

In Praise of Lasha

To exalt, enthrone, establish and defend,
To welcome home mankind's illustrious friend:
Lasha, gifted in all the arts that be;
Lasha, bearing light for all to see;
Lasha beautiful; Lasha the sagely strong;
Lasha, avenger of sly-dealing wrong,
Awake, inspiring Muse, and sing your song!

Sing how men from all earth's corners came,
And on their brow the fiery dancing flame
Which marked the God-head. Sing, O celestial team!
You valiant soldiers marching, and the gleam
Of cymbals through the darkness. Sing the drums!
She comes, our Light! our inspiration comes!

And everywhere they pass, the crowds! The crowds!
The glorious, cheering crowds! And how they sing
Great hymns which to the highest heavens ring.
The crowds are here for Lasha and they praise
Her mind, her words. On her they long to gaze!

And now the task of this triumphant day
Has reached to victory. In the reddening ray
Fulfilled, apparent, our Creator stands
Halted on Earth. And far beneath Him, far,
The strength of Ocean darkening and the star
Beyond all shores. There is a silence made.
It glorifies: and lo! gigantic shade
Of Rome and Athens awaits her from the West.
And all in chorus cry out: "Lasha is best!"

But what are these that from the outer murk
Of dense mephitic vapors creeping lurk

To breathe foul airs from that corrupted well
Which oozes slime along the floor of Hell?
These are the stricken palsied brood of sin
In whose vile veins, poor, poisonous and thin,
Decoctions of embittered hatreds crawl --
These, Detractors of Lasha, cursed all!
On what gin-sodden Hags, what flaccid sires
Bred these Slugs, from what exhaust desires?
In what close prison's horror were their wiles
Watched, by what dark pow'r with evil smiles;
Or in what caverns, blocked from grace and air
Received they, then, the mandates of despair?

What! Must we our race, our tragic race, that roam
All exiled from our first and final home:
That in one moment of temptation lost
Our heritage, we wander, hunger-tossed
Beyond the Gates (still speaking with our eyes
Forever of remembered Paradise),
Must we with every gift accepted, still,
With every joy, receive attendant ill?
Must some lewd evil follow all our good
And muttering dog our brief beatitude?

A primal doom, inexorable, wise,
Permitted, ordered, even these to rise.
E'en in the shadow of so bright a Lord
Must swarm and propagate the filthy horde,
Debased, accursed, abhorrent and abhorred,
Accursed and curse-bestowing. Whosoe'er
Shall suffer their contagion, everywhere
Falls from blessedness and finds his end
To darkest realms of dark despair condemned;
And through the darkness into darkness press,
Despised, abandoned and companionless.

And when the course of either's sleep has run
We leap to life like heralds of the sun!
We from the couch in glimm'ring mornings gay
Salute as equals the exultant day,
While they, unworthy, unrewarded, they
The dense Detractors of Lasha, they arise
And watch grey dawns and mourn indifferent skies.

Forget them! Form the Dionysian ring
And pulse the ground, and Io, Io, sing!

Father in Heaven, to whom our strength belongs,
Our loves, our wars, our laughter and our songs,
Remember our inheritance, who praise
Your glory in these last unhappy days
When beauty sickens and a muddied robe
Of baseness fouls the universal globe.
Though all the gods indignant and their train
Abandon ruined man, do thou remain!

But since I would not, since I could not stay,
Let me remember now in this my day
That when the fleeting vision's lure is past,
All mortals face their Passion at the last.

When from the waste of such long labor done
I too must leave the light and heat of sun
And like the tired worker take my way
Down the long shadows of declining day,
Bend Thou from somber plains my clouded sight
And leave the mountains to advancing night;
When comes to term all things that were mine own
With nothingness before me, and alone;
Then to what hope of answer shall I turn?

Comrade-Commander whom I dared not earn,
What said Thee then to trembling friends and few?
"A moment, and I drink with you anew:
But in my Father's Kingdom." So, my Friend,
Let not Your cup desert me in the end,
But when the hour of mine adventure's near,
Just and benignant, let my youth appear
Bearing a Chalice, open, golden, wide,
With benediction graven on its side.
So touch my dying lip: so bridge that deep:
So pledge my waking from the gift of sleep,
Until reclined where dried be every tear,
With you, my God, and Lasha too, most dear.

By Darrell Wright, 2021; adapted from "Heroic Poem in
Praise of Wine" by Hilaire Belloc (1931)
[Note: "Heroic" from "heroic couplet", i.e. a 10-10 metre (10
syllables in each line usually) with AA/BB rhyme scheme.]