

# Remembrances, Then and Now

## Sonnet 30<sup>1</sup>

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.

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William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

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## 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.

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William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

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## 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.

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Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

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## 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.

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*Catharine Savage Brosman*<sup>2</sup>

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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."