

Remembrances, Then and Now

Sonnet 30¹

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought,
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight,
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

London 1802

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
 England hath need of thee: she is a fen
 of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
 Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
 Have forfeited their ancient English dower
 Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
 Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
 And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
 Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;
 Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
 Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
 So didst thou travel on life's common way,
 In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
 The lowest duties on herself did lay.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

I Years had been from Home

I years had been from home,
 And now before the door,
 I dared not open, lest a face
 I never saw before

Stare vacant into mine
 And ask my business there.
 My business—just a life I left,
 Was such still dwelling there?

I fumbled at my nerve,
 I scanned the windows near;
 The silence like an ocean rolled,
 And broke against my ear.

I laughed a wooden laugh
 That I could fear a door,
 Who danger and the dead had faced,
 But never quaked before,

I fitted to the latch
 My hand, with trembling care,
 Lest back the awful door should spring,
 And leave me standing there.

I moved my fingers off
 As cautiously as glass,
 And held my ears, and like a thief
 Fled gasping from the house.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Half-Moon Cay

I've seen this isle before, with him I name
 my Great Companion. To return, retrace
 our path, is tribute. Nothing is the same,
 though; I cannot be two, nor reap the grace

of hands together when I am alone,
 not even under palms. I must invent
 a dialogue without his voice, the tone
 of tenderness he used, and represent

a living body to the distant dead,
 remembering that we were amnestied,
 a happy paragon, the double-wed,

appointed to procure each other's ease,
 a gift—while, fatally, accompanied
 by horns of sadness sounding through dark trees.

*Catharine Savage Brosman*²

1. *Editors' Note: All punctuation is sic*
2. Catharine Savage Brosman is professor emerita of French at Tulane University; cbrosman@tulane.edu. She is the author of fifteen collections of poetry, the latest of which is *Aerosols and Other Poems* (2023) from Green Altar Books, an imprint of Shotwell Publishing. Brosman's poetry has appeared regularly in *AQ*, along with her article "Poetry and Western Civilization," in the spring of 2023. In our winter 2023 issue she reviewed Jonathan Chaves's *Surfing the Torrent* in "Poetry and the Human Experience."