

Sonnet V, Sonnets from the Portuguese
Earliest known draft ms of a sonnet from *Sonnets from the Portuguese*

From ABL new notebook, D1411 in *The Browning Collections* in *The Brownings: A Research Guide* <<http://www.browningguide.org/contents.php>>
Transcription by Rita Patteson & Marjorie Stone March, 2011

solemnly
I lift my heavy heart up ~~in my hands~~

As once Electra her sepulchral urn

And looking in thine eyes I over turn

ashes [all it holds]
The ~~ashes at~~ At thy feet! Behold & see

[^]What a great heap woe ~~seemed~~ ~~awash~~ lay[^]that[^] in>hid ^in¹ me
A ~~great heap~~ of ~~unmeasured~~ misery

And had these red wild sparks>sparkle ~~that~~ dimly burn

whole world's
Thro which the scorn
~~In all the~~>this ashen greyness, ~~all the~~ scorn
& if thy scorn if thy [iw]>foot in scorn²

Of all the world could
~~Could ever be trod out tread~~ not utterly
Could [?bend]³ not out to darkness⁴

Out into dark—that I should bear henceforth

That may be well perhaps! But if instead

[^]Thou wait beside me [?for] [?the][^]⁵
We two shall wait for some new wind to blow

scatter drift & wrap thy
These ashes up & [iw]>[?rain] [iw]>them on thy head

¹ “lay in me” is inserted at the end of the line; “that” inserted above the line after “lay,” and “in” above the line between “hid” and “me.”

² These phrases are inserted below the line.

³ Possibly “beat”: although the final letter clearly seems to be a “d.”

⁴ “Could bend not out to darkness” is inserted below the line.

⁵ This line is inserted above the line beginning “We two.”

dim dust
With t>This grey surge up⁶

O my [?beloved]⁷ the>those laurels on thy head

not shield
O my beloved will never guard thee so

beats ~~unquenched sparkles~~⁸
That these ~~from points of sorrow be not shed~~

[^]That none of all the fires shall scorch never
The [?laurels]⁹ hot unspent shafts shall scorch & shred
hot unspent shafts shall scorch & shred
But these [~~hot~~ ~~unquenched~~] shalt be unspent [?unerected]
~~shall not be scorched & shred~~

Thy copious locks. Stand off then farther—Go!
By the [iw]—stand off then at [?iw]—Go.
That none shall scorch thy

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The Published Text of Sonnet V from *Poems* (1850, 1853, 1856).

From *The Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*. [link] 5 vols. General Editor, Sandra Donaldson. Vol. II. Volume Editors: Marjorie Stone & Beverly Taylor. London: Pickering and Chatto Press, 2010. P. 446.

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me, 5
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
Through the ashen greyness. If thy foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if instead
Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow 10
The grey dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,
O my beloved, will not shield thee so,

⁶ “With t>This grey surge of” is written below the line as if a new line, but seems to be a variant on “These ashes up” above it; above “grey surge” EBB inserts “dim dust,” suggesting it is a substitution for the two words even though “grey” is not cancelled.

⁷ These words are heavily cancelled; the “O” and “my” are visible.

⁸ This is a variant not for the line above, but for the deleted line below “That

⁹ Although the upstroke of the final “l” is not visible, this word appears to be “laurels,” as in l. 11 of the published texts of the sonnet.

That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
The hair beneath. Stand further off then! go.

Text: Poems (4th ed., 1856), III, 192.

Editions: Poems (1850-6). No substantive variants.