

CHRISTOPHER LOGUE

## *The Song of Autobiography*

- 1926 I came among you in a time of hunger.  
My daybreak split on a dockyard suburb.  
Gunboats lay like scum on the water.
- I, Christopher Logue, was baptised next year  
While many thousands of Englishmen,  
Fists clenched, ther bellies empty,
- Walked day and night on the Capital city.  
This three year child walked with them.  
This triple step's best foot still must. Amen.
- One class gained time. One lost that time.  
I asked my mother, who are those men  
Singing down the gutter to spoons and little drums?
- She said, the out of work and lame.  
Lame from what? Lame from war.  
In the streets many policemen.
- Six. And the sun and air struck wealth  
Into my body's side. Mother, I cried,  
Where does that cripple's walk come from?
- The open market or work, my son.  
His bib went into her bottom drawer.  
Ask no more. But agree among you, how, as he slept,
- Tight as a bean, others scarce born  
Took picks grey as silver through the level rain,  
For pence and pence, went mowing or worse.
- Nine times November had passed through me when  
Germany's iron womb let out its holy man.  
A scourge walked upright in your room. Outside
- Rain fell, moist red, through Spanish undershirts,  
Drenching the paliasse, the donkey hurt,  
Man, woman, and their childer running dead,
- My father said and changed his priest. Amen.  
I, smug thirteen, talked back: Why fret, old man? Most say  
Their black dove works. Engines run dead on time.
- 1937 Can one give back dead breath so easily yet learn  
The sun was born in a red giant's eye  
The earth was thrown from the sun's gold seed

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This hand was cast as a housewife moaned  
Given ten fingers by the world for free,  
Plain bone to make your poetry? Has it  
Thursday's shape? By Sunday, noon, black doves had flown.  
I woke. We ate in war. A neighbour said,  
What will he do, your pretty boy, to get ahead?

Fifteen I am. To be a man? To get ahead  
Is ahead of whom? Whose baldy crown shall fall  
A little dead to keep me housed and fed?

Neighbour, what is a man, I said?  
Five words to last my thirty years that night.  
Neighbour, take care your son is not a trouble maker.

Schools have been built to keep like thoughts from sight.  
Away, away, bombed-out, I learnt to sing  
Hymns madrigals the Ringarango,

Beat and be beaten, play our game, amen,  
And we'll play ball with you. Outside  
Those sixteenth century walls, a pyramid

Six million Jewish bodies high lay gassed in shit.  
What is a man their shilling soldier cried?  
His upper lip gone stiff with keeping

Ten toes against the English party line  
That stretches from Threadneedle Street to the hangy-judge,  
His Priest, our Qu-shut up: as wrong as gold

1946 Her shilling slept for two deep years among  
The Royal stones of our huge Colonial gaols.  
Home, I climbed by gazebo in Dorsetshire to see

How far my mind's eye pierced the sun's hot infinity  
And saw instead of self the lit peninsulars of Asia glint  
In our backyard. The red spark scratched my eye.

If men rebel I must rebel with them; step out,  
My hoity mates into the common time. Or die. And the sea got dark.  
When I can down the lobster pots were dipped

In their May tar by men I knew because they fished  
Out of my country, where the spend a penny means  
To piss. Amen. Too pert a truth. For what can three

And twenty do but fall in love? He did? Yes. Yes,  
Fell down inside myself because she pushed  
And it was shallow so he bust his conk.

Our last morality called love is cauls alone.  
Too private, honey. One plus one makes pain,  
If either of the one thinks love the axle

And the stem round which the dumb earth spins  
 O Eve, Eve, Eve, give back my soiled rib again!  
 Unless, as humans pair and come again in love

They are defined by bliss in a wet circumstance, and who  
 Knows love therefore knows me and I  
 May share your love with you. Alas, my love

The deal's not like that. I know. Love,  
 Is no fancy man when chops come lean.  
 And he dies hard. And we or is it I, and I,

Live out alone. Amen. Amen, again,  
 And if I dare to say it-yes, Amen again.  
 Forgive for when I think of you I am a wren

Who pisses in the sea  
 Every little helps, she says, Amen.  
 So the time passed given on earth to me.

Living off pride and turnips, too blind to see  
 How private meantime aged no heart but his  
 Until she said: We have used up the sky. What next?

Will our child have two heads, no eyes, bleed hydrogen,  
 And squeal in my wharped loins?—  
 And went away. Time tocks and that means work. For whom?

Work means great profit to the mind. Who thrives?  
 Mind is our fingertip's true shadow in the brain. Who profits,  
 Buys the fifty guinea priest to name,

Wed, put him in the earth again. Pomp.  
 For who may count his blessings is not cursed.  
 Seven lush meadows my grandma snatched;

Then other greed-inspired sires grabbed back  
 And built the curious engines they shall loose this noon.  
 Can I aid that? Alas,

Strife queers my pitch, needs graves.  
 And yet I eat and fill myself with hope.  
 1956 As the time runs given to me on earth.

*Envoi*

Men of the future think of me  
 Living at a time when one by one  
 Our kings gave way to businessmen.  
 Our poets wrote to make bother less.  
 Our wisemen, fat with caution, spoke of death.  
 And most died twice from individuality.  
 In this time on earth given by men to me.