**The Laboratory-Ancien Régime**

I  
Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,  
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,  
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy---  
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?  
  
II  
He is with her, and they know that I know  
Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow  
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear  
Empty church, to pray God in, for them!---I am here.  
  
III  
Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,  
Pound at thy powder,---I am not in haste!  
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,  
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.  
  
IV  
That in the mortar---you call it a gum?  
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!   
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,  
Sure to taste sweetly,---is that poison too?  
  
V  
Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,  
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!  
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,  
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!  
  
VI  
Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give,  
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!  
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head  
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!  
  
VII  
Quick---is it finished? The colour's too grim!  
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?  
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,  
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!  
  
VIII  
What a drop! She's not little, no minion like me!  
That's why she ensnared him: this never will free  
The soul from those masculine eyes,---Say, ``no!''  
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.  
  
IX  
For only last night, as they whispered, I brought  
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought  
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall  
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!  
  
X  
Not that I bid you spare her the pain;  
Let death be felt and the proof remain:  
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace---  
He is sure to remember her dying face!  
  
XI  
Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose;  
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close;  
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee!  
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?  
  
XII  
Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,  
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!  
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings  
Ere I know it---next moment I dance at the King's!

Robert Browning

**The Patriot**

**Historical context: The Risorgimento (Uprising) in Italy**

* Italy not a unified country until later C19 (and even then, some states did join unified Italy until after WWI!)
* The Risorgimento was a political and social movement in the C19 (1800s), which fought for a unified Italy; a nationalistic movement (nationalism → patriotism)
* Key figures/organizations include:
  + Giuseppe Mezzini (patriot, philosopher, politician)
  + Giuseppe Garibaldi (soldier, political figure, \*\*beard named after him\*\*)
  + Carbonari (secret organization)
* The movement was opposed, particularly, to Austrian rule
* 1848-1849: a number of revolts occur across Italy (e.g. at Brescia, Tuscany, Sicily); by summer 1849 all have been quashed
* Mezzini and Garibaldi flee into exile.
* Browning, as well as his wife, the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, supported the ideals of the Risorgimento. After seeing it fail, Browning became somewhat disillusioned with politics; he began to write about more “timeless” and “universal” ideas, such as love, art, aesthetics.

**The Patriot**

I.  
It was roses, roses, all the way,  
 With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:  
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,  
 The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,  
A year ago on this very day.  
  
II.  
The air broke into a mist with bells,  
 The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.  
Had I said, ``Good folk, mere noise repels---  
 But give me your sun from yonder skies!''  
They had answered, ``And afterward, what else?''  
  
III.  
Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun  
 To give it my loving friends to keep!  
Nought man could do, have I left undone:  
 And you see my harvest, what I reap  
This very day, now a year is run.  
  
IV.  
There's nobody on the house-tops now---  
 Just a palsied few at the windows set;  
For the best of the sight is, all allow,  
 At the Shambles' Gate---or, better yet,  
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.  
  
V.  
I go in the rain, and, more than needs,  
 A rope cuts both my wrists behind;  
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,  
 For they fling, whoever has a mind,  
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.  
  
VI.  
Thus I entered Brescia, and thus I go!  
 In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.  
``Paid by the world, what dost thou owe  
 ``Me?''---God might question; now instead,  
'Tis God shall repay: I am safer so.

**Porphyria’s Lover**

And thus we sit together now,   
And all night long we have not stirred,   
And yet God has not said a word!

\*\*\*\*

*Porphyria: an incurable disease of the blood; the word is derived from a Greek word meaning “purple.”*

The rain set early in to-night,

       The sullen wind was soon awake,

It tore the elm-tops down for spite,

       And did its worst to vex the lake:

       I listened with heart fit to break.

When glided in Porphyria; straight

       She shut the cold out and the storm,

And kneeled and made the cheerless grate

       Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;

       Which done, she rose, and from her form

Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,

       And laid her soiled gloves by, untied

Her hat and let the damp hair fall,

       And, last, she sat down by my side

       And called me. When no voice replied,

She put my arm about her waist,

       And made her smooth white shoulder bare,

And all her yellow hair displaced,

       And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,

       And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,

Murmuring how she loved me — she

       Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,

To set its struggling passion free

       From pride, and vainer ties dissever,

       And give herself to me for ever.

But passion sometimes would prevail,

       Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain

A sudden thought of one so pale

       For love of her, and all in vain:

       So, she was come through wind and rain.

Be sure I looked up at her eyes

       Happy and proud; at last I knew

Porphyria worshipped me; surprise

       Made my heart swell, and still it grew

       While I debated what to do.

That moment she was mine, mine, fair,

       Perfectly pure and good: I found

A thing to do, and all her hair

       In one long yellow string I wound

       Three times her little throat around,

And strangled her. No pain felt she;

       I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee,

       I warily oped her lids: again

       Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.

And I untightened next the tress

       About her neck; her cheek once more

Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:

       I propped her head up as before,

       Only, this time my shoulder bore

Her head, which droops upon it still:

       The smiling rosy little head,

So glad it has its utmost will,

       That all it scorned at once is fled,

       And I, its love, am gained instead!

Porphyria's love: she guessed not how

       Her darling one wish would be heard.

And thus we sit together now,

       And all night long we have not stirred,

       And yet God has not said a word!

The rain set early in to-night,

       The sullen wind was soon awake,

It tore the elm-tops down for spite,

       And did its worst to vex the lake:

       I listened with heart fit to break.

When glided in Porphyria; straight

       She shut the cold out and the storm,

And kneeled and made the cheerless grate

       Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;

       Which done, she rose, and from her form

Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,

       And laid her soiled gloves by, untied

Her hat and let the damp hair fall,

       And, last, she sat down by my side

       And called me. When no voice replied,

She put my arm about her waist,

       And made her smooth white shoulder bare,

And all her yellow hair displaced,

       And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,

       And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,

Murmuring how she loved me — she

       Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,

To set its struggling passion free

       From pride, and vainer ties dissever,

       And give herself to me for ever.

But passion sometimes would prevail,

       Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain

A sudden thought of one so pale

       For love of her, and all in vain:

       So, she was come through wind and rain.

Be sure I looked up at her eyes

       Happy and proud; at last I knew

Porphyria worshipped me; surprise

       Made my heart swell, and still it grew

       While I debated what to do.

That moment she was mine, mine, fair,

       Perfectly pure and good: I found

A thing to do, and all her hair

       In one long yellow string I wound

       Three times her little throat around,

And strangled her. No pain felt she;

       I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee,

       I warily oped her lids: again

       Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.

And I untightened next the tress

       About her neck; her cheek once more

Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:

       I propped her head up as before,

       Only, this time my shoulder bore

Her head, which droops upon it still:

       The smiling rosy little head,

So glad it has its utmost will,

       That all it scorned at once is fled,

       And I, its love, am gained instead!

Porphyria's love: she guessed not how

       Her darling one wish would be heard.

And thus we sit together now,

       And all night long we have not stirred,

       And yet God has not said a word!

The rain set early in to-night,

       The sullen wind was soon awake,

It tore the elm-tops down for spite,

       And did its worst to vex the lake:

       I listened with heart fit to break.

When glided in Porphyria; straight

       She shut the cold out and the storm,

And kneeled and made the cheerless grate

       Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;

       Which done, she rose, and from her form

Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,

       And laid her soiled gloves by, untied

Her hat and let the damp hair fall,

       And, last, she sat down by my side

       And called me. When no voice replied,

She put my arm about her waist,

       And made her smooth white shoulder bare,

And all her yellow hair displaced,

       And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,

       And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,

Murmuring how she loved me — she

       Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,

To set its struggling passion free

       From pride, and vainer ties dissever,

       And give herself to me for ever.

But passion sometimes would prevail,

       Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain

A sudden thought of one so pale

       For love of her, and all in vain:

       So, she was come through wind and rain.

Be sure I looked up at her eyes

       Happy and proud; at last I knew

Porphyria worshipped me; surprise

       Made my heart swell, and still it grew

       While I debated what to do.

That moment she was mine, mine, fair,

       Perfectly pure and good: I found

A thing to do, and all her hair

       In one long yellow string I wound

       Three times her little throat around,

And strangled her. No pain felt she;

       I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee,

       I warily oped her lids: again

       Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.

And I untightened next the tress

       About her neck; her cheek once more

Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:

       I propped her head up as before,

       Only, this time my shoulder bore

Her head, which droops upon it still:

       The smiling rosy little head,

So glad it has its utmost will,

       That all it scorned at once is fled,

       And I, its love, am gained instead!

Porphyria's love: she guessed not how

       Her darling one wish would be heard.

And thus we sit together now,

       And all night long we have not stirred,

       And yet God has not said a word!

The rain set early in tonight,   
The sullen wind was soon awake,   
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,   
and did its worst to vex the lake:   
I listened with heart fit to break.   
When glided in Porphyria; straight   
She shut the cold out and the storm,   
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate   
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;   
Which done, she rose, and from her form   
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,   
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied   
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,   
And, last, she sat down by my side   
And called me. When no voice replied,   
She put my arm about her waist,   
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,   
And all her yellow hair displaced,   
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,   
And spread, o’er all, her yellow hair,   
Murmuring how she loved me—she   
Too weak, for all her heart’s endeavor,   
To set its struggling passion free   
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,   
And give herself to me forever.   
But passion sometimes would prevail,   
Nor could tonight’s gay feast restrain   
A sudden thought of one so pale   
For love of her, and all in vain:   
So, she was come through wind and rain.   
Be sure I looked up at her eyes   
Happy and proud; at last I knew   
Porphyria worshiped me: surprise   
Made my heart swell, and still it grew   
While I debated what to do.   
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,   
Perfectly pure and good: I found   
A thing to do, and all her hair   
In one long yellow string I wound   
Three times her little throat around,   
And strangled her. No pain felt she;   
I am quite sure she felt no pain.   
As a shut bud that holds a bee,   
I warily oped her lids: again   
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.   
And I untightened next the tress   
About her neck; her cheek once more   
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:   
I propped her head up as before   
Only, this time my shoulder bore   
Her head, which droops upon it still:   
The smiling rosy little head,   
So glad it has its utmost will,   
That all it scorned at once is fled,   
And I, its love, am gained instead!   
Porphyria’s love: she guessed not how   
Her darling one wish would be heard.