris I moved from your house now hold in the dusty dry fists of their roots green knives and forks as if waiting for dinner, as if spring were a feast. I thank you for that. Were it not for the way you taught me to look at the world, to see life at play in everything, I would have to be lonely forever.
PUT YOUR READER ON THE MAP:

WHERE IS THE POEM TAKING PLACE
  ◦ The namer of names is the father of things
TOPOGRAPHY

THE NATURAL WORLD

WHAT HAS GOD/MOTHER NATURE PLACED THERE
- Rivers
- Lakes
- Deserts
- Mountains
- Weather
WHAT HAVE HUMANS PLACED THERE

THESE ARE BOTH THE TANGIBLE & the INTANGIBLE

- Buildings
- Windmills
- Philosophy
- Religion
- Ideas
MINUTE DETAILS THAT ONLY THE WRITER WOULD KNOW

THE POEM BROKERS IN TRUST BY SHARING SECRETS

“It spoke the feeling for them, which is what they had lacked.”

–Wallace Stevens
LOCATE US IN TIME

WHAT TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE TO TELL TIME

Seasons
Songs
Historical Events
Clothing Trends
Clock
HOW & WHY ARE THE PEOPLE IN YOUR POEM OCCUPYING THE POEM

WHAT IS THEIR PURPOSE FOR FINDING THEMSELVES IN THE POEM

No Parachuting
Consider Haunting or Memory
Their “job”
MENTAL LANDSCAPE

WHAT IS THE EMOTION OF THE POET & THE PERSONA

HOW DO YOU KNOW HOW THEY ARE FEELING
Use of 1–6 often gives us hints
Let 1–4 represent emotion
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Direction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>UP</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>DOWN</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PAST</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FUTURE</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
it's 1962 March 28th
I'm sitting by the window on the Prague–Berlin train
night is falling
I never knew I liked
night descending like a tired bird on a smoky wet plain
I don't like
comparing nightfall to a tired bird
I didn't know I loved the earth
can someone who hasn't worked the earth love it
I've never worked the earth
it must be my only Platonic love

and here I've loved rivers all this time
whether motionless like this they curl skirting the hills
European hills crowned with chateaus
or whether stretched out flat as far as the eye can see
I know you can't wash in the same river even once
I know the river will bring new lights you'll never see
I know we live slightly longer than a horse but not nearly as long as a crow
I know this has troubled people before
and will trouble those after me
I know all this has been said a thousand times before
I didn't know I liked rain
whether it falls like a fine net or splatters against the glass my
heart leaves me tangled up in a net or trapped inside a drop
and takes off for uncharted countries I didn't know I loved
rain but why did I suddenly discover all these passions sitting
by the window on the Prague–Berlin train
is it because I lit my sixth cigarette
one alone could kill me
is it because I'm half dead from thinking about someone back in Moscow
her hair straw–blond eyelashes blue

the train plunges on through the pitch–black night
I never knew I liked the night pitch–black
sparks fly from the engine
I didn't know I loved sparks

I didn't know I loved so many things and I had to wait until sixty
to find it out sitting by the window on the Prague–Berlin train
HOMES THE POEM ENTERS

1  ARCHETYPAL
2  HISTORICAL
3  MYTHICAL
4  ACTUAL
Grace
by Jake Adam York

Because my grandmother made me
the breakfast her mother made her,
when I crack the eggs, pat the butter
on the toast, and remember the bacon
to cast iron, to fork, to plate, to tongue,
my great grandmother moves my hands
to whisk, to spatula, to biscuit ring,
and I move her hands too, making
her mess, so the syllable of batter
I’ll find tomorrow beneath the fridge
and the strew of salt and oil are all
memorials, like the pan-fried chicken
that whistles in the grease in the voice
of my best friend’s grandmother
like a midnight mockingbird,
and the smoke from the grill
is the smell of my father coming home
from the furnace and the tang
of vinegar and char is the smell
of Birmingham, the smell
of coming home, of history, redolent
as the salt of black-and-white film
when I unwrap the sandwich
from the wax-paper the wax-paper
crackling like the cold grass
along the Selma to Montgomery road,
like the foil that held
Medgar’s last meal, a square of tin
that is just the ghost of that barbecue
I can imagine to my tongue
when I stand at the pit with my brother
and think of all the hands and mouths
and breaths of air that sharpened
this flavor and handed it down to us,
I feel all those hands inside
my hands when it’s time to spread
the table linen or lift a coffin rail
and when the smoke billows from the pit
I think of my uncle, I think of my uncle
rising, not falling, when I raise
the buttermilk and the cornmeal to the light
before giving them to the skillet
and sometimes I say the recipe
to the air and sometimes I say his name
or her name or her name
and sometimes I just set the table
because meals are memorials
that teach us how to move,
history moves in us as we raise
our voices and then our glasses
to pour a little out for those
who poured out everything for us,
we pour ourselves for them,
so they can eat again.
ARCHETYPAL

GOOD VS EVIL
FATHERS AND SONS
LIGHT AND DARK
JOURNEY
MODERN VS THE TRADITIONAL
GRIEF
LOVE
WHAT PART OF OUR HUMAN HISTORY DOES THE POEM TOUCH & UTILIZE

THE UNIVERSAL MUST MEET THE PERSONAL
MYTHICAL

WHAT MYTHICAL OR MAGICAL THING HAPPENS IN THE POEM

THE POEM MUST DO SOMETHING THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE
ACTUAL

THE POEM SHOULD STILL BE RELEVANT TO THE HERE & NOW OR TAKE PLACE IN THE REAL WORLD
ENDURING QUESTIONS

1 SPIRITUAL
2 POLITICAL
3 PERSONAL
4 QUARREL
POEM IN PRAISE OF MENSTRUATION
by Lucille Clifton

if there is a river
more beautiful than this
bright as the blood
red edge of the moon if

there is a river
more faithful than this
returning each month
to the same delta if there

is a river
braver than this
coming and coming in a surge
of passion, of pain if there is

a river
more ancient than this
daughter of eve

mother of cain and of abel if there is in
the universe such a river if there is some where water
more powerful than this wild water
pray that it flows also
through animals
beautiful and faithful and ancient
and female and brave
LOTS I & II
by Lorna Dee Cervantes

Lots: I
The Ally
He told her
shut up and die.
The bed of shrubs
in the vacant lot
listened and filled
the fog with their
“Tsk, tsk.”
She was so young,
only two years
more than a child.
She felt the flex
of his arm before
he touched her,
the wind of his fist
before he hit her.
But it was the glint
of steel at her throat
that cut through
to her voice.
She would not be
silent and still.
She would live,
arrogantly,
having wrestled
her death_
and won.

LOTS: II
Herself
I picked myself up ignoring
whoever I was slowly
noticing for the first time my body’s stench
I made a list in my head
of all the names who could help me
and then meticulously I scratched
each one!
they won’t hear me burning
inside of myself!
my used skin glistened
my first diamond
A POEM TO GET RID OF FEAR

by Joy Harjo

I release you,
my beautiful and terrible fear.
I release you.
You are my beloved and hated twin

but now I don’t know you
as myself.

I release you
with all the pain
I would know
at the death
of my children.

You are not my blood
anymore.

I give you back to the soldiers
who burned down my home
beheaded my children
raped and sodomized my brothers
and sisters.

I give you back to those
who stole the food from our plates
when we were starving.

I release you, fear,
because you were born,
and I was born, with eyes
that can never close.

I release you.
I release you.
I release you.

I am not afraid to be angry
I am not afraid to rejoice
I am not afraid to be hungry
I am not afraid to be full
I am not afraid to be black
I am not afraid to be white
I am not afraid to be hated
I am not afraid to be loved
To be loved

To be loved, fear,
oh, you have choked me
but I gave you the leash.

You have gutted me
but I gave you the knife.

You have devoured me
but I laid myself across the fire.

I take myself back, fear
You are not my shadow any longer.
I won’t hold you in my hands,
in my eyes, my ears, my voice, my belly
or in my heart, my heart, my heart, my heart...

Come here, fear,
I am alive!
and you are so afraid
of dying.
On Fridays he'd open a can of Jax
After coming home from the mill,
& ask me to write a letter to my mother
Who sent postcards of desert flowers
Taller than men. He would beg,
Promising to never beat her
Again. Somehow I was happy
She had gone, & sometimes wanted
To slip in a reminder, how Mary Lou Williams' "Polka Dots & Moonbeams"
Never made the swelling go down.
His carpenter's apron always bulged
With old nails, a claw hammer
Looped at his side & extension cords
Coiled around his feet.
Words rolled from under the pressure
Of my ballpoint: Love,
Baby, Honey, Please.
We sat in the quiet brutality
Of voltage meters & pipe threaders,
Lost between sentences . . .
The gleam of a five-pound wedge

On the concrete floor
Pulled a sunset
Through the doorway of his toolshed.
I wondered if she laughed
& held them over a gas burner.
My father could only sign
His name, but he'd look at blueprints
& say how many bricks
Formed each wall. This man,
Who stole roses & hyacinth
For his yard, would stand there
With eyes closed & fists balled,
Laboring over a simple word, almost
Redeemed by what he tried to say.