

## Four Poems: Then and Now

### Robert Browning (1812–1889)

#### Home-Thoughts, from Abroad

Oh, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England—now!

And after April, when May follows,  
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!  
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—  
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture  
The first fine careless rapture!  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower  
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

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**William Wordsworth (1770–1850)****Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802**

Earth has not any thing to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth, like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

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**Catharine Savage Brosman\*****Bearings****—New Orleans**

No point in saying north, south, east, or west—  
you won't be understood. This crescent space  
is shaped, sharp-angled, by the river—pressed  
off the meridian in its embrace.

We say “downtown” or “uptown,” “river,” “lake”;  
concentric avenues contribute sense;  
enormous wedges marked out early make  
a neat design, providing reference.

An age ago, I lost my bearings—green,  
and restless, like my father. Finding true  
directions was a long adventure; seen  
in retrospect, it's odd at first, askew.

But radii connect, and streets in rows  
may narrow, veer, and lead to one I missed;  
false parallels converging interpose  
a centered nexus. How could I resist?

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**Catharine Savage Brosman** is professor emerita of French at Tulane University; cbrosman@tulane.edu.  
Her forthcoming book, *Arm in Arm: Poems* is set to appear April 1, 2022 from Mercer University Press.

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**Catharine Savage Brosman****Festschrift**

No need to have a thick Geburtstag tome,  
or rhyming “Garland” by my writer friends.  
My celebration’s in New Orleans—home  
so long, on which much happiness depends.

I’m seated at a garden party, with my peers,  
once students, all accomplished, some retired,  
their presence a salute to early years  
of molding words and character, shaped, fired.

The spirit was both medium and goal.  
Round tables, verbal jousting, tournaments,  
with pomp and poetry, the heart of letters,

and scattered wounds, none fatal. You have soul;  
you are the champions, the evidence.  
I dare one to identify your betters.