

Classic Poetry Series

Carl Sandburg
- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Carl Sandburg(6 January 1878 – 22 July 1967)

Carl Sandburg was an American writer and editor, best known for his poetry. He won three Pulitzer Prizes, two for his poetry and another for a biography of [Abraham Lincoln](http://www.poemhunter.com/abraham-lincoln/). H. L. Mencken called Carl Sandburg "indubitably an American in every pulse-beat."

Biography

Sandburg was born in Galesburg, Illinois, to parents of Swedish ancestry. At the age of thirteen (During Eighth grade) he left school and began driving a milk wagon. From the age of about fourteen until he was seventeen or eighteen, he worked as a porter at the Union Hotel barbershop in Galesburg. After that he was on the milk route again for 18 months. He then became a bricklayer and a farm laborer on the wheat plains of Kansas. After an interval spent at Lombard College in Galesburg, he became a hotel servant in Denver, then a coal-heaver in Omaha. He began his writing career as a journalist for the Chicago Daily News. Later he wrote poetry, history, biographies, novels, children's literature, and film reviews. Sandburg also collected and edited books of ballads and folklore. He spent most of his life in the Midwest before moving to North Carolina.

Sandburg volunteered to go to the military and was stationed in Puerto Rico with the 6th Illinois Infantry during the Spanish–American War, disembarking at Guánica, Puerto Rico on July 25, 1898. Sandburg was never actually called to battle. He attended West Point for just two weeks, before failing a mathematics and grammar exam. Sandburg returned to Galesburg and entered Lombard College, but left without a degree in 1903.

He moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and joined the Social Democratic Party, the name by which the Socialist Party of America was known in the state. Sandburg served as a secretary to Emil Seidel, socialist mayor of Milwaukee from 1910 to 1912.

Sandburg met Lilian Steichen at the Social Democratic Party office in 1907, and they married the next year. Lilian's brother was the photographer Edward Steichen. Sandburg with his wife, whom he called Paula, raised three daughters.

Sandburg moved to Harbert, Michigan, and then suburban Chicago, Illinois. They lived in Evanston, Illinois, before settling at 331 S. York Street in Elmhurst, Illinois, from 1919 to 1930. Sandburg wrote three children's books in Elmhurst,

Rootabaga Stories, in 1922, followed by Rootabaga Pigeons (1923), and Potato Face (1930). Sandburg also wrote Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years, a two volume biography in 1926, The American Songbag (1927), and a book of poems Good Morning, America (1928) in Elmhurst. The family moved to Michigan in 1930. The Sandburg house at 331 W. York Street, Elmhurst was demolished and the site is now a parking lot. The War Years, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1940. Sandburg's Complete Poems won him a second Pulitzer Prize in 1951.

He moved to a Flat Rock, North Carolina estate, Connemara, in 1945 and lived there until his death in 1967.

Sandburg supported the civil rights movement, and contributed to the NAACP.

Works

Carl Sandburg rented a room in this house where he lived for three years while he wrote the poem "Chicago". It's now a Chicago landmark. Much of Carl Sandburg's poetry, such as "Chicago", focused on Chicago, Illinois, where he spent time as a reporter for the Chicago Daily News and the Day Book. His most famous description of the city is as "Hog Butcher for the World/Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat/Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler,/Stormy, Husky, Brawling, City of the Big Shoulders."

Sandburg is also remembered by generations of children for his Rootabaga Stories and Rootabaga Pigeons, a series of whimsical, sometimes melancholy stories he originally created for his own daughters. The Rootabaga Stories were born of Sandburg's desire for "American fairy tales" to match American childhood. He felt that the European stories involving royalty and knights were inappropriate, and so populated his stories with skyscrapers, trains, corn fairies and the "Five Marvelous Pretzels".

Sandburg earned Pulitzer Prizes for his collection The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg, Corn Huskers, and for his biography of Abraham Lincoln (Abraham Lincoln: The War Years). He recorded excerpts from the biography and some of Lincoln's speeches for Caedmon Records in New York City in May 1957. He was awarded a Grammy Award in 1959 for Best Performance – Documentary Or Spoken Word (Other Than Comedy) for his recording of Aaron Copland's Lincoln Portrait with the New York Philharmonic.

Legacy

Carl Sandburg's boyhood home in Galesburg is now operated by the Illinois

Historic Preservation Agency as the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site. The site contains the cottage Sandburg was born in, a modern visitor's center, and small garden with a large stone called Remembrance Rock, under which he and his wife Lilian's ashes are buried. Sandburg's home of 22 years in Flat Rock, Henderson County, North Carolina, is preserved by the National Park Service as the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site. Carl Sandburg College is located in Sandburg's birthplace of Galesburg, Illinois.

Carl Sandburg Village was a Chicago urban renewal project of the 1960s located in the Near North Side, Chicago. Financed by the city, it is located between Clark and LaSalle St. between Division Street and North Ave. Solomon & Cordwell, architects. In 1979, Carl Sandburg Village was converted to condominium ownership.

Elmhurst, Illinois, renamed the former Elmhurst Junior High School as 'Carl Sandburg Middle School,' in his honor in 1960. Sandburg spoke at the dedication ceremony. He resided at 331 S. York Street in Elmhurst from 1919 to 1930. The house was demolished and the site is a parking lot. In 1954, Carl Sandburg High School was dedicated in Orland Park, Illinois. Mr. Sandburg was in attendance, and stretched what was supposed to be a one hour event into several hours, regaling students with songs and stories. Years later, he returned to the school with no identification and, appearing to be a hobo, was thrown out by the principal. When he later returned with I.D., the embarrassed principal canceled the rest of the school day and held an assembly to honor the visit. In 1959, Carl Sandburg Junior High School was opened in Golden Valley, Minnesota. Carl Sandburg attended the dedication of the school. In 1988 the name was changed to Sandburg Middle School servicing grades 6, 7, and 8. Originally built with a capacity for 1,800 students the school now has 1,100 students enrolled. Sandburg Middle school was one of the first schools in the state of Minnesota to offer accelerated learning programs for gifted students. In December 1961, Carl Sandburg Elementary School was dedicated in San Bruno, California. Again, Sandburg came for the ceremonies and was clearly impressed with the faces of the young children, who gathered around him. The school was closed in the 1980s, due to falling enrollments in the San Bruno Park School District.

In Neshaminy School District of lower Bucks County resides the secondary institution Carl Sandburg Middle School. Located in the lobby is a finished split tree trunk with the quote engraved lengthwise horizontally: "Man is born with rainbows in his heart and you'll never read him unless you consider rainbows". Another secondary school by the same name is located south of Alexandria, Virginia, and is part of the Fairfax County Public Schools School District. Sandburg Halls is a student residence hall at the University of

Wisconsin–Milwaukee. The building consists of 4 high rise towers with a total housing capacity of 2,700 students. It has an exterior plaque on Sandburg's roles as an organizer for the Social Democratic Party and as personal secretary to Emil Seidel, Milwaukee's first Socialist mayor. There are several other schools named after Sandburg in Illinois, including those in Wheaton, Orland Park, Springfield, Mundelein, and Joliet.

A Coin

Your western heads here cast on money,
You are the two that fade away together,
Partners in the mist.

Lunging buffalo shoulder,
Lean Indian face,
We who come after where you are gone
Salute your forms on the new nickel.

You are
To us:
The past.

Runners
On the prairie:
Good-by.

Carl Sandburg

A Father To His Son

A father sees his son nearing manhood.
What shall he tell that son?
'Life is hard; be steel; be a rock.'
And this might stand him for the storms
and serve him for humdrum monotony
and guide him among sudden betrayals
and tighten him for slack moments.
'Life is a soft loam; be gentle; go easy.'
And this too might serve him.
Brutes have been gentled where lashes failed.
The growth of a frail flower in a path up
has sometimes shattered and split a rock.
A tough will counts. So does desire.
So does a rich soft wanting.
Without rich wanting nothing arrives.
Tell him too much money has killed men
and left them dead years before burial:
the quest of lucre beyond a few easy needs
has twisted good enough men
sometimes into dry thwarted worms.
Tell him time as a stuff can be wasted.
Tell him to be a fool every so often
and to have no shame over having been a fool
yet learning something out of every folly
hoping to repeat none of the cheap follies
thus arriving at intimate understanding
of a world numbering many fools.
Tell him to be alone often and get at himself
and above all tell himself no lies about himself
whatever the white lies and protective fronts
he may use against other people.
Tell him solitude is creative if he is strong
and the final decisions are made in silent rooms.
Tell him to be different from other people
if it comes natural and easy being different.
Let him have lazy days seeking his deeper motives.
Let him seek deep for where he is born natural.
Then he may understand Shakespeare
and the Wright brothers, Pasteur, Pavlov,

Michael Faraday and free imaginations
Bringing changes into a world resenting change.
He will be lonely enough
to have time for the work
he knows as his own.

Carl Sandburg

A Fence

Now the stone house on the lake front is finished and the workmen are beginning the fence.

The palings are made of iron bars with steel points that can stab the life out of any man who falls on them.

As a fence, it is a masterpiece, and will shut off the rabble and all vagabonds and hungry men and all wandering children looking for a place to play.

Passing through the bars and over the steel points will go nothing except Death and the Rain and To-morrow.

Carl Sandburg

A Million Young Work Men

A million young workmen straight and strong lay stiff on the grass and roads,
And the million are now under soil and their rotting flesh will in the years feed
roots of blood-red roses.

Yes, this million of young workmen slaughtered one another and never saw their
red hands.

And oh, it would have been a great job of killing and a new and beautiful thing
under the sun if the million knew why they hacked and tore each other to death.
The kings are grinning, the Kaiser and the czar—they are alive riding in leather-
seated motor cars, and they have their women and roses for ease, and they eat
fresh-poached eggs for breakfast, new butter on toast, sitting in tall water-tight
houses reading the news of war.

I dreamed a million ghosts of the young workmen rose in their shirts all soaked
in crimson ... and yelled:

God damn the grinning kings, God damn the kaiser and the czar.

Carl Sandburg

A Sphinx

Close-mouthed you sat five thousand years and never let out a whisper.
Processions came by, marchers, asking questions you answered with grey eyes
never blinking, shut lips never talking.
Not one croak of anything you know has come from your cat crouch of ages.
I am one of those who know all you know and I keep my questions: I know the
answers you hold.

Carl Sandburg

A Tall Man

The mouth of this man is a gaunt strong mouth.
The head of this man is a gaunt strong head.

The jaws of this man are bone of the Rocky Mountains, the Appalachians.
The eyes of this man are chlorine of two sobbing oceans,
Foam, salt, green, wind, the changing unknown.
The neck of this man is pith of buffalo prairie, old longing and new beckoning of
corn belt or cotton belt,
Either a proud Sequoia trunk of the wilderness
Or huddling lumber of a sawmill waiting to be a roof.

Brother mystery to man and mob mystery,
Brother cryptic to lifted cryptic hands,
He is night and abyss, he is white sky of sun, he is the head of the people.
The heart of him the red drops of the people,
The wish of him the steady gray-eagle crag-hunting flights of the people.

Humble dust of a wheel-worn road,
Slashed sod under the iron-shining plow,
These of service in him, these and many cities, many borders, many wrangles
between Alaska and the Isthmus, between the Isthmus and the Horn, and east
and west of Omaha, and east and west of Paris, Berlin, Petrograd.
The blood in his right wrist and the blood in his left wrist run with the right wrist
wisdom of the many and the left wrist wisdom of the many.
It is the many he knows, the gaunt strong hunger of the many.

Carl Sandburg

A Teamster's Farewell

Sobs En Route to a Penitentiary

Good-by now to the streets and the clash of wheels and
locking hubs,
The sun coming on the brass buckles and harness knobs.
The muscles of the horses sliding under their heavy
haunches,
Good-by now to the traffic policeman and his whistle,
The smash of the iron hoof on the stones,
All the crazy wonderful slamming roar of the street-
O God, there's noises I'm going to be hungry for.

Carl Sandburg

A.E.F.

There will be a rusty gun on the wall, sweetheart,
The rifle grooves curling with flakes of rust.
A spider will make a silver string nest in the
darkest, warmest corner of it.
The trigger and the range-finder, they too will be rusty.
And no hands will polish the gun, and it will hang on the wall.
Forefingers and thumbs will point casually toward it.
It will be spoken among half-forgotten, wished-to-be-forgotten things.
They will tell the spider: Go on, you're doing good work.

Carl Sandburg

Accomplished Facts

Every year Emily Dickinson sent one friend
the first arbutus bud in her garden.

In a last will and testament Andrew Jackson
remembered a friend with the gift of George
Washington's pocket spy-glass.

Napoleon too, in a last testament, mentioned a silver
watch taken from the bedroom of Frederick the Great,
and passed along this trophy to a particular friend.

O. Henry took a blood carnation from his coat lapel
and handed it to a country girl starting work in a
bean bazaar, and scribbled: "Peach blossoms may or
may not stay pink in city dust."

So it goes. Some things we buy, some not.

Tom Jefferson was proud of his radishes, and Abe
Lincoln blacked his own boots, and Bismarck called
Berlin a wilderness of brick and newspapers.

So it goes. There are accomplished facts.
Ride, ride, ride on in the great new blimps—
Cross unheard-of oceans, circle the planet.
When you come back we may sit by five hollyhocks.
We might listen to boys fighting for marbles.
The grasshopper will look good to us.

So it goes ...

Carl Sandburg

Adelaide Crapsey

Among the bumble-bees in red-top hay, a freckled field of brown-eyed Susans
dripping yellow leaves in July,
I read your heart in a book.

And your mouth of blue pansy—I know somewhere I have seen it rain-shattered.

And I have seen a woman with her head flung between her naked knees, and her
head held there listening to the sea, the great naked sea shouldering a load of
salt.

And the blue pansy mouth sang to the sea:
Mother of God, I'm so little a thing,
Let me sing longer,
Only a little longer.

And the sea shouldered its salt in long gray combers hauling new shapes on the
beach sand.

Carl Sandburg

Alix

The mare Alix breaks the world's trotting record one day. I see her heels flash down the dust of an Illinois race track on a summer afternoon. I see the timekeepers put their heads together over stopwatches, and call to the grand stand a split second is clipped off the old world's record and a new world's record fixed.

I see the mare Alix led away by men in undershirts and streaked faces. Dripping Alix in foam of white on the harness and shafts. And the men in undershirts kiss her ears and rub her nose, and tie blankets on her, and take her away to have the sweat sponged.

I see the grand stand jammed with prairie people yelling themselves hoarse. Almost the grand stand and the crowd of thousands are one pair of legs and one voice standing up and yelling hurrah.

I see the driver of Alix and the owner smothered in a fury of handshakes, a mob of caresses. I see the wives of the driver and owner smothered in a crush of white summer dresses and parasols.

Hours later, at sundown, gray dew creeping on the sod and sheds, I see Alix again:

Dark, shining-velvet Alix,
Night-sky Alix in a gray blanket,
Led back and forth by a nigger.
Velvet and night-eyed Alix
With slim legs of steel.

And I want to rub my nose against the nose of the mare Alix.

Carl Sandburg

All Day Long

All day long in fog and wind,
The waves have flung their beating crests
Against the palisades of adamant.
My boy, he went to sea, long and long ago,
Curls of brown were slipping underneath his cap,
He looked at me from blue and steely eyes;
Natty, straight and true, he stepped away,
My boy, he went to sea.
All day long in fog and wind,
The waves have flung their beating crests
Against the palisades of adamant.

Carl Sandburg

Alley Rats

They were calling certain styles of whiskers by the name of "lilacs."
And another manner of beard assumed in their chatter a verbal guise
Of "mutton chops," "galways," "feather dusters."

Metaphors such as these sprang from their lips while other street cries
Sprang from sparrows finding scattered oats among interstices of the curb.
Ah-hah these metaphors—and Ah-hah these boys—among the police they were
known

As the Dirty Dozen and their names took the front pages of newspapers
And two of them croaked on the same day at a "necktie party" ... if we employ
the metaphors of their lips.

Carl Sandburg

Always The Mob

Jesus emptied the devils of one man into forty hogs and the hogs took the edge of a high rock and dropped off and down into the sea: a mob.

The sheep on the hills of Australia, blundering fourfooted in the sunset mist to the dark, they go one way, they hunt one sleep, they find one pocket of grass for all.

Karnak? Pyramids? Sphinx paws tall as a coolie? Tombs kept for kings and sacred cows? A mob.

Young roast pigs and naked dancing girls of Belshazzar, the room where a thousand sat guzzling when a hand wrote: Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin? A mob.

The honeycomb of green that won the sun as the Hanging Gardens of Nineveh, flew to its shape at the hands of a mob that followed the fingers of Nebuchadnezzar: a mob of one hand and one plan.

Stones of a circle of hills at Athens, staircases of a mountain in Peru, scattered clans of marble dragons in China: each a mob on the rim of a sunrise: hammers and wagons have them now.

Locks and gates of Panama? The Union Pacific crossing deserts and tunneling mountains? The Woolworth on land and the Titanic at sea? Lighthouses blinking a coast line from Labrador to Key West? Pig iron bars piled on a barge whistling in a fog off Sheboygan? A mob: hammers and wagons have them to-morrow.

The mob? A typhoon tearing loose an island from thousand-year moorings and bastions, shooting a volcanic ash with a fire tongue that licks up cities and peoples. Layers of worms eating rocks and forming loam and valley floors for potatoes, wheat, watermelons.

The mob? A jag of lightning, a geyser, a gravel mass loosening...

The mob ... kills or builds ... the mob is Attila or Ghengis Khan, the mob is Napoleon, Lincoln.

I am born in the mob—I die in the mob—the same goes for you—I don't care who you are.

I cross the sheets of fire in No Man's land for you, my brother—I slip a steel
tooth into your throat, you my brother—I die for you and I kill you—It is a
twisted and gnarled thing, a crimson wool:

One more arch of stars,
In the night of our mist,
In the night of our tears.

Carl Sandburg

Among The Red Guns

Among the red guns,
In the hearts of soldiers
Running free blood
In the long, long campaign:
Dreams go on.

Among the leather saddles,
In the heads of soldiers
Heavy in the wracks and kills
Of all straight fighting:
Dreams go on.

Among the hot muzzles,
In the hands of soldiers
Brought from flesh-folds of women--
Soft amid the blood and crying--
In all your hearts and heads
Among the guns and saddles and muzzles:

Dreams,
Dreams go on,
Out of the dead on their backs,
Broken and no use any more:
Dreams of the way and the end go on.

Carl Sandburg

An Electric Sign Goes Dark

Poland, France, Judea ran in her veins,
Singing to Paris for bread, singing to Gotham in a fizz at the pop of a bottle's
cork.

"Won't you come and play wiz me" she sang ... and "I just can't make my eyes
behave."

"Higgeldy-Piggeldy," "Papa's Wife," "Follow Me" were plays.

Did she wash her feet in a tub of milk? Was a strand of pearls sneaked from her
trunk? The newspapers asked.

Cigarettes, tulips, pacing horses, took her name.

Twenty years old ... thirty ... forty ...

Forty-five and the doctors fathom nothing, the doctors quarrel, the doctors use
silver tubes feeding twenty-four quarts of blood into the veins, the respects of a
prize-fighter, a cab driver.

And a little mouth moans: It is easy to die when they are dying so many grand
deaths in France.

A voice, a shape, gone.

A baby bundle from Warsaw ... legs, torso, head ... on a hotel bed at The Savoy.
The white chiselings of flesh that flung themselves in somersaults, straddles, for
packed houses:

A memory, a stage and footlights out, an electric sign on Broadway dark.

She belonged to somebody, nobody.

No one man owned her, no ten nor a thousand.

She belonged to many thousand men, lovers of the white chiseling of arms and
shoulders, the ivory of a laugh, the bells of song.

Railroad brakemen taking trains across Nebraska prairies, lumbermen jaunting in
pine and tamarack of the Northwest, stock ranchers in the middle west, mayors
of southern cities

Say to their pals and wives now: I see by the papers Anna Held is dead.

Carl Sandburg

And So To-Day

And so to-day- they lay him away-
the boy nobody knows the name of-
the buck private- the unknown soldier-
the doughboy who dug under and died
when they told him to- that's him.

Down Pennsylvania Avenue to-day the riders go,
men and boys riding horses, roses in their teeth,
stems of roses, rose leaf stalks, rose dark leaves-
the line of the green ends in a red rose flash.

Skeleton men and boys riding skeleton horses,
the rib bones shine, the rib bones curve,
shine with savage, elegant curves-
a jawbone runs with a long white slant,
a skull dome runs with a long white arch,
bone triangles click and rattle,
elbows, ankles, white line slants-
shining in the sun, past the White House,
past the Treasury Building, Army and Navy Buildings,
on to the mystic white Capitol Dome-
so they go down Pennsylvania Avenue to-day,
skeleton men and boys riding skeleton horses,
stems of roses in their teeth,
rose dark leaves at their white jaw slants-
and a horse laugh question nickers and whinnies,
moans with a whistle out of horse head teeth:
why? who? where?

('The big fish- eat the little fish-
the little fish- eat the shrimps-
and the shrimps- eat mud,'-
said a cadaverous man- with a black umbrella-
spotted with white polka dots- with a missing
ear- with a missing foot and arms-
with a missing sheath of muscles
singing to the silver sashes of the sun.)

And so to-day- they lay him away-

the boy nobody knows the name of-
the buck private- the unknown soldier-
the doughboy who dug under and died
when they told him to- that's him.

If he picked himself and said, 'I am ready to die,'
if he gave his name and said, 'My country, take me,'
then the baskets of roses to-day are for the Boy,
the flowers, the songs, the steamboat whistles,
the proclamations of the honorable orators,
they are all for the Boy- that's him.

If the government of the Republic picked him saying,
'You are wanted, your country takes you'-
if the Republic put a stethoscope to his heart
and looked at his teeth and tested his eyes and said,
'You are a citizen of the Republic and a sound
animal in all parts and functions- the Republic takes you'-
then to-day the baskets of flowers are all for the Republic,
the roses, the songs, the steamboat whistles,
the proclamations of the honorable orators-
they are all for the Republic.

And so to-day- they lay him away-
and an understanding goes- his long sleep shall be
under arms and arches near the Capitol Dome-
there is an authorization- he shall have tomb companions-
the martyred presidents of the Republic-
the buck private- the unknown soldier- that's him.

The man who was war commander of the armies of the Republic
rides down Pennsylvania Avenue-
The man who is peace commander of the armies of the Republic
rides down Pennsylvania Avenue-
for the sake of the Boy, for the sake of the Republic.

(And the hoofs of the skeleton horses
all drum soft on the asphalt footing-
so soft is the drumming, so soft the roll call
of the grinning sergeants calling the roll call-
so soft is it all- a camera man murmurs, 'Moonshine.')

Look- who salutes the coffin-
lays a wreath of remembrance
on the box where a buck private
sleeps a clean dry sleep at last-
look- it is the highest ranking general
of the officers of the armies of the Republic.

(Among pigeon corners of the Congressional Library- they
file documents quietly, casually, all in a day's work-
this human document, the buck private nobody knows the
name of- they file away in granite and steel- with music
and roses, salutes, proclamations of the honorable
orators.)

Across the country, between two ocean shore lines,
where cities cling to rail and water routes,
there people and horses stop in their foot tracks,
cars and wagons stop in their wheel tracks-
faces at street crossings shine with a silence
of eggs laid in a row on a pantry shelf-
among the ways and paths of the flow of the Republic
faces come to a standstill, sixty clockticks count-
in the name of the Boy, in the name of the Republic.

(A million faces a thousand miles from Pennsylvania Avenue
stay frozen with a look, a clocktick, a moment-
skeleton riders on skeleton horses- the nickering high horse
laugh,
the whinny and the howl up Pennsylvania Avenue:
who? why? where?)

(So people far from the asphalt footing of Pennsylvania
Avenue look, wonder, mumble- the riding white-jaw
phantoms ride hi-eeee, hi-eeee, hi-yi, hi-yi, hi-eeee-
the proclamations of the honorable orators mix with the
top-sergeants whistling the roll call.)

If when the clockticks counted sixty,
when the heartbeats of the Republic
came to a stop for a minute,
if the Boy had happened to sit up,
happening to sit up as Lazarus sat up, in the story,

then the first shivering language to drip off his mouth
might have come as, 'Thank God,' or 'Am I dreaming?'
or 'What the hell' or 'When do we eat?'
or 'Kill 'em, kill 'em, the....'
or 'Was that ... a rat ... ran over my face?'
or 'For Christ's sake, gimme water, gimme water,'
or 'Blub blub, bloo bloo....'
or any bubbles of shell shock gibberish
from the gashes of No Man's Land.

Maybe some buddy knows,
some sister, mother, sweetheart,
maybe some girl who sat with him once
when a two-horn silver moon
slid on the peak of a house-roof gable,
and promises lived in the air of the night,
when the air was filled with promises,
when any little slip-shoe lovey
could pick a promise out of the air.

'Feed it to 'em,
they lap it up,
bull ... bull ... bull,'

Said a movie news reel camera man,
Said a Washington newspaper correspondent,
Said a baggage handler lugging a trunk,
Said a two-a-day vaudeville juggler,
Said a hanky-pank selling jumping-jacks.
'Hokum- they lap it up,' said the bunch.

And a tall scar-face ball player,
Played out as a ball player,
Made a speech of his own for the hero boy,
Sent an earful of his own to the dead buck private:
'It's all safe now, buddy,
Safe when you say yes,
Safe for the yes-men.'

He was a tall scar-face battler
With his face in a newspaper
Reading want ads, reading jokes,
Reading love, murder, politics,

Jumping from jokes back to the want ads,
Reading the want ads first and last,
The letters of the word JOB, 'J-O-B,'
Burnt like a shot of bootleg booze
In the bones of his head-
In the wish of his scar-face eyes.

The honorable orators,
Always the honorable orators,
Buttoning the buttons on their prinz alberts,
Pronouncing the syllables 'sac-ri-fice,'
Juggling those bitter salt-soaked syllables-
Do they ever gag with hot ashes in their mouths?
Do their tongues ever shrivel with a pain of fire
Across those simple syllables 'sac-ri-fice'?

(There was one orator people far off saw.
He had on a gunnysack shirt over his bones,
And he lifted an elbow socket over his head,
And he lifted a skinny signal finger.
And he had nothing to say, nothing easy-
He mentioned ten million men, mentioned them as having gone west,
mentioned them as shoving up the daisies.
We could write it all on a postage stamp, what he said.
He said it and quit and faded away,
A gunnysack shirt on his bones.)

Stars of the night sky,
did you see that phantom fadeout,
did you see those phantom riders,
skeleton riders on skeleton horses,
stems of roses in their teeth,
rose leaves red on white-jaw slants,
grinning along on Pennsylvania Avenue,
the top-sergeants calling roll calls-
did their horses nicker a horse laugh?
did the ghosts of the boney battalions
move out and on, up the Potomac, over on the Ohio
and out to the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Red River,
and down to the Rio Grande, and on to the Yazoo,
over to the Chattahoochee and up to the Rappahannock?
did you see 'em, stars of the night sky?

And so to-day- they lay him away-
the boy nobody knows the name of-
they lay him away in granite and steel-
with music and roses- under a flag-
under a sky of promises.

Carl Sandburg

And They Obey

Smash down the cities.
Knock the walls to pieces.
Break the factories and cathedrals, warehouses
and homes
Into loose piles of stone and lumber and black
burnt wood:
You are the soldiers and we command you.
Build up the cities.
Set up the walls again.
Put together once more the factories and cathedrals,
warehouses and homes
Into buildings for life and labor:
You are workmen and citizens all: We
command you.

Carl Sandburg

And This Will Be All....

And this will be all?
And the gates will never open again?
And the dust and the wind will play around the rusty door hinges and the songs
of October moan, Why-oh, why-oh?

And you will look to the mountains
And the mountains will look to you
And you will wish you were a mountain
And the mountain will wish nothing at all?
This will be all?
The gates will never-never open again?

The dust and the wind only
And the rusty door hinges and moaning October
And Why-oh, why-oh, in the moaning dry leaves,
This will be all?

Nothing in the air but songs
And no singers, no mouths to know the songs?
You tell us a woman with a heartache tells you it is so?
This will be all?

Carl Sandburg

Anna Imroth

Cross the hands over the breast here--so.
Straighten the legs a little more--so.
And call for the wagon to come and take her home.
Her mother will cry some and so will her sisters and
brothers.
But all of the others got down and they are safe and
this is the only one of the factory girls who
wasn't lucky in making the jump when the fire broke.
It is the hand of God and the lack of fire escapes.

Carl Sandburg

Aprons Of Silence

Many things I might have said today.
And I kept my mouth shut.
So many times I was asked
To come and say the same things
Everybody was saying, no end
To the yes-yes, yes-yes,
me-too, me-too.

The aprons of silence covered me.
A wire and hatch held my tongue.
I spit nails into an abyss and listened.
I shut off the gable of Jones, Johnson, Smith,
All whose names take pages in the city directory.

I fixed up a padded cell and lugged it around.
I locked myself in and nobody knew it.
Only the keeper and the kept in the hoosegow
Knew it--on the streets, in the post office,
On the cars, into the railroad station
Where the caller was calling, "All a-board,
All a-board for . . . Blaa-blaa . . . Blaa-blaa,
Blaa-blaa . . . and all points northwest . . .all a-board."
Here I took along my own hoosegow
And did business with my own thoughts.
Do you see? It must be the aprons of silence.

Carl Sandburg

Ashurnatsirpal Iii

Three walls around the town of Tela when I came.
They expected everything of those walls;
Nobody in the town came out to kiss my feet.

I knocked the walls down, killed three thousand soldiers,
Took away cattle and sheep, took all the loot in sight,
And burned special captives.

Some of the soldiers—I cut off hands and feet.
Others—I cut off ears and fingers.
Some—I put out the eyes.
I made a pyramid of heads.
I strung heads on trees circling the town.

When I got through with it
There wasn't much left of the town of Tela.

Carl Sandburg

At A Window

Give me hunger,
O you gods that sit and give
The world its orders.
Give me hunger, pain and want,
Shut me out with shame and failure
From your doors of gold and fame,
Give me your shabbiest, weariest hunger!

But leave me a little love,
A voice to speak to me in the day end,
A hand to touch me in the dark room
Breaking the long loneliness.
In the dusk of day-shapes
Blurring the sunset,
One little wandering, western star
Thrust out from the changing shores of shadow.
Let me go to the window,
Watch there the day-shapes of dusk
And wait and know the coming
Of a little love.

Carl Sandburg

Aztec

You came from the Aztecs
With a copper on your fore-arms
Tawnier than a sunset
Saying good-by to an even river.

And I said, you remember,
Those fore-arms of yours
Were finer than bronzes
And you were glad.

It was tears
And a path west
and a home-going
when I asked
Why there were scars of worn gold
Where a man's ring was fixed once
On your third finger.
And I call you
To come back
before the days are longer.

Carl Sandburg

Aztec Mask

I wanted a man's face looking into the jaws and throat of life
With something proud on his face, so proud no smash of the jaws,
No gulp of the throat leaves the face in the end
With anything else than the old proud look:
Even to the finish, dumped in the dust,
Lost among the used-up cinders,
This face, men would say, is a flash,
Is laid on bones taken from the ribs of the earth,
Ready for the hammers of changing, changing years,
Ready for the sleeping, sleeping years of silence.
Ready for the dust and fire and wind.
I wanted this face and I saw it today in an Aztec mask.
A cry out of storm and dark, a red yell and a purple prayer,
A beaten shape of ashes
waiting the sunrise or night,
something or nothing,
proud-mouthed,
proud-eyed gambler.

Carl Sandburg

Baby Face

White moon comes in on a baby face.
The shafts across her bed are flimmering.

Out on the land White Moon shines,
Shines and glimmers against gnarled shadows,
All silver to slow twisted shadows
Falling across the long road that runs from the house.

Keep a little of your beauty
And some of your flimmering silver
For her by the window to-night
Where you come in, White Moon.

Carl Sandburg

Baby Toes

There is a blue star, Janet,
Fifteen years' ride from us,
If we ride a hundred miles an hour.

There is a white star, Janet,
Forty years' ride from us,
If we ride a hundred miles an hour.

Shall we ride
To the blue star
Or the white star?

Carl Sandburg

Baby Vamps

Baby vamps, is it harder work than it used to be?

Are the new soda parlors worse than the old time saloons?

Baby vamps, do you have jobs in the day time or is this all you do? do you come out only at night?

In the winter at the skating rinks, in the summer at the roller coaster parks,
Wherever figure eights are carved, by skates in winter, by roller coasters in
summer,

Wherever the whirligigs are going and chicken spanish and hot dog are sold,
There you come, giggling baby vamp, there you come with your blue baby eyes,
saying:

Take me along.

Carl Sandburg

Back Yard

Shine on, O moon of summer.
Shine to the leaves of grass, catalpa and oak,
All silver under your rain to-night.

An Italian boy is sending songs to you to-night from an accordion.
A Polish boy is out with his best girl; they marry next month; to-night they are
throwing you kisses.

An old man next door is dreaming over a sheen that sits in a cherry tree in his
back yard.

The clocks say I must go—I stay here sitting on the back porch drinking white
thoughts you rain down.

Shine on, O moon,
Shake out more and more silver changes.

Carl Sandburg

Balloon Faces

The Balloons hang on wires in the Marigold Gardens.

They spot their yellow and gold, they juggle their blue and red, they float their faces on the face of the sky.

Balloon face eaters sit by hundreds reading the eat cards, asking, "What shall we eat?"—and the waiters, "Have you ordered?" they are sixty balloon faces sifting white over the tuxedos.

Poets, lawyers, ad men, mason contractors, smartalecks discussing "educated jackasses," here they put crabs into their balloon faces.

Here sit the heavy balloon face women lifting crimson lobsters into their crimson faces, lobsters out of Saragossa sea bottoms.

Here sits a man cross-examining a woman, "Where were you last night? What do you do with all your money? Who's buying your shoes now, anyhow?"

So they sit eating whitefish, two balloon faces swept on God's night wind.

And all the time the balloon spots on the wires, a little mile of festoons, they play their own silence play of film yellow and film gold, bubble blue and bubble red.

The wind crosses the town, the wind from the west side comes to the banks of marigolds boxed in the Marigold Gardens.

Night moths fly and fix their feet in the leaves and eat and are seen by the eaters.

The jazz outfit sweats and the drums and the saxophones reach for the ears of the eaters.

The chorus brought from Broadway works at the fun and the slouch of their shoulders, the kick of their ankles, reach for the eyes of the eaters.

These girls from Kokomo and Peoria, these hungry girls, since they are paid-for, let us look on and listen, let us get their number.

Why do I go again to the balloons on the wires, something for nothing, kin women of the half-moon, dream women?

And the half-moon swinging on the wind crossing the town—these two, the half-moon and the wind—this will be about all, this will be about all.

Eaters, go to it; your mazuma pays for it all; it's a knockout, a classy knockout—and payday always comes.

Carl Sandburg

Baltic Fog Notes

Seven days all fog, all mist, and the turbines pounding through high seas.

I was a plaything, a rat's neck in the teeth of a scuffling mastiff.

Fog and fog and no stars, sun, moon.

Then an afternoon in fjords, low-lying lands scrawled in granite languages on a gray sky,

A night harbor, blue dusk mountain shoulders against a night sky,

And a circle of lights blinking: Ninety thousand people here.

Among the Wednesday night thousands in goloshes and coats slickered for rain,
I learned how hungry I was for streets and people.

I would rather be water than anything else.

I saw a drive of salt fog and mist in the North Atlantic and an iceberg dusky as a cloud in the gray of morning.

And I saw the dream pools of fjords in Norway ... and the scarf of dancing water on the rocks and over the edges of mountain shelves.

Bury me in a mountain graveyard in Norway.

Three tongues of water sing around it with snow from the mountains.

Bury me in the North Atlantic.

A fog there from Iceland will be a murmur in gray over me and a long deep wind sob always.

Bury me in an Illinois cornfield.

The blizzards loosen their pipe organ voluntaries in winter stubble and the spring rains and the fall rains bring letters from the sea.

Carl Sandburg

Band Concert

Band concert public square Nebraska city. Flowing and circling dresses, summer-white dresses. Faces, flesh tints flung like sprays of cherry blossoms. And gigglers, God knows, gigglers, rivaling the pony whinnies of the Livery Stable Blues.

Cowboy rags and nigger rags. And boys driving sorrel horses hurl a cornfield laughter at the girls in dresses, summer-white dresses. Amid the cornet staccato and the tuba oompa, gigglers, God knows, gigglers daffy with life's razzle dazzle.

Slow good-night melodies and Home Sweet Home. And the snare drummer bookkeeper in a hardware store nods hello to the daughter of a railroad conductor—a giggle, God knows, a giggle—and the summer-white dresses filter fanwise out of the public square.

The crushed strawberries of ice cream soda places, the night wind in cottonwoods and willows, the lattice shadows of doorsteps and porches, these know more of the story.

Carl Sandburg

Basket

Speak, sir, and be wise.

Speak choosing your words, sir, like an old woman over a bushel of apples.

Carl Sandburg

Bas-Relief

Five geese deploy mysteriously.
Onward proudly with flagstuffs,
Hearses with silver bugles,
Bushes of plum-blossoms dropping
For ten mystic web-feet--
Each his own drum-major,
Each charged with the honor
Of the ancient goose nation,
Each with a nose-length surpassing
The nose-lengths of rival nations.
Somberly, slowly, unimpeachably,
Five geese deploy mysteriously.

Carl Sandburg

Bath

A man saw the whole world as a grinning skull and cross-bones. The rose flesh of life shriveled from all faces. Nothing counts. Everything is a fake. Dust to dust and ashes to ashes and then an old darkness and a useless silence. So he saw it all. Then he went to a Mischa Elman concert. Two hours waves of sound beat on his eardrums. Music washed something or other inside him. Music broke down and rebuilt something or other in his head and heart. He joined in five encores for the young Russian Jew with the fiddle. When he got outside his heels hit the sidewalk a new way. He was the same man in the same world as before. Only there was a singing fire and a climb of roses everlastingly over the world he looked on.

Carl Sandburg

Between Two Hills

Between two hills
The old town stands.
The houses loom
And the roofs and trees
And the dusk and the dark,
The damp and the dew
Are there.

The prayers are said
And the people rest
For sleep is there
And the touch of dreams
Is over all.

Carl Sandburg

Bilbea

BILBEA, I was in Babylon on Saturday night.

I saw nothing of you anywhere.

I was at the old place and the other girls were there, but no Bilbea.

Have you gone to another house? or city?

Why don't you write?

I was sorry. I walked home half-sick.

Tell me how it goes.

Send me some kind of a letter.

And take care of yourself.

Carl Sandburg

Blacklisted

Why shall I keep the old name?

What is a name anywhere anyway?

A name is a cheap thing all fathers and mothers leave each child:

A job is a job and I want to live, so

Why does God Almighty or anybody else care whether I take a new name to go by?

Carl Sandburg

Blizzard Notes

I DON'T blame the kettle drums-they are hungry.
And the snare drums-I know what they want-they are empty too.
And the harring booming bass drums-they are hungriest of all. . . .
The howling spears of the Northwest die down.
The lullabies of the Southwest get a chance, a mother song.
A cradle moon rides out of a torn hole in the ragbag top of the sky.

Carl Sandburg

Blue Island Intersection

Six streets come together here.
They feed people and wagons into the center.
In and out all day horses with thoughts of nose-bags,
Men with shovels, women with baskets and baby-buggies.
Six ends of streets and no sleep for them all day.
The people and wagons come and go, out and in.
Triangles of banks and drug stores watch.
The policemen whistle, the trolley cars bump:
Wheels, wheels, feet, feet, all day.

In the false dawn when the chickens blink
And the east shakes a lazy baby toe at tomorrow,
And the east fixes a lazy pink half-eye this way,
In the time when only one milk wagon crosses
These three streets, these six street ends,
It is the sleep time and they rest.
The triangle banks and the drug stores rest.
The policeman is gone, his star and gun sleep.
The owl car blutters along in a sleep walk.

Carl Sandburg

Blue Maroons

'YOU ****,' he flung at her.
It was more than a hundred times
He had thrown it into her face
And by this time it meant nothing to her.
She said to herself upstairs sweeping,
'Clocks are to tell time with, pitchers
Hold milk, spoons dip out gravy, and a
Coffee pot keeps the respect of those
Who drink coffee-I am a woman whose
Husband gives her a kiss once for ten
Times he throws it in my face, 'You ****.'
If I go to a small town and him along
Or if I go to a big city and him along.
What of it? Am I better off?' She swept
The upstairs and came downstairs to fix
Dinner for the family.

Carl Sandburg

Blue Ridge

BORN a million years ago you stay here a million years ...
watching the women come and live and be laid away ...
you and they thin-gray thin-dusk lovely.

So it goes: either the early morning lights are lovely or the early morning star.
I am glad I have seen racehorses, women, mountains.

Carl Sandburg

'Boes

I waited today for a freight train to pass.
Cattle cars with steers butting their horns against the
bars, went by.
And a half a dozen hoboes stood on bumpers between
cars.
Well, the cattle are respectable, I thought.
Every steer has its transportation paid for by the farmer
sending it to market,
While the hoboes are law-breakers in riding a railroad
train without a ticket.
It reminded me of ten days I spent in the Allegheny
County jail in Pittsburgh.
I got ten days even though I was a veteran of the
Spanish-American war.
Cooped in the same cell with me was an old man, a
bricklayer and a booze-fighter.
But it just happened he, too, was a veteran soldier, and
he had fought to preserve the Union and free the
niggers.
We were three in all, the other being a Lithuanian who
got drunk on pay day at the steel works and got to
fighting a policeman;
All the clothes he had was a shirt, pants and shoes--
somebody got his hat and coat and what money he
had left over when he got drunk.

Carl Sandburg

Bones

Sling me under the sea.
Pack me down in the salt and wet.
No farmer's plow shall touch my bones.
No Hamlet hold my jaws and speak
How jokes are gone and empty is my mouth.
Long, green-eyed scavengers shall pick my eyes,
Purple fish play hide-and-seeK,
And I shall be song of thunder, crash of sea,
Down on the floors of salt and wet.
Sling me ... under the sea.

Carl Sandburg

Boy And Father

THE BOY Alexander understands his father to be a famous lawyer.
The leather law books of Alexander's father fill a room like hay in a barn.
Alexander has asked his father to let him build a house like bricklayers build, a house with walls and roofs made of big leather law books.

The rain beats on the windows
And the raindrops run down the window glass
And the raindrops slide off the green blinds down the siding.
The boy Alexander dreams of Napoleon in John C. Abbott's history, Napoleon the grand and lonely man wronged, Napoleon in his life wronged and in his memory wronged.
The boy Alexander dreams of the cat Alice saw, the cat fading off into the dark and leaving the teeth of its Cheshire smile lighting the gloom.

Buffaloes, blizzards, way down in Texas, in the panhandle of Texas snuggling close to New Mexico,
These creep into Alexander's dreaming by the window when his father talks with strange men about land down in Deaf Smith County.
Alexander's father tells the strange men: Five years ago we ran a Ford out on the prairie and chased antelopes.

Only once or twice in a long while has Alexander heard his father say 'my first wife' so-and-so and such-and-such.
A few times softly the father has told Alexander, 'Your mother ... was a beautiful woman ... but we won't talk about her.'
Always Alexander listens with a keen listen when he hears his father mention 'my first wife' or 'Alexander's mother.'

Alexander's father smokes a cigar and the Episcopal rector smokes a cigar and the words come often: mystery of life, mystery of life.
These two come into Alexander's head blurry and gray while the rain beats on the windows and the raindrops run down the window glass and the raindrops slide off the green blinds and down the siding.
These and: There is a God, there must be a God, how can there be rain or sun unless there is a God?

So from the wrongs of Napoleon and the Cheshire cat smile on to the buffaloes and blizzards of Texas and on to his mother and to God, so the blurry gray rain dreams of Alexander have gone on five minutes, maybe ten, keeping slow easy

time to the raindrops on the window glass and the raindrops sliding off the green
blinds and down the siding.

Carl Sandburg

Branches

The long beautiful night of the wind and rain in April,
The long night hanging down from the drooping branches of the top of a birch
tree,
Swinging, swaying, to the wind for a partner, to the rain for a partner.
What is the humming, swishing thing they sing in the morning now?
The rain, the wind, the swishing whispers of the long slim curve so little and so
dark on the western morning sky ... these dancing girls here on an April early
morning ...
They have had a long cool beautiful night of it with their partners learning this
year's song of April.

Carl Sandburg

Brass Keys

JOY ... weaving two violet petals for a coat lapel ... painting on a slab of night sky a Christ face ... slipping new brass keys into rusty iron locks and shouldering till at last the door gives and we are in a new room ... forever and ever violet petals, slabs, the Christ face, brass keys and new rooms.

are we near or far?... is there anything else?... who comes back?... and why does love ask nothing and give all? and why is love rare as a tailed comet shaking guesses out of men at telescopes ten feet long? why does the mystery sit with its chin on the lean forearm of women in gray eyes and women in hazel eyes?

are any of these less proud, less important, than a cross-examining lawyer? are any of these less perfect than the front page of a morning newspaper?

the answers are not computed and attested in the back of an arithmetic for the verifications of the lazy

there is no authority in the phone book for us to call and ask the why, the wherefore, and the howbeit it's ... a riddle ... by God.

Carl Sandburg

Bricklayer Love

I thought of killing myself because I am only a bricklayer
and you a woman who loves the man who runs a drug store.

I don't care like I used to; I lay bricks straighter than I
used to and I sing slower handling the trowel afternoons.

When the sun is in my eyes and the ladders are shaky and the
mortar boards go wrong, I think of you.

Carl Sandburg

Bringers

Cover me over
In dusk and dust and dreams.

Cover me over
And leave me alone.

Cover me over,
You tireless, great.

Hear me and cover me,
Bringers of dusk and dust and dreams.

Carl Sandburg

Broadway

I shall never forget you, Broadway
Your golden and calling lights.

I'll remember you long,
Tall-walled river of rush and play.

Hearts that know you hate you
And lips that have given you laughter
Have gone to their ashes of life and its roses,
Cursing the dreams that were lost
In the dust of your harsh and trampled stones.

Carl Sandburg

Broken Tabernacles

Have I broken the smaller tabernacles, O Lord?

And in the destruction of these set up the greater and massive, the everlasting tabernacles?

I know nothing today, what I have done and why, O Lord, only I have broken and broken tabernacles.

They were beautiful in a way, these tabernacles torn down by strong hands swearing—

They were beautiful—why did the hypocrites carve their own names on the corner-stones? why did the hypocrites keep on singing their own names in their long noses every Sunday in these tabernacles?

Who lays any blame here among the split cornerstones?

Carl Sandburg

Broken-Face Gargoyles

ALL I can give you is broken-face gargoyles.

It is too early to sing and dance at funerals,

Though I can whisper to you I am looking for an undertaker humming a lullaby
and throwing his feet in a swift and mystic buck-and-wing, now you see it and
now you don't.

Fish to swim a pool in your garden flashing a speckled silver,

A basket of wine-saps filling your room with flame-dark for your eyes and the
tang of valley orchards for your nose,

Such a beautiful pail of fish, such a beautiful peck of apples, I cannot bring you
now.

It is too early and I am not footloose yet.

I shall come in the night when I come with a hammer and saw.

I shall come near your window, where you look out when your eyes open in the
morning,

And there I shall slam together bird-houses and bird-baths for wing-loose wrens
and hummers to live in, birds with yellow wing tips to blur and buzz soft all
summer,

So I shall make little fool homes with doors, always open doors for all and each
to run away when they want to.

I shall come just like that even though now it is early and I am not yet footloose,
Even though I am still looking for an undertaker with a raw, wind-bitten face and
a dance in his feet.

I make a date with you (put it down) for six o'clock in the evening a thousand
years from now.

All I can give you now is broken-face gargoyles.

All I can give you now is a double gorilla head with two fish mouths and four
eagle eyes hooked on a street wall, spouting water and looking two ways to the
ends of the street for the new people, the young strangers, coming, coming,
always coming.

It is early.

I shall yet be footloose.

Carl Sandburg

Bronzes

I

The bronze General Grant riding a bronze horse in Lincoln Park

Shrivels in the sun by day when the motor cars whirr by in long processions going somewhere to keep appointment for dinner and matineés and buying and selling

Though in the dusk and nightfall when high waves are piling

On the slabs of the promenade along the lake shore near by

I have seen the general dare the combers come closer
And make to ride his bronze horse out into the hoofs
and guns of the storm.

II

I cross Lincoln Park on a winter night when the snow is falling.

Lincoln in bronze stands among the white lines of snow,
his bronze forehead meeting soft echoes of the new-
sies crying forty thousand men are dead along the
Yser, his bronze ears listening to the mumbled roar
of the city at his bronze feet.

A lithe Indian on a bronze pony, Shakespeare seated with
long legs in bronze, Garibaldi in a bronze cape, they
hold places in the cold, lonely snow to-night on their
pedestals and so they will hold them past midnight
and into the dawn.

Carl Sandburg

Buckwheat

THERE was a late autumn cricket,
And two smoldering mountain sunsets
Under the valley roads of her eyes.

There was a late autumn cricket,
A hangover of summer song,
Scraping a tune
Of the late night clocks of summer,
In the late winter night fireglow,
This in a circle of black velvet at her neck.

In pansy eyes a flash, a thin rim of white light, a beach bonfire ten miles across
dunes, a speck of a fool star in night's half circle of velvet.

In the corner of the left arm a dimple, a mole, a forget-me-not, and it fluttered a
hummingbird wing, a blur in the honey-red clover, in the honey-white
buckwheat.

Carl Sandburg

Buffalo Bill

BOY heart of Johnny Jones-aching to-day?
Aching, and Buffalo Bill in town?
Buffalo Bill and ponies, cowboys, Indians?

Some of us know
All about it, Johnny Jones.

Buffalo Bill is a slanting look of the eyes,
A slanting look under a hat on a horse.
He sits on a horse and a passing look is fixed
On Johnny Jones, you and me, barelegged,
A slanting, passing, careless look under a hat on a horse.

Go clickety-clack, O pony hoofs along the street.
Come on and slant your eyes again, O Buffalo Bill.
Give us again the ache of our boy hearts.
Fill us again with the red love of prairies, dark nights, lonely wagons, and the
crack-crack of rifles sputtering flashes into an ambush.

Carl Sandburg

Buffalo Dusk

THE BUFFALOES are gone.

And those who saw the buffaloes are gone.

Those who saw the buffaloes by thousands and how they pawed the prairie sod
into dust with their hoofs, their great heads down pawing on in a great pageant
of dusk,

Those who saw the buffaloes are gone.

And the buffaloes are gone.

Carl Sandburg

Buttons

I have been watching the war map slammed up for advertising in front of the newspaper office.

Buttons—red and yellow buttons—blue and black buttons—are shoved back and forth across the map.

A laughing young man, sunny with freckles,
Climbs a ladder, yells a joke to somebody in the crowd,
And then fixes a yellow button one inch west
And follows the yellow button with a black button one inch west.

(Ten thousand men and boys twist on their bodies in a red soak along a river edge,
Gasping of wounds, calling for water, some rattling death in their throats.)
Who would guess what it cost to move two buttons one inch on the war map here in front of the newspaper office where the freckle-faced young man is laughing to us?

Carl Sandburg

Caboose Thoughts

IT'S going to come out all right-do you know?
The sun, the birds, the grass-they know.
They get along-and we'll get along.

Some days will be rainy and you will sit waiting
And the letter you wait for won't come,
And I will sit watching the sky tear off gray and gray
And the letter I wait for won't come.

There will be ac-ci-dents.
I know ac-ci-dents are coming.
Smash-ups, signals wrong, washouts, trestles rotten,
Red and yellow ac-ci-dents.
But somehow and somewhere the end of the run
The train gets put together again
And the caboose and the green tail lights
Fade down the right of way like a new white hope.

I never heard a mockingbird in Kentucky
Spilling its heart in the morning.

I never saw the snow on Chimborazo.
It's a high white Mexican hat, I hear.

I never had supper with Abe Lincoln.
Nor a dish of soup with Jim Hill.

But I've been around.
I know some of the boys here who can go a little.
I know girls good for a burst of speed any time.

I heard Williams and Walker
Before Walker died in the bughouse.

I knew a mandolin player
Working in a barber shop in an Indiana town,
And he thought he had a million dollars.

I knew a hotel girl in Des Moines.

She had eyes; I saw her and said to myself
The sun rises and the sun sets in her eyes.
I was her steady and her heart went pit-a-pat.
We took away the money for a prize waltz at a Brotherhood dance.
She had eyes; she was safe as the bridge over the Mississippi at Burlington; I
married her.

Last summer we took the cushions going west.
Pike's Peak is a big old stone, believe me.
It's fastened down; something you can count on.

It's going to come out all right-do you know?
The sun, the birds, the grass-they know.
They get along-and we'll get along.

Carl Sandburg

Cadenza

THE KNEES

of this proud woman
are bone.

The elbows

of this proud woman
are bone.

The summer-white stars
and the winter-white stars
never stop circling
around this proud woman.

The bones

of this proud woman
answer the vibrations
of the stars.

In summer
the stars speak deep thoughts
In the winter
the stars repeat summer speeches.

The knees

of this proud woman
know these thoughts
and know these speeches
of the summer and winter stars.

Carl Sandburg

Cahoots

PLAY it across the table.
What if we steal this city blind?
If they want any thing let 'em nail it down.

Harness bulls, dicks, front office men,
And the high goats up on the bench,
Ain't they all in cahoots?
Ain't it fifty-fifty all down the line,
Petemen, dips, boosters, stick-ups and guns-what's to hinder?

Go fifty-fifty.
If they nail you call in a mouthpiece.
Fix it, you gazump, you slant-head, fix it.
Feed 'em ...

Nothin' ever sticks to my fingers, nah, nah, nothin' like that,
But there ain't no law we got to wear mittens-huh-is there?
Mittens, that's a good one-mittens!
There oughta be a law everybody wear mittens.

Carl Sandburg

California City Landscape

On a mountain-side the real estate agents
Put up signs marking the city lots to be sold there.
A man whose father and mother were Irish
Ran a goat farm half-way down the mountain;
He drove a covered wagon years ago,
Understood how to handle a rifle,
Shot grouse, buffalo, Indians, in a single year,
And now was raising goats around a shanty.
Down at the foot of the mountain
Two Japanese families had flower farms.
A man and woman were in rows of sweet peas
Picking the pink and white flowers
To put in baskets and take to the Los Angeles market.
They were clean as what they handled
There in the morning sun, the big people and the baby-faces.
Across the road, high on another mountain,
Stood a house saying, 'I am it,' a commanding house.
There was the home of a motion picture director
Famous for lavish ****-house interiors,
Clothes ransacked from the latest designs for women
In the combats of 'male against female.'
The mountain, the scenery, the layout of the landscape,
And the peace of the morning sun as it happened,
The miles of houses pocketed in the valley beyond-
It was all worth looking at, worth wondering about,
How long it might last, how young it might be.

Carl Sandburg

Calls

BECAUSE I have called to you
as the flame flamingo calls,
or the want of a spotted hawk
is called-

because in the dusk
the warblers shoot the running
waters of short songs to the
homecoming warblers-

because
the cry here is wing to wing
and song to song-

I am waiting,
waiting with the flame flamingo,
the spotted hawk, the running water
warbler-
waiting for you.

Carl Sandburg

Carlovingian Dreams

COUNT these reminiscences like money.

The Greeks had their picnics under another name.

The Romans wore glad rags and told their neighbors, 'What of it? '

The Carlovingians hauling logs on carts, they too

Stuck their noses in the air and stuck their thumbs to their noses

And tasted life as a symphonic dream of fresh eggs broken over a frying pan left
by an uncle who killed men with spears and short swords.

Count these reminiscences like money.

Drift, and drift on, white ships.

Sailing the free sky blue, sailing and changing and sailing,

Oh, I remember in the blood of my dreams how they sang before me.

Oh, they were men and women who got money for their work, money or love or
dreams.

Sail on, white ships.

Let me have spring dreams.

Let me count reminiscences like money; let me count picnics, glad rags and the
great bad manners of the Carlovingians breaking fresh eggs in the copper pans
of their proud uncles.

Carl Sandburg

Cartoon

I AM making a Cartoon of a Woman. She is the People.

She is the Great Dirty Mother.

And Many Children hang on her Apron, crawl at her

Feet, snuggle at her Breasts.

Carl Sandburg

Chamfort

There's Chamfort. He's a sample.
Locked himself in his library with a gun,
Shot off his nose and shot out his right eye.
And this Chamfort knew how to write
And thousands read his books on how to live,
But he himself didn't know
How to die by force of his own hand—see?
They found him a red pool on the carpet
Cool as an April forenoon,
Talking and talking gay maxims and grim epigrams.
Well, he wore bandages over his nose and right eye,
Drank coffee and chatted many years
With men and women who loved him
Because he laughed and daily dared Death:
"Come and take me."

Carl Sandburg

Chasers

THE SEA at its worst drives a white foam up,
The same sea sometimes so easy and rocking with green mirrors.
So you were there when the white foam was up
And the salt spatter and the rack and the dulse-
You were done fingering these, and high, higher and higher
Your feet went and it was your voice went, 'Hai, hai, hai,'
Up where the rocks let nothing live and the grass was gone,
Not even a hank nor a wisp of sea moss hoping.
Here your feet and your same singing, 'Hai, hai, hai.'

Was there anything else to answer than, 'Hai, hai, hai,'?
Did I go up those same crags yesterday and the day before
Scruffing my shoe leather and scraping the tough gnomonic stuff
Of stones woven on a cold criss-cross so long ago?
Have I not sat there ... watching the white foam up,
The hoarse white lines coming to curve, foam, slip back?
Didn't I learn then how the call comes, 'Hai, hai, hai'?

Carl Sandburg

Chicago

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I
have seen your painted women under the gas lamps
luring the farm boys.

And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes, it
is true I have seen the gunman kill and go free to
kill again.

And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the
faces of women and children I have seen the marks
of wanton hunger.

And having answered so I turn once more to those who
sneer at this my city, and I give them back the sneer
and say to them:

Come and show me another city with lifted head singing
so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.
Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on
job, here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the
little soft cities;

Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning
as a savage pitted against the wilderness,

Bareheaded,
Shoveling,
Wrecking,
Planning,
Building, breaking, rebuilding,

Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with
white teeth,
Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young
man laughs,
Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has
never lost a battle,

Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse,
and under his ribs the heart of the people,

Laughing!

Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of
Youth, half-naked, sweating, proud to be Hog
Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with
Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation.

Carl Sandburg

Chicago Poet

I saluted a nobody.
I saw him in a looking-glass.
He smiled--so did I.
He crumpled the skin on his forehead, frowning--so did I.
Everything I did he did.
I said, "Hello, I know you."
And I was a liar to say so.

Ah, this. looking-glass man!
Liar, fool, dreamer, play-actor,
Soldier, dusty drinker of dust--
Ah! he will go with me
Down the dark stairway
When nobody else is looking,
When everybody else is gone.

He locks his elbow in mine,
I lose all--but not him.

Carl Sandburg

Chicks

THE CHICK in the egg picks at the shell, cracks open one oval world, and enters another oval world.

'Cheep... cheep... cheep' is the salutation of the newcomer, the emigrant, the casual at the gates of the new world.

'Cheep... cheep'... from oval to oval, sunset to sunset, star to star.

It is at the door of this house, this teeny weeny eggshell exit, it is here men say a riddle and jeer each other: who are you? where do you go from here?

(In the academies many books, at the circus many sacks of peanuts, at the club rooms many cigar butts.)

'Cheep... cheep'... from oval to oval, sunset to sunset, star to star.

Carl Sandburg

Child

The young child, Christ, is straight and wise
And asks questions of the old men, questions
Found under running water for all children
And found under shadows thrown on still waters
By tall trees looking downward, old and gnarled.
Found to the eyes of children alone, untold,
Singing a low song in the loneliness.
And the young child, Christ, goes on asking
And the old men answer nothing and only know love
For the young child. Christ, straight and wise.

Carl Sandburg

Child Margaret

THE CHILD Margaret begins to write numbers on a Saturday morning, the first numbers formed under her wishing child fingers.

All the numbers come well-born, shaped in figures assertive for a frieze in a child's room.

Both 1 and 7 are straightforward, military, filled with lunge and attack, erect in shoulder-straps.

The 6 and 9 salute as dancing sisters, elder and younger, and 2 is a trapeze actor swinging to handclaps.

All the numbers are well-born, only 3 has a hump on its back and 8 is knock-kneed.

The child Margaret kisses all once and gives two kisses to 3 and 8.

(Each number is a bran-new rag doll ... O in the wishing fingers ... millions of rag dolls, millions and millions of new rag dolls!!)

Carl Sandburg

Child Moon

The child's wonder
At the old moon
Comes back nightly.
She points her finger
To the far silent yellow thing
Shining through the branches
Filtering on the leaves a golden sand,
Crying with her little tongue, "See the moon!"
And in her bed fading to sleep
With babblings of the moon on her little mouth.

Carl Sandburg

Child Of The Romans

The dago shovelman sits by the railroad track
Eating a noon meal of bread and bologna.
A train whirls by, and men and women at tables
Alive with red roses and yellow jonquils,
Eat steaks running with brown gravy,
Strawberries and cream, eclaires and coffee.
The dago shovelman finishes the dry bread and bologna,
Washes it down with a dipper from the water-boy,
And goes back to the second half of a ten-hour day's work
Keeping the road-bed so the roses and jonquils
Shake hardly at all in the cut glass vases
Standing slender on the tables in the dining cars.

Carl Sandburg

Choices

They offer you many things,

I a few.

Moonlight on the play of fountains at night

With water sparkling a drowsy monotone,

Bare-shouldered, smiling women and talk

And a cross-play of loves and adulteries

And a fear of death

and a remembering of regrets:

All this they offer you.

I come with:

salt and bread

a terrible job of work

and tireless war;

Come and have now:

hunger.

danger

and hate.

Carl Sandburg

Choose

The single clenched fist lifted and ready,
Or the open asking hand held out and waiting.

Choose:

For we meet by one or the other.

Carl Sandburg

Chords

IN the morning, a Sunday morning, shadows of sea and adumbrants of rock in her eyes ... horseback in leather boots and leather gauntlets by the sea.

In the evening, a Sunday evening, a rope of pearls on her white shoulders ... and a speaking, brooding black velvet, relapsing to the voiceless ... battering Russian marches on a piano ... drive of blizzards across Nebraska.

Yes, riding horseback on hills by the sea ... sitting at the ivory keys in black velvet, a rope of pearls on white shoulders.

Carl Sandburg

Circles Of Doors

I LOVE him, I love him, ran the patter of her lips
And she formed his name on her tongue and sang
And she sent him word she loved him so much,
So much, and death was nothing; work, art, home,
All was nothing if her love for him was not first
Of all; the patter of her lips ran, I love him,
I love him; and he knew the doors that opened
Into doors and more doors, no end of doors,
And full length mirrors doubling and tripling
The apparitions of doors: circling corridors of
Looking glasses and doors, some with knobs, some
With no knobs, some opening slow to a heavy push,
And some jumping open at a touch and a hello.
And he knew if he so wished he could follow her
Swift running through circles of doors, hearing
Sometimes her whisper, I love him, I love him,
And sometimes only a high chaser of laughter
Somewhere five or ten doors ahead or five or ten
Doors behind, or chattering h-st, h-st, among corners
Of the tall full-length dusty looking glasses.
I love, I love, I love, she sang short and quick in
High thin beaten soprano and he knew the meanings,
The high chaser of laughter, the doors on doors
And the looking glasses, the room to room hunt,
The ends opening into new ends always.

Carl Sandburg

Clark Street Bridge

Dust of the feet
And dust of the wheels,
Wagons and people going,
All day feet and wheels.

Now. . .
. . Only stars and mist
A lonely policeman,
Two cabaret dancers,
Stars and mist again,
No more feet or wheels,
No more dust and wagons.

Voices of dollars
And drops of blood
.
Voices of broken hearts,
. . Voices singing, singing,
. . Silver voices, singing,
Softer than the stars,
Softer than the mist.

Carl Sandburg

Clean Hands

IT is something to face the sun and know you are free.

To hold your head in the shafts of daylight slanting the earth

And know your heart has kept a promise and the blood runs clean:

It is something.

To go one day of your life among all men with clean hands,

Clean for the day book today and the record of the after days,

Held at your side proud, satisfied to the last, and ready,

So to have clean hands:

God, it is something,

One day of life so

And a memory fastened till the stars sputter out

And a love washed as white linen in the noon drying.

Yes, go find the men of clean hands one day and see the life, the memory, the love they have, to stay longer than the plunging sea wets the shores or the fires heave under the crust of the earth.

O yes, clean hands is the chant and only one man knows its sob and its undersong and he dies clenching the secret more to him than any woman or chum.

And O the great brave men, the silent little brave men, proud of their hands-clutching the knuckles of their fingers into fists ready for death and the dark, ready for life and the fight, the pay and the memories-O the men proud of their hands.

Carl Sandburg

Clinton South Of Polk

I WANDER down on Clinton street south of Polk
And listen to the voices of Italian children quarreling.
It is a cataract of coloratura
And I could sleep to their musical threats and accusations.

Carl Sandburg

Clocks

HERE is a face that says half-past seven the same way whether a murder or a wedding goes on, whether a funeral or a picnic crowd passes.

A tall one I know at the end of a hallway broods in shadows and is watching booze eat out the insides of the man of the house; it has seen five hopes go in five years: one woman, one child, and three dreams.

A little one carried in a leather box by an actress rides with her to hotels and is under her pillow in a sleeping-car between one-night stands.

One hoists a phiz over a railroad station; it points numbers to people a quarter-mile away who believe it when other clocks fail.

And of course ... there are wrist watches over the pulses of airmen eager to go to France...

Carl Sandburg

Cool Tombs

When Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tombs he forgot
the copperheads and the assassin . . . in the dust, in the
cool tombs.

And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street,
cash and collateral turned ashes . . . in the dust, in the
cool tombs.

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in
November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder? does she
remember? . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs?

Take any streetful of people buying clothes and groceries,
cheering a hero or throwing confetti and blowing tin
horns . . . tell me if the lovers are losers . . . tell me if any
get more than the lovers . . . in the dust . . . in the cool
tombs.

Carl Sandburg

Corn Hut Talk

WRITE your wishes
on the door
and come in.

Stand outside
in the pools of the harvest moon.

Bring in
the handshake of the pumpkins.

There's a wish
for every hazel nut?
There's a hope
for every corn shock?
There's a kiss
for every clumsy climbing shadow?

Clover and the bumblebees once,
high winds and November rain now.

Buy shoes
for rough weather in November.
Buy shirts
to sleep outdoors when May comes.

Buy me
something useless to remember you by.
Send me
a sumach leaf from an Illinois hill.

In the faces marching in the firelog flickers,
In the fire music of wood singing to winter,
Make my face march through the purple and ashes.
Make me one of the fire singers to winter.

Carl Sandburg

Crabapple Blossoms

SOMEBODY'S little girl-how easy to make a sob story over who she was once and who she is now.

Somebody's little girl-she played once under a crab-apple tree in June and the blossoms fell on the dark hair.

It was somewhere on the Erie line and the town was Salamanca or Painted Post or Horse's Head.

And out of her hair she shook the blossoms and went into the house and her mother washed her face and her mother had an ache in her heart at a rebel voice, 'I don't want to.'

Somebody's little girl-forty little girls of somebodies splashed in red tights forming horseshoes, arches, pyramids-forty little show girls, ponies, squabs. How easy a sob story over who she once was and who she is now-and how the crabapple blossoms fell on her dark hair in June.

Let the lights of Broadway spangle and splatter-and the taxis hustle the crowds away when the show is over and the street goes dark.

Let the girls wash off the paint and go for their midnight sandwiches-let 'em dream in the morning sun, late in the morning, long after the morning papers and the milk wagons-

Let 'em dream long as they want to ... of June somewhere on the Erie line ... and crabapple blossoms.

Carl Sandburg

Crapshooters

SOMEBODY loses whenever somebody wins.
This was known to the Chaldeans long ago.
And more: somebody wins whenever somebody loses.
This too was in the savvy of the Chaldeans.

They take it heaven's hereafter is an eternity of crap games where they try their wrists years and years and no police come with a wagon; the game goes on forever.

The spots on the dice are the music signs of the songs of heaven here.
God is Luck: Luck is God: we are all bones the High Thrower rolled: some are two spots, some double sixes.

The myths are Phoebe, Little Joe, Big Dick.
Hope runs high with a: Huh, seven-huh, come seven
This too was in the savvy of the Chaldeans.

Carl Sandburg

Crimson

Crimson is the slow smolder of the cigar end I hold,
Gray is the ash that stiffens and covers all silent the fire.
(A great man I know is dead and while he lies in his coffin a gone flame I sit here
in cumbering shadows and smoke and watch my thoughts come and go.)

Carl Sandburg

Crimson Changes People

DID I see a crucifix in your eyes
and nails and Roman soldiers
and a dusk Golgotha?

Did I see Mary, the changed woman,
washing the feet of all men,
clean as new grass
when the old grass burns?

Did I see moths in your eyes, lost moths,
with a flutter of wings that meant:
we can never come again.

Did I see No Man's Land in your eyes
and men with lost faces, lost loves,
and you among the stubs crying?

Did I see you in the red death jazz of war
losing moths among lost faces,
speaking to the stubs who asked you
to speak of songs and God and dancing,
of bananas, northern lights or Jesus,
any hummingbird of thought whatever
flying away from the red death jazz of war?

Did I see your hand make a useless gesture
trying to say with a code of five fingers
something the tongue only stutters?
did I see a dusk Golgotha?

Carl Sandburg

Crimson Rambler

NOW that a crimson rambler
begins to crawl over the house
of our two lives-

Now that a red curve
winds across the shingles-

Now that hands
washed in early sunrises
climb and spill scarlet
on a white lattice weave-

Now that a loop of blood
is written on our roof
and reaching around a chimney-

How are the two lives of this house
to keep strong hands and strong hearts?

Carl Sandburg

Cripple

Once when I saw a cripple
Gasping slowly his last days with the white plague,
Looking from hollow eyes, calling for air,
Desperately gesturing with wasted hands
In the dark and dust of a house down in a slum,
I said to myself
I would rather have been a tall sunflower
Living in a country garden
Lifting a golden-brown face to the summer,
Rain-washed and dew-misted,
Mixed with the poppies and ranking hollyhocks,
And wonderingly watching night after night
The clear silent processions of stars.

Carl Sandburg

Crucible

Hot gold runs a winding stream on the inside of a green bowl.

Yellow trickles in a fan figure, scatters a line of skirmishes, spreads a chorus of dancing girls, performs blazing ochre evolutions, gathers the whole show into one stream, forgets the past and rolls on.

The sea-mist green of the bowl's bottom is a dark throat of sky crossed by quarreling forks of umber and ochre and yellow changing faces.

Carl Sandburg

Cumulatives

Storms have beaten on this point of land
And ships gone to wreck here
and the passers-by remember it
with talk on the deck at night
as they near it.

Fists have beaten on the face of this old prize-fighter
And his battles have held the sporting pages
and on the street they indicate him with their
right fore-finger as one who once wore
a championship belt.

A hundred stories have been published and a thousand rumored
About why this tall dark man has divorced two beautiful
young women
And married a third who resembles the first two
and they shake their heads and say, "There he
goes,"
when he passes by in sunny weather or in rain
along the city streets.

Carl Sandburg

Cups Of Coffee

THE HAGGARD woman with a hacking cough and a deathless love whispers of white flowers ... in your poem you pour like a cup of coffee, Gabriel.

The slim girl whose voice was lost in the waves of flesh piled on her bones ... and the woman who sold to many men and saw her breasts shrivel ... in two poems you pour these like a cup of coffee, Francois.

The woman whose lips are a thread of scarlet, the woman whose feet take hold on hell, the woman who turned to a memorial of salt looking at the lights of a forgotten city ... in your affidavits, ancient Jews, you pour these like cups of coffee.

The woman who took men as snakes take rabbits, a rag and a bone and a hank of hair, she whose eyes called men to sea dreams and shark's teeth ... in a poem you pour this like a cup of coffee, Kip.

Marching to the footlights in night robes with spots of blood, marching in white sheets muffling the faces, marching with heads in the air they come back and cough and cry and sneer:... in your poems, men, you pour these like cups of coffee.

Carl Sandburg

Curse Of A Rich Polish Peasant On His Sister Who Ran Away With A Wild Man

FELIKSOWA has gone again from our house and this time for good, I hope. She and her husband took with them the cow father gave them, and they sold it. She went like a swine, because she called neither on me, her brother, nor on her father, before leaving for those forests.

That is where she ought to live, with bears, not with men.

She was something of an ape before and there, with her wild husband, she became altogether an ape.

No honest person would have done as they did.

Whose fault is it? And how much they have cursed me and their father!

May God not punish them for it. They think only about money; they let the church go if they can only live fat on their money.

Carl Sandburg

Dan

EARLY May, after cold rain the sun baffling cold wind.
Irish setter pup finds a corner near the cellar door, all sun and no wind,
Cuddling there he crosses forepaws and lays his skull
Sideways on this pillow, dozing in a half-sleep,
Browns of hazel nut, mahogany, rosewood, played off against each other on his
paws and head.

Carl Sandburg

Dancer

THE LADY in red, she in the chile con carne red,
Brilliant as the shine of a pepper crimson in the summer sun,
She behind a false-face, the much sought-after dancer, the most sought-after
dancer of all in this masquerade,
The lady in red sox and red hat, ankles of willow, crimson arrow amidst the
Spanish clashes of music,

I sit in a corner
watching her dance first with one man
and then another.

Carl Sandburg

Death Snips Proud Men

DEATH is stronger than all the governments because
the governments are men and men die and then
death laughs: Now you see 'em, now you don't.
Death is stronger than all proud men and so death
snips proud men on the nose, throws a pair of
dice and says: Read 'em and weep.
Death sends a radiogram every day: When I want
you I'll drop in--and then one day he comes with a
master-key and lets himself in and says: We'll
go now.
Death is a nurse mother with big arms: 'Twon't hurt
you at all; it's your time now; just need a
long sleep, child; what have you had anyhow
better than sleep?

Carl Sandburg

Do You Want Affidavits?

THERE'S a hole in the bottom of the sea.

Do you want affidavits?

There's a man in the moon with money for you.

Do you want affidavits?

There are ten dancing girls in a sea-chamber off Nantucket waiting for you.

There are tall candles in Timbuctoo burning penance for you.

There are-anything else?

Speak now-for now we stand amid the great wishing windows-and the law says
we are free to be wishing all this week at the windows.

Shall I raise my right hand and swear to you in the monotone of a notary public?

this is 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.'

Carl Sandburg

Docks

Strolling along
By the teeming docks,
I watch the ships put out.
Black ships that heave and lunge
And move like mastodons
Arising from lethargic sleep.

The fathomed harbor
Calls them not nor dares
Them to a strain of action,
But outward, on and outward,
Sounding low-reverberating calls,
Shaggy in the half-lit distance,
They pass the pointed headland,
View the wide, far-lifting wilderness
And leap with cumulative speed
To test the challenge of the sea.

Plunging,
Doggedly onward plunging,
Into salt and mist and foam and sun.

Carl Sandburg

Dogheads

AMONG the grassroots
In the moonlight, who comes circling,
red tongues and high noses?
Is one of 'em Buck and one of 'em
White Fang?

In the moonlight, who are they, cross-legged,
telling their stories over and over?
Is one of 'em Martin Eden and one of 'em Larsen the Wolf?

Let an epitaph read:
He loved the straight eyes of dogs and the strong heads of men.

Carl Sandburg

Dream Girl

You will come one day in a waver of love,
Tender as dew, impetuous as rain,
The tan of the sun will be on your skin,
The purr of the breeze in your murmuring speech,
You will pose with a hill-flower grace.

You will come, with your slim, expressive arms,
A poise of the head no sculptor has caught
And nuances spoken with shoulder and neck,
Your face in a pass-and-repass of moods
As many as skies in delicate change
Of cloud and blue and flimmering sun.

Yet,
You may not come, O girl of a dream,
We may but pass as the world goes by
And take from a look of eyes into eyes,
A film of hope and a memoried day.

Carl Sandburg

Dreams In The Dusk

Dreams in the dusk,
Only dreams closing the day
And with the day's close going back
To the gray things, the dark things,
The far, deep things of dreamland.

Dreams, only dreams in the dusk,
Only the old remembered pictures
Of lost days when the day's loss
Wrote in tears the heart's loss.

Tears and loss and broken dreams
May find your heart at dusk.

Carl Sandburg

Drumnotes

Days of the dead men, Danny.
Drum for the dead, drum on your
remembering heart.

Jaurès, a great love-heart of France,
a slug of lead in the red valves.
Kitchener of Khartoum, tall, cold, proud,
a shark's mouthful.
Franz Josef, the old man of forty haunted
kingdoms, in a tomb with the Hapsburg
fathers, moths eating a green uniform
to tatters, worms taking all and leaving
only bones and gold buttons, bones and
iron crosses.

Jack London, Jim Riley, Verhaeren, riders to
the republic of dreams.

Days of the dead, Danny.
Drum on your remembering heart.

Carl Sandburg

Dunes

What do we see here in the sand dunes of the white moon alone with our
thoughts, Bill,
Alone with our dreams, Bill, soft as the women tying scarves around their heads
dancing,
Alone with a picture and a picture coming one after the other of all the dead,
The dead more than all these grains of sand one by one piled here in the moon,
Piled against the sky-line taking shapes like the hand of the wind wanted,
What do we see here, Bill, outside of what the wise men beat their heads on,
Outside of what the poets cry for and the soldiers drive on headlong and leave
their skulls in the sun for—what, Bill?

Carl Sandburg

Dust

Here is dust remembers it was a rose
one time and lay in a woman's hair.
Here is dust remembers it was a woman
one time and in her hair lay a rose.
Oh things one time dust, what else now is it
you dream and remember of old days?

Carl Sandburg

Dusty Doors

Child of the Aztec gods,
how long must we listen here,
how long before we go?

The dust is deep on the lintels.
The dust is dark on the doors.
If the dreams shake our bones,
what can we say or do?

Since early morning we waited.
Since early, early morning, child.
There must be dreams on the way now.
There must be a song for our bones.

The dust gets deeper and darker.
Do the doors and lintels shudder?
How long must we listen here?
How long before we go?

Carl Sandburg

Dynamiter

I sat with a dynamiter at supper in a German saloon eating steak and onions.
And he laughed and told stories of his wife and children and the cause of labor
and the working class.

It was laughter of an unshakable man knowing life to be a rich and red-blooded
thing.

Yes, his laugh rang like the call of gray birds filled with a glory of joy ramming
their winged flight through a rain storm.

His name was in many newspapers as an enemy of the nation and few keepers of
churches or schools would open their doors to him.

Over the steak and onions not a word was said of his deep days and nights as a
dynamiter.

Only I always remember him as a lover of life, a lover of children, a lover of all
free, reckless laughter everywhere—lover of red hearts and red blood the world
over.

Carl Sandburg

Early Moon

THE BABY moon, a canoe, a silver papoose canoe, sails and sails in the Indian west.

A ring of silver foxes, a mist of silver foxes, sit and sit around the Indian moon. One yellow star for a runner, and rows of blue stars for more runners, keep a line of watchers.

O foxes, baby moon, runners, you are the panel of memory, fire-white writing to-night of the Red Man's dreams.

Who squats, legs crossed and arms folded, matching its look against the moon-face, the star-faces, of the West?

Who are the Mississippi Valley ghosts, of copper foreheads, riding wiry ponies in the night?-no bridles, love-arms on the pony necks, riding in the night a long old trail?

Why do they always come back when the silver foxes sit around the early moon, a silver papoose, in the Indian west?

Carl Sandburg

Elephants Are Different To Different People

Wilson and Pilcer and Snack stood before the zoo elephant.

Wilson said, 'What is its name? Is it from Asia or Africa? Who feeds it? Is it a he or a she? How old is it? Do they have twins? How much does it cost to feed? How much does it weigh? If it dies, how much will another one cost? If it dies, what will they use the bones, the fat, and the hide for? What use is it besides to look at?'

Pilcer didn't have any questions; he was murmuring to himself, 'It's a house by itself, walls and windows, the ears came from tall cornfields, by God; the architect of those legs was a workman, by God; he stands like a bridge out across the deep water; the face is sad and the eyes are kind; I know elephants are good to babies.'

Snack looked up and down and at last said to himself, 'He's a tough son-of-a-gun outside and I'll bet he's got a strong heart, I'll bet he's strong as a copper-riveted boiler inside.'

They didn't put up any arguments.

They didn't throw anything in each other's faces.

Three men saw the elephant three ways

And let it go at that.

They didn't spoil a sunny Sunday afternoon;

'Sunday comes only once a week,' they told each other.

Carl Sandburg

Eleventh Avenue Racket

There is something terrible
about a hurdy-gurdy,
a gipsy man and woman,
and a monkey in red flannel
all stopping in front of a big house
with a sign "For Rent" on the door
and the blinds hanging loose
and nobody home.

I never saw this.

I hope to God I never will.

Whoop-de-doodle-de-doo.

Hoodle-de-harr-de-hum.

Nobody home? Everybody home.

Whoop-de-doodle-de-doo.

Mamie Riley married Jimmy Higgins last night: Eddie Jones died of whooping
cough: George Hacks got a job on the police force: the Rosenheims bought a
brass bed: Lena Hart giggled at a jackie: a pushcart man called tomaytoes,
tomaytoes.

Whoop-de-doodle-de-doo.

Hoodle-de-harr-de-hum.

Nobody home? Everybody home.

Carl Sandburg

Evening Waterfall

What is the name you called me?--
And why did you go so soon?

The crows lift their caws on the wind,
And the wind changed and was lonely.

The warblers cry thier sleepy-songs
Across the valley gloaming,
Across the cattle-horns of early stars.

Feathers and people in the crotch of a treetop
Throw an evening waterfall of sleepy-songs.

What is the name you called me?--
And why did you go so soon?

Carl Sandburg

Excerpt From The People, Yes

The little girl saw her first troop parade and asked,

'What are those?'

'Soldiers.'

'What are soldiers?'

'They are for war. They fight and each tries to kill as many of the other side as he can.'

The girl held still and studied.

'Do you know . . . I know something?'

'Yes, what is it you know?'

'Sometime they'll give a war and nobody will come.'

Carl Sandburg

Falltime

GOLD of a ripe oat straw, gold of a southwest moon,
Canada thistle blue and flimmering larkspur blue,
Tomatoes shining in the October sun with red hearts,
Shining five and six in a row on a wooden fence,
Why do you keep wishes on your faces all day long,
Wishes like women with half-forgotten lovers going to new cities?
What is there for you in the birds, the birds, the birds, crying down on the north
wind in September, acres of birds spotting the air going south?
Is there something finished? And some new beginning on the way?

Carl Sandburg

Far Rockaway Night Till Morning

WHAT can we say of the night?

The fog night, the moon night, the fog moon night last night?

There swept out of the sea a song.

There swept out of the sea-torn white plungers.

There came on the coast wind drive

In the spit of a driven spray,

On the boom of foam and rollers,

The cry of midnight to morning:

Hoi-a-loa.

Hoi-a-loa.

Hoi-a-loa.

Who has loved the night more than I have?

Who has loved the fog moon night last night more than I have?

Out of the sea that song

-can I ever forget it?

Out of the sea those plungers

-can I remember anything else?

Out of the midnight morning cry: Hoi-a-loa:

-how can I hunt any other songs now?

Carl Sandburg

Fellow Citizens

I drank musty ale at the Illinois Athletic Club with
the millionaire manufacturer of Green River butter
one night
And his face had the shining light of an old-time Quaker,
he spoke of a beautiful daughter, and I knew he had
a peace and a happiness up his sleeve somewhere.
Then I heard Jim Kirch make a speech to the Advertising
Association on the trade resources of South America.
And the way he lighted a three-for-a-nickel stogie and
cocked it at an angle regardless of the manners of
our best people,
I knew he had a clutch on a real happiness even though
some of the reporters on his newspaper say he is
the living double of Jack London's Sea Wolf.
In the mayor's office the mayor himself told me he was
happy though it is a hard job to satisfy all the office-
seekers and eat all the dinners he is asked to eat.
Down in Gilpin Place, near Hull House, was a man with
his jaw wrapped for a bad toothache,
And he had it all over the butter millionaire, Jim Kirch
and the mayor when it came to happiness.
He is a maker of accordions and guitars and not only
makes them from start to finish, but plays them
after he makes them.
And he had a guitar of mahogany with a walnut bottom
he offered for seven dollars and a half if I wanted it,
And another just like it, only smaller, for six dollars,
though he never mentioned the price till I asked him,
And he stated the price in a sorry way, as though the
music and the make of an instrument count for a
million times more than the price in money.
I thought he had a real soul and knew a lot about God.
There was light in his eyes of one who has conquered
sorrow in so far as sorrow is conquerable or worth
conquering.
Anyway he is the only Chicago citizen I was jealous of
that day.
He played a dance they play in some parts of Italy
when the harvest of grapes is over and the wine

presses are ready for work.

Carl Sandburg

Fight

Red drips from my chin where I have been eating.
Not all the blood, nowhere near all, is wiped off my mouth.
Clots of red mess my hair
And the tiger, the buffalo, know how.
I was a killer.

Yes, I am a killer.
I come from killing.
I go to more.

I drive red joy ahead of me from killing.
Red gluts and red hungers run in the smears and juices
of my inside bones:

The child cries for a suck mother and I cry for war.

Carl Sandburg

Films

I HAVE kept all, not one is thrown away, not one given to the ragman, not one thrust in a corner with a 'P-f-f.'

The red ones and the blue, the long ones in stripes, and each of the little black and white checkered ones.

Keep them: I tell my heart: keep them another year, another ten years: they will be wanted again.

They came once, they came easy, they came like a first white flurry of snow in late October,

Like any sudden, presumptuous, beautiful thing, and they were cheap at the price, cheap like snow.

Here a red one and there a long one in yellow stripes,

O there shall be no ragman have these yet a year, yet ten years.

Carl Sandburg

Finish

DEATH comes once, let it be easy.
Ring one bell for me once, let it go at that.
Or ring no bell at all, better yet.

Sing one song if I die.
Sing John Brown's Body or Shout All Over God's Heaven.
Or sing nothing at all, better yet.

Death comes once, let it be easy.

Carl Sandburg

Fire Dreams

I REMEMBER here by the fire,
In the flickering reds and saffrons,
They came in a ramshackle tub,
Pilgrims in tall hats,
Pilgrims of iron jaws,
Drifting by weeks on beaten seas,
And the random chapters say
They were glad and sang to God.

And so
Since the iron-jawed men sat down
And said, 'Thanks, O God,'
For life and soup and a little less
Than a hobo handout to-day,
Since gray winds blew gray patterns of sleet on Plymouth Rock,
Since the iron-jawed men sang 'Thanks, O God,'
You and I, O Child of the West,
Remember more than ever
November and the hunter's moon,
November and the yellow-spotted hills.

And so
In the name of the iron-jawed men
I will stand up and say yes till the finish is come and gone.
God of all broken hearts, empty hands, sleeping soldiers,
God of all star-flung beaches of night sky,
I and my love-child stand up together to-day and sing: 'Thanks, O God.'

Carl Sandburg

Fire Pages

I will read ashes for you, if you ask me.
I will look on the fire and tell you from the gray lashes
And out of the red and black tongues and stripes,
I will tell how fire comes
And how fire runs far as the sea.

Carl Sandburg

Fire-Logs

Nancy Hanks dreams by the fire;
Dreams, and the logs sputter,
And the yellow tongues climb.
Red lines lick their way in flickers.
Oh, sputter, logs.

Oh, dream, Nancy.

Time now for a beautiful child.
Time now for a tall man to come.

Carl Sandburg

Fish Crier

I know a Jew fish crier down on Maxwell Street with a voice like a north wind blowing over corn stubble in January.

He dangles herring before prospective customers evincing a joy identical with that of Pavlowa dancing.

His face is that of a man terribly glad to be selling fish, terribly glad that God made fish, and customers to whom he may call his wares, from a pushcart.

Carl Sandburg

Five Cent Balloons

PIETRO has twenty red and blue balloons on a string.
They flutter and dance pulling Pietro's arm.
A nickel apiece is what they sell for.

Wishing children tag Pietro's heels.

He sells out and goes the streets alone.

Carl Sandburg

Five Towns On The B. & O.

BY day ... tireless smokestacks ... hungry smoky shanties hanging to the slopes
... crooning: We get by, that's all.

By night ... all lit up ... fire-gold bars, fire-gold flues ... and the shanties shaking
in clumsy shadows ... almost the hills shaking ... all crooning: By God, we're
going to find out or know why.

Carl Sandburg

Flanders

Flanders, the name of a place, a country of people,
Spells itself with letters, is written in books.

"Where is Flanders?" was asked one time,
Flanders known only to those who lived there
And milked cows and made cheese and spoke the home language.

"Where is Flanders?" was asked.
And the slang adepts shot the reply: Search me.

A few thousand people milking cows, raising radishes,
On a land of salt grass and dunes, sand-swept with a sea-breath on it:
This was Flanders, the unknown, the quiet,
The place where cows hunted lush cuds of green on lowlands,
And the raw-boned plowmen took horses with long shanks
Out in the dawn to the sea-breath.

Flanders sat slow-spoken amid slow-swung windmills,
Slow-circling windmill arms turning north or west,
Turning to talk to the swaggering winds, the childish winds,
So Flanders sat with the heart of a kitchen girl
Washing wooden bowls in the winter sun by a window.

Carl Sandburg

Flash Crimson

I SHALL cry God to give me a broken foot.

I shall ask for a scar and a slashed nose.

I shall take the last and the worst.

I shall be eaten by gray creepers in a bunkhouse where no runners of the sun come and no dogs live.

And yet-of all 'and yet's' this is the bronze strongest-

I shall keep one thing better than all else; there is the blue steel of a great star of early evening in it; it lives longer than a broken foot or any scar.

The broken foot goes to a hole dug with a shovel or the bone of a nose may whiten on a hilltop-and yet-'and yet'-

There is one crimson pinch of ashes left after all; and none of the shifting winds that whip the grass and none of the pounding rains that beat the dust, know how to touch or find the flash of this crimson.

I cry God to give me a broken foot, a scar, or a lousy death.

I who have seen the flash of this crimson, I ask God for the last and worst.

Carl Sandburg

Flat Lands

FLAT lands on the end of town where real estate men are crying new subdivisions,

The sunsets pour blood and fire over you hundreds and hundreds of nights, flat lands-blood and fire of sunsets thousands of years have been pouring over you. And the stars follow the sunsets. One gold star. A shower of blue stars. Blurs of white and gray stars. Vast marching processions of stars arching over you flat lands where frogs sob this April night.

'Lots for Sale-Easy Terms' run letters painted on a board-and the stars wheel onward, the frogs sob this April night.

Carl Sandburg

Flux

Sand of the sea runs red
Where the sunset reaches and quivers.
Sand of the sea runs yellow
Where the moon slants and wavers.

Carl Sandburg

Flying Fish

I HAVE lived in many half-worlds myself ... and so I know you.

I leaned at a deck rail watching a monotonous sea, the same circling birds and the same plunge of furrows carved by the plowing keel.

I leaned so ... and you fluttered struggling between two waves in the air now ... and then under the water and out again ... a fish ... a bird ... a fin thing ... a wing thing.

Child of water, child of air, fin thing and wing thing ... I have lived in many half worlds myself ... and so I know you.

Carl Sandburg

Fog

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Carl Sandburg

Fog Portrait

RINGS of iron gray smoke; a woman's steel face ... looking ... looking.

Funnels of an ocean liner negotiating a fog night; pouring a taffy mass down the wind; layers of soot on the top deck; a taffrail ... and a woman's steel face ... looking ... looking.

Cliffs challenge humped; sudden arcs form on a gull's wing in the storm's vortex; miles of white horses plow through a stony beach; stars, clear sky, and everywhere free climbers calling; and a woman's steel face ... looking ... looking ...

Carl Sandburg

Follies

Shaken,
The blossoms of lilac,
And shattered,
The atoms of purple.
Green dip the leaves,
Darker the bark,
Longer the shadows.

Sheer lines of poplar
Shimmer with masses of silver
And down in a garden old with years
And broken walls of ruin and story,
Roses rise with red rain-memories.
May!
In the open world
The sun comes and finds your face,
Remembering all.

Carl Sandburg

For You

THE PEACE of great doors be for you.
Wait at the knobs, at the panel oblongs.
Wait for the great hinges.

The peace of great churches be for you,
Where the players of loft pipe organs
Practice old lovely fragments, alone.

The peace of great books be for you,
Stains of pressed clover leaves on pages,
Bleach of the light of years held in leather.

The peace of great prairies be for you.
Listen among windplayers in cornfields,
The wind learning over its oldest music

The peace of great seas be for you.
Wait on a hook of land, a rock footing
For you, wait in the salt wash.

The peace of great mountains be for you,
The sleep and the eyesight of eagles,
Sheet mist shadows and the long look across.

The peace of great hearts be for you,
Valves of the blood of the sun,
Pumps of the strongest wants we cry.

The peace of great silhouettes be for you,
Shadow dancers alive in your blood now,
Alive and crying, 'Let us out, let us out.'

The peace of great changes be for you.
Whisper, Oh beginners in the hills.
Tumble, Oh cubs-to-morrow belongs to you.

The peace of great loves be for you.
Rain, soak these roots; wind, shatter the dry rot.
Bars of sunlight, grips of the earth, hug these.

The peace of great ghosts be for you,
Phantoms of night-gray eyes, ready to go
To the fog-star dumps, to the fire-white doors.

Yes, the peace of great phantoms be for you,
Phantom iron men, mothers of bronze,
Keepers of the lean clean breeds.

Carl Sandburg

Four Preludes On Playthings Of The Wind

'The past is a bucket of ashes.'

1

THE WOMAN named To-morrow
sits with a hairpin in her teeth
and takes her time
and does her hair the way she wants it
and fastens at last the last braid and coil
and puts the hairpin where it belongs
and turns and drawls: Well, what of it?
My grandmother, Yesterday, is gone.
What of it? Let the dead be dead.

2

The doors were cedar
and the panels strips of gold
and the girls were golden girls
and the panels read and the girls chanted:
We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation:
nothing like us ever was.

The doors are twisted on broken hinges.
Sheets of rain swish through on the wind
where the golden girls ran and the panels read:
We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation,
nothing like us ever was.

3

It has happened before.
Strong men put up a city and got
a nation together,
And paid singers to sing and women
to warble: We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation,

nothing like us ever was.

And while the singers sang
and the strong men listened
and paid the singers well
and felt good about it all,
there were rats and lizards who listened
... and the only listeners left now
... are... the rats... and the lizards.

And there are black crows
crying, 'Caw, caw,'
bringing mud and sticks
building a nest
over the words carved
on the doors where the panels were cedar
and the strips on the panels were gold
and the golden girls came singing:
We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation:
nothing like us ever was.

The only singers now are crows crying, 'Caw, caw,'
And the sheets of rain whine in the wind and doorways.
And the only listeners now are... the rats... and the lizards.

4

The feet of the rats
scribble on the door sills;
the hieroglyphs of the rat footprints
chatter the pedigrees of the rats
and babble of the blood
and gabble of the breed
of the grandfathers and the great-grandfathers
of the rats.

And the wind shifts
and the dust on a door sill shifts
and even the writing of the rat footprints
tells us nothing, nothing at all
about the greatest city, the greatest nation

where the strong men listened
and the women warbled: Nothing like us ever was.

Carl Sandburg

From The Shore

A lone gray bird,
Dim-dipping, far-flying,
Alone in the shadows and grandeurs and tumults
Of night and the sea
And the stars and storms.

Out over the darkness it wavers and hovers,
Out into the gloom it swings and batters,
Out into the wind and the rain and the vast,
Out into the pit of a great black world,
Where fogs are at battle, sky-driven, sea-blown,
Love of mist and rapture of flight,
Glories of chance and hazards of death
On its eager and palpitant wings.

Out into the deep of the great dark world,
Beyond the long borders where foam and drift
Of the sundering waves are lost and gone
On the tides that plunge and rear and crumble.

Carl Sandburg

Galoots

GALOOTTS, you hairy, hankering,

Snousle on the bones you eat, chew at the gristle and lick the last of it.

Grab off the bones in the paws of other galoots-hook your claws in their sleazy mouths-snap and run.

If long-necks sit on their rumps and sing wild cries to the winter moon, chasing their tails to the flickers of foolish stars ... let 'em howl.

Galoots fat with too much, galoots lean with too little, galoot millions and millions, snousle and snicker on, plug your exhausts, hunt your snacks of fat and lean, grab off yours.

Carl Sandburg

Garden Wireless

HOW many feet ran with sunlight, water, and air?

What little devils shaken of laughter, cramming their little ribs with chuckles,

Fixed this lone red tulip, a woman's mouth of passion kisses, a nun's mouth of sweet thinking, here topping a straight line of green, a pillar stem?

Who hurled this bomb of red caresses?-nodding balloon-film shooting its wireless every fraction of a second these June days:

Love me before I die;

Love me-love me now.

Carl Sandburg

Gargoyle

I SAW a mouth jeering. A smile of melted red iron ran over it. Its laugh was full of nails rattling. It was a child's dream of a mouth.

A fist hit the mouth: knuckles of gun-metal driven by an electric wrist and shoulder. It was a child's dream of an arm.

The fist hit the mouth over and over, again and again. The mouth bled melted iron, and laughed its laughter of nails rattling.

And I saw the more the fist pounded the more the mouth laughed. The fist is pounding and pounding, and the mouth answering.

Carl Sandburg

Girl In A Cage

HERE in a cage the dollars come down.
To the click of a tube the dollars tumble.
And out of a mouth the dollars run.

I finger the dollars,
Paper and silver,
Thousands a day.

Some days it's fun
to finger the dollars.
Some days...
the dollars keep on
in a sob or a whisper:
A flame of rose in the hair,
A flame of silk at the throat.

Carl Sandburg

Glimmer

LET down your braids of hair, lady.
Cross your legs and sit before the looking-glass
And gaze long on lines under your eyes.
Life writes; men dance.
And you know how men pay women.

Carl Sandburg

Goldwing Moth

A goldwing moth is between the scissors and the ink bottle
on the desk.

Last night it flew hundreds of circles around a glass bulb
and a flame wire.

The wings are a soft gold; it is the gold of illuminated
initials in manuscripts of the medieval monks.

Carl Sandburg

Gone

Everybody loved Chick Lorimer in our town.
Far off
Everybody loved her.
So we all love a wild girl keeping a hold
On a dream she wants.
Nobody knows now where Chick Lorimer went.
Nobody knows why she packed her trunk .. a few old things
And is gone,
Gone with her little chin
Thrust ahead of her
And her soft hair blowing careless
From under a wide hat,
Dancer, singer, a laughing passionate lover.

Were there ten men or a hundred hunting Chick?
Were there five men or fifty with aching hearts?
Everybody loved Chick Lorimer.
Nobody knows where she's gone.

Carl Sandburg

Good Night

Many ways to say good night.

Fireworks at a pier on the Fourth of July
spell it with red wheels and yellow spokes.
They fizz in the air, touch the water and quit.
Rockets make a trajectory of gold-and-blue
and then go out.

Railroad trains at night spell with a smokestack mushrooming a white pillar.

Steamboats turn a curve in the Mississippi crying a baritone that crosses lowland
cottonfields to razorback hill.

It is easy to spell good night.
Many ways to spell good night.

Carl Sandburg

Government

The Government -- I heard about the Government and I went out to find it. I said I would look closely at it when I saw it.

Then I saw a policeman dragging a drunken man to the calaboose. It was the Government in action.

I saw a ward alderman slip into an office one morning and talk with a judge. Later in the day the judge dismissed a case against a pickpocket who was a live ward worker for the alderman. Again I saw this was the Government, doing things.

I saw militiamen level their rifles at a crowd of workingmen who were trying to get other workingmen to stay away from a shop where there was a strike on. Government in action.

Everywhere I saw that Government is a thing made of men, that Government has blood and bones, it is many mouths whispering into many ears, sending telegrams, aiming rifles, writing orders, saying "yes" and "no."

Government dies as the men who form it die and are laid away in their graves and the new Government that comes after is human, made of heartbeats of blood, ambitions, lusts, and money running through it all, money paid and money taken, and money covered up and spoken of with hushed voices.

A Government is just as secret and mysterious and sensitive as any human sinner carrying a load of germs, traditions and corpuscles handed down from fathers and mothers away back.

Carl Sandburg

Graceland

Tomb of a millionaire,
A multi-millionaire, ladies and gentlemen,
Place of the dead where they spend every year
The usury of twenty-five thousand dollars
For upkeep and flowers
To keep fresh the memory of the dead.
The merchant prince gone to dust
Commanded in his written will
Over the signed name of his last testament
Twenty-five thousand dollars be set aside
For roses, lilacs, hydrangeas, tulips,
For perfume and color, sweetness of remembrance
Around his last long home.

(A hundred cash girls want nickels to go to the movies to-night.
In the back stalls of a hundred saloons, women are at tables
Drinking with men or waiting for men jingling loose silver dollars in their pockets.

In a hundred furnished rooms is a girl who sells silk or dress goods or leather
stuff for six dollars a week wages
And when she pulls on her stockings in the morning she is reckless about God
and the newspapers and the police, the talk of her home town or the name
people call her.)

Carl Sandburg

Grass

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work--
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and the passengers ask the conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?

I am the grass.
Let me work.

Carl Sandburg

Graves

I dreamed one man stood against a thousand,
One man damned as a wrongheaded fool.
One year and another he walked the streets,
And a thousand shrugs and hoots
Met him in the shoulders and mouths he passed.

He died alone.
And only the undertaker came to his funeral.

Flowers grow over his grave and in the wind,
And over the graves of the thousand, too,
The flowers grow and in the wind.

Flowers and the wind,
Flowers and over the graves of the dead,
Petals of red, leaves of yellow, streaks of white,
Masses of purple sagging...
I love you and your great way of forgetting.

Carl Sandburg

Grieg Being Dead

GRIEG being dead we may speak of him and his art.

Grieg being dead we can talk about whether he was any good or not.

Grieg being with Ibsen, Björnson, Lief Ericson and the rest,

Grieg being dead does not care a hell's hoot what we say.

Morning, Spring, Anitra's Dance,

He dreams them at the doors of new stars.

Carl Sandburg

Gypsy

I asked a gypsy pal
To imitate an old image
And speak old wisdom.
She drew in her chin,
Made her neck and head
The top piece of a Nile obelisk
and said:
Snatch off the gag from thy mouth, child,
And be free to keep silence.
Tell no man anything for no man listens,
Yet hold thy lips ready to speak.

Carl Sandburg

Half Moon In A High Wind

MONEY is nothing now, even if I had it,
O mooney moon, yellow half moon,
Up over the green pines and gray elms,
Up in the new blue.

Streel, streel,
White lacey mist sheets of cloud,
Streel in the blowing of the wind,
Streel over the blue-and-moon sky,
Yellow gold half moon. It is light
On the snow; it is dark on the snow,
Streel, O lacey thin sheets, up in the new blue.

Come down, stay there, move on.
I want you, I don't, keep all.
There is no song to your singing.
I am hit deep, you drive far,
O mooney yellow half moon,
Steady, steady; or will you tip over?
Or will the wind and the streeling
Thin sheets only pass and move on
And leave you alone and lovely?
I want you, I don't, come down,
Stay there, move on.
Money is nothing now, even if I had it.

Carl Sandburg

Halsted Street Car

Come you, cartoonists,
Hang on a strap with me here
At seven o'clock in the morning
On a Halsted street car.

Take your pencils
And draw these faces.

Try with your pencils for these crooked faces,
That pig-sticker in one corner—his mouth—
That overall factory girl—her loose cheeks.

Find for your pencils
A way to mark your memory
Of tired empty faces.

After their night's sleep,
In the moist dawn
And cool daybreak,
Faces
Tired of wishes,
Empty of dreams.

Carl Sandburg

Handfuls

BLOSSOMS of babies
Blinking their stories
Come soft
On the dusk and the babble;
Little red gamblers,
Handfuls that slept in the dust.

Summers of rain,
Winters of drift,
Tell off the years;
And they go back
Who came soft-
Back to the sod,
To silence and dust;
Gray gamblers,
Handfuls again.

Carl Sandburg

Happiness

I asked the professors who teach the meaning of life to tell
me what is happiness.

And I went to famous executives who boss the work of
thousands of men.

They all shook their heads and gave me a smile as though
I was trying to fool with them

And then one Sunday afternoon I wandered out along
the Desplaines river

And I saw a crowd of Hungarians under the trees with
their women and children and a keg of beer and an
accordion.

Carl Sandburg

Harrison Street Court

I heard a woman's lips
Speaking to a companion
Say these words:

"A woman what hustles
Never keeps nothin'
For all her hustlin'.
Somebody always gets
What she goes on the street for.
If it ain't a pimp
It's a bull what gets it.
I been hustlin' now
Till I ain't much good any more.
I got nothin' to show for it.
Some man got it all,
Every night's hustlin' I ever did."

Carl Sandburg

Harvest Sunset

RED gold of pools,
Sunset furrows six o'clock,
And the farmer done in the fields
And the cows in the barns with bulging udders.

Take the cows and the farmer,
Take the barns and bulging udders.
Leave the red gold of pools
And sunset furrows six o'clock.
The farmer's wife is singing.
The farmer's boy is whistling.
I wash my hands in red gold of pools.

Carl Sandburg

Hate

ONE man killed another. The saying between them had been 'I'd give you the shirt off my back.'

The killer wept over the dead. The dead if he looks back knows the killer was sorry. It was a shot in one second of hate out of ten years of love.

Why is the sun a red ball in the six o'clock mist?

Why is the moon a tumbling chimney?... tumbling ... tumbling ... 'I'd give you the shirt off my back' ... And I'll kill you if my head goes wrong.

Carl Sandburg

Hats

HATS, where do you belong?
what is under you?

On the rim of a skyscraper's forehead
I looked down and saw: hats: fifty thousand hats:
Swarming with a noise of bees and sheep, cattle and waterfalls,
Stopping with a silence of sea grass, a silence of prairie corn.
Hats: tell me your high hopes.

Carl Sandburg

Haunts

There are places I go when I am strong.
One is a marsh pool where I used to go
with a long-ear hound-dog.
One is a wild crabapple tree; I was there
a moonlight night with a girl.
The dog is gone; the girl is gone; I go to these
places when there is no other place to go.

Carl Sandburg

Have Me

Have me in the blue and the sun.
Have me on the open sea and the mountains.

When I go into the grass of the sea floor, I will go alone.
This is where I came from- the chlorine and the salt are
blood and bones.
It is here the nostrils rush the air to the lungs. It is
here oxygen clamors to be let in.
And here in the root grass of the sea floor I will go alone.

Love goes far. Here love ends.
Have me in the blue and the sun.

Carl Sandburg

Haze

KEEP a red heart of memories
Under the great gray rain sheds of the sky,
Under the open sun and the yellow gloaming embers.
Remember all paydays of lilacs and songbirds;
All starlights of cool memories on storm paths.

Out of this prairie rise the faces of dead men.
They speak to me. I can not tell you what they say.

Other faces rise on the prairie.
They are the unborn. The future.

Yesterday and to-morrow cross and mix on the skyline
The two are lost in a purple haze. One forgets. One waits.

In the yellow dust of sunsets, in the meadows of vermilion eight o'clock June
nights ... the dead men and the unborn children speak to me ... I can not tell you
what they say ... you listen and you know.

I don't care who you are, man:
I know a woman is looking for you
and her soul is a corn-tassel kissing a south-west wind.
(The farm-boy whose face is the color of brick-dust, is calling the cows; he will
form the letter X with crossed streams of milk from the teats; he will beat a
tattoo on the bottom of a tin pail with X's of milk.)

I don't care who you are, man:
I know sons and daughters looking for you
And they are gray dust working toward star paths
And you see them from a garret window when you laugh
At your luck and murmur, 'I don't care.'

I don't care who you are, woman:
I know a man is looking for you
And his soul is a south-west wind kissing a corn-tassel.

(The kitchen girl on the farm is throwing oats to the chickens and the buff of
their feathers says hello to the sunset's late maroon.)

I don't care who you are, woman:
I know sons and daughters looking for you
And they are next year's wheat or the year after hidden in the dark and loam.

My love is a yellow hammer spinning circles in Ohio, Indiana. My love is a redbird shooting flights in straight lines in Kentucky and Tennessee. My love is an early robin flaming an ember of copper on her shoulders in March and April. My love is a graybird living in the eaves of a Michigan house all winter. Why is my love always a crying thing of wings?

On the Indiana dunes, in the Mississippi marshes, I have asked: Is it only a fishbone on the beach?
Is it only a dog's jaw or a horse's skull whitening in the sun? Is the red heart of man only ashes? Is the flame of it all a white light switched off and the power house wires cut?

Why do the prairie roses answer every summer? Why do the changing repeating rains come back out of the salt sea wind-blown? Why do the stars keep their tracks? Why do the cradles of the sky rock new babies?

Carl Sandburg

Helga

THE WISHES on this child's mouth
Came like snow on marsh cranberries;
The tamarack kept something for her;
The wind is ready to help her shoes.
The north has loved her; she will be
A grandmother feeding geese on frosty
Mornings; she will understand
Early snow on the cranberries
Better and better then.

Carl Sandburg

Hell On The Wabash

When country fiddlers held a convention in Danville, the big money went to a barn dance artist who played Turkey in the Straw, with variations.

They asked him the name of the piece calling it a humdinger and he answered, "I call it 'Hell on the Wabash.'"

The two next best were The Speckled Hen, and Sweet Potatoes Grow in Sandy Land, with variations.

Carl Sandburg

Hemlock And Cedar

THIN sheets of blue smoke among white slabs ... near the shingle mill ... winter morning.

Falling of a dry leaf might be heard ... circular steel tears through a log.

Slope of woodland ... brown ... soft ... tinge of blue such as pansy eyes.

Farther, field fires ... funnel of yellow smoke ... spellings of other yellow in corn stubble.

Bobsled on a down-hill road ... February snow mud ... horses steaming ... Oscar the driver sings ragtime under a spot of red seen a mile ... the red wool yarn of Oscar's stocking cap is seen from the shingle mill to the ridge of hemlock and cedar.

Carl Sandburg

High Conspiratorial Person

OUT of the testimony of such reluctant lips, out of the oaths and mouths of such scrupulous liars, out of perjurers whose hands swore by God to the white sun before all men,

Out of a rag saturated with smears and smuts gathered from the footbaths of kings and the loin cloths of ****s, from the scabs of Babylon and Jerusalem to the scabs of London and New York,

From such a rag that has wiped the secret sores of kings and overlords across the milleniums of human marches and babblings,

From such a rag perhaps I shall wring one reluctant desperate drop of blood, one honest-to-God spot of red speaking a ber, tiania, Norway

Carl Sandburg

His Own Face Hidden

HOKUSAI'S portrait of himself
Tells what his hat was like
And his arms and legs. The only faces
Are a river and a mountain
And two laughing farmers.

The smile of Hokusai
is under his hat.

Carl Sandburg

Hits And Runs

I REMEMBER the Chillicothe ball players grappling the Rock Island ball players in a sixteen-inning game ended by darkness.

And the shoulders of the Chillicothe players were a red smoke against the sundown and the shoulders of the Rock Island players were a yellow smoke against the sundown.

And the umpire's voice was hoarse calling balls and strikes and outs and the umpire's throat fought in the dust for a song.

Carl Sandburg

Home Fires

IN a Yiddish eating place on Rivington Street ... faces ... coffee spots ... children kicking at the night stars with bare toes from bare buttocks.

They know it is September on Rivington when the red tomaytoes cram the pushcarts,

Here the children snozzle at milk bottles, children who have never seen a cow.

Here the stranger wonders how so many people remember where they keep home fires.

Carl Sandburg

Home Thoughts

THE SEA rocks have a green moss.
The pine rocks have red berries.
I have memories of you.

Speak to me of how you miss me.
Tell me the hours go long and slow.

Speak to me of the drag on your heart,
The iron drag of the long days.

I know hours empty as a beggar's tin cup on a rainy day, empty as a soldier's sleeve with an arm lost.

Speak to me ...

Carl Sandburg

Honky Tonk In Cleveland, Ohio

It's a jazz affair, drum crashes and coronet razzes.
The trombone pony neighs and the tuba jackass snorts.
The banjo tickles and titters too awful.
The chippies talk about the funnies in the papers.
The cartoonists weep in their beer.
Shop riveters talk with their feet
To the feet of floozies under the tables.
A quartet of white hopes mourn with interspersed snickers:
"I got the blues.
I got the blues.
I got the blues."
And . . . as we said earlier:
The cartoonists weep in their beer.

Carl Sandburg

Hoodlums

I AM a hoodlum, you are a hoodlum, we and all of us are a world of hoodlums-
maybe so.

I hate and kill better men than I am, so do you, so do all of us-maybe-maybe so.
In the ends of my fingers the itch for another man's neck, I want to see him
hanging, one of dusk's cartoons against the sunset.

This is the hate my father gave me, this was in my mother's milk, this is you and
me and all of us in a world of hoodlums-maybe so.

Let us go on, brother hoodlums, let us kill and kill, it has always been so, it will
always be so, there is nothing more to it.

Let us go on, sister hoodlums, kill, kill, and kill, the torsoes of the world's
mother's are tireless and the loins of the world's fathers are strong-so go on-kill,
kill, kill.

Lay them deep in the dirt, the stiffes we fixed, the cadavers bumped off, lay them
deep and let the night winds of winter blizzards howl their burial service.

The night winds and the winter, the great white sheets of northern blizzards, who
can sing better for the lost hoodlums the old requiem, 'Kill him! kill him!...'

Today my son, to-morrow yours, the day after your next door neighbor's-it is all
in the wrists of the gods who shoot craps-it is anybody's guess whose eyes shut
next.

Being a hoodlum now, you and I, being all of us a world of hoodlums, let us take
up the cry when the mob sluffs by on a thousand shoe soles, let us too yammer,
'Kill him! kill him!...'

Let us do this now ... for our mothers ... for our sisters and wives ... let us kill,
kill, kill-for the torsoes of the women are tireless and the loins of the men are go,
July 29, 1919.

Carl Sandburg

Hope Is A Tattered Flag

Hope is a tattered flag and a dream of time.
Hope is a heartspun word, the rainbow, the shadblow in white
The evening star inviolable over the coal mines,
The shimmer of northern lights across a bitter winter night,
The blue hills beyond the smoke of the steel works,
The birds who go on singing to their mates in peace, war, peace,
The ten-cent crocus bulb blooming in a used-car salesroom,
The horseshoe over the door, the luckpiece in the pocket,
The kiss and the comforting laugh and resolve—
Hope is an echo, hope ties itself yonder, yonder.
The spring grass showing itself where least expected,
The rolling fluff of white clouds on a changeable sky,
The broadcast of strings from Japan, bells from Moscow,
Of the voice of the prime minister of Sweden carried
Across the sea in behalf of a world family of nations
And children singing chorals of the Christ child
And Bach being broadcast from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
And tall skyscrapers practically empty of tenants
And the hands of strong men groping for handholds
And the Salvation Army singing God loves us....

Carl Sandburg

Horse Fiddle

FIRST I would like to write for you a poem to be shouted in the teeth of a strong wind.

Next I would like to write one for you to sit on a hill and read down the river valley on a late summer afternoon, reading it in less than a whisper to Jack on his soft wire legs learning to stand up and preach, Jack-in-the-pulpit.

As many poems as I have written to the moon and the streaming of the moon spinners of light, so many of the summer moon and the winter moon I would like to shoot along to your ears for nothing, for a laugh, a song,

for nothing at all,

for one look from you,

for your face turned away

and your voice in one clutch

half way between a tree wind moan

and a night-bird sob.

Believe nothing of it all, pay me nothing, open your window for the other singers and keep it shut for me.

The road I am on is a long road and I can go hungry again like I have gone hungry before.

What else have I done nearly all my life than go hungry and go on singing?

Leave me with the hoot owl.

I have slept in a blanket listening.

He learned it, he must have learned it

From two moons, the summer moon,

And the winter moon

And the streaming of the moon spinners of light.

Carl Sandburg

Horses And Men In Rain

Let us sit by a hissing steam radiator a winter's day, gray wind pattering frozen
raindrops on the window,
And let us talk about milk wagon drivers and grocery delivery boys.

Let us keep our feet in wool slippers and mix hot punches--and talk about mail
carriers and
messenger boys slipping along the icy sidewalks.
Let us write of olden, golden days and hunters of the
Holy Grail and men called "knights" riding horses in the rain, in the cold frozen
rain for ladies they loved.

A roustabout hunched on a coal wagon goes by, icicles drip on his hat rim, sheets
of ice wrapping
the hunks of coal, the caravanserai a gray blur in slant of rain.
Let us nudge the steam radiator with our wool slippers and write poems of
Launcelot, the hero, and
Roland, the hero, and all the olden golden men who rode horses in the rain.

Carl Sandburg

House

TWO Swede families live downstairs and an Irish policeman upstairs, and an old soldier, Uncle Joe.

Two Swede boys go upstairs and see Joe. His wife is dead, his only son is dead, and his two daughters in Missouri and Texas don't want him around.

The boys and Uncle Joe crack walnuts with a hammer on the bottom of a flatiron while the January wind howls and the zero air weaves laces on the window glass. Joe tells the Swede boys all about Chickamauga and Chattanooga, how the Union soldiers crept in rain somewhere a dark night and ran forward and killed many Rebels, took flags, held a hill, and won a victory told about in the histories in school.

Joe takes a piece of carpenter's chalk, draws lines on the floor and piles stove wood to show where six regiments were slaughtered climbing a slope.

'Here they went' and 'Here they went,' says Joe, and the January wind howls and the zero air weaves laces on the window glass.

The two Swede boys go downstairs with a big blur of guns, men, and hills in their heads. They eat herring and potatoes and tell the family war is a wonder and soldiers are a wonder.

One breaks out with a cry at supper: I wish we had a war now and I could be a soldier.

Carl Sandburg

How Much?

HOW much do you love me, a million bushels?
Oh, a lot more than that, Oh, a lot more.

And to-morrow maybe only half a bushel?
To-morrow maybe not even a half a bushel.

And is this your heart arithmetic?
This is the way the wind measures the weather.

Carl Sandburg

How Yesterday Looked

THE HIGH horses of the sea broke their white riders
On the walls that held and counted the hours
The wind lasted.

Two landbirds looked on and the north and the east
Looked on and the wind poured cups of foam
And the evening began.

The old men in the shanties looked on and lit their
Pipes and the young men spoke of the girls
For a wild night like this.

The south and the west looked on and the moon came
When the wind went down and the sea was sorry
And the singing slow.

Ask how the sunset looked between the wind going
Down and the moon coming up and I would struggle
To tell the how of it.

I give you fire here, I give you water, I give you
The wind that blew them across and across,
The scooping, mixing wind.

Carl Sandburg

Humdrum

IF I had a million lives to live
and a million deaths to die
in a million humdrum worlds,
I'd like to change my name
and have a new house number to go by
each and every time I died
and started life all over again.

I wouldn't want the same name every time
and the same old house number always,
dying a million deaths,
dying one by one a million times:
-would you?
 or you?
 or you?

Carl Sandburg

Humming Bird Woman

WHY should I be wondering
How you would look in black velvet and yellow? in orange and green?
I who cannot remember whether it was a dash of blue
Or a whirr of red under your willow throat-
Why do I wonder how you would look in humming-bird feathers?

Carl Sandburg

Hydrangeas

Dragoons, I tell you the white hydrangeas turn rust and go soon.
Already mid September a line of brown runs over them.
One sunset after another tracks the faces, the petals.
Waiting, they look over the fence for what way they go.

Carl Sandburg

I Am The People, The Mob

I Am the people--the mob--the crowd--the mass.
Do you know that all the great work of the world is
done through me?
I am the workingman, the inventor, the maker of the
world's food and clothes.
I am the audience that witnesses history. The Napoleons
come from me and the Lincolns. They die. And
then I send forth more Napoleons and Lincolns.
I am the seed ground. I am a prairie that will stand
for much plowing. Terrible storms pass over me.
I forget. The best of me is sucked out and wasted.
I forget. Everything but Death comes to me and
makes me work and give up what I have. And I
forget.
Sometimes I growl, shake myself and spatter a few red
drops for history to remember. Then--I forget.
When I, the People, learn to remember, when I, the
People, use the lessons of yesterday and no longer
forget who robbed me last year, who played me for
a fool--then there will be no speaker in all the world
say the name: 'The People,' with any fleck of a
sneer in his voice or any far-off smile of derision.
The mob--the crowd--the mass--will arrive then.

Carl Sandburg

I Sang

I sang to you and the moon
But only the moon remembers.
I sang
O reckless free-hearted
free-throated rythms,
Even the moon remembers them
And is kind to me.

Carl Sandburg

Ice Handler

I know an ice handler who wears a flannel shirt with pearl buttons the size of a dollar,
And he lugs a hundred-pound hunk into a saloon ice-box, helps himself to cold ham and rye bread,
Tells the bartender it's hotter than yesterday and will be hotter yet to-morrow, by Jesus,
And is on his way with his head in the air and a hard pair of fists.
He spends a dollar or so every Saturday night on a two hundred pound woman who washes dishes in the Hotel Morrison.
He remembers when the union was organized he broke the noses of two scabs and loosened the nuts so the wheels came off six different wagons one morning, and he came around and watched the ice melt in the street.
All he was sorry for was one of the scabs bit him on the knuckles of the right hand so they bled when he came around to the saloon to tell the boys about it.

Carl Sandburg

Illinois Farmer

BURY this old Illinois farmer with respect.

He slept the Illinois nights of his life after days of work in Illinois cornfields.

Now he goes on a long sleep.

The wind he listened to in the cornsilk and the tassels, the wind that combed his red beard zero mornings when the snow lay white on the yellow ears in the bushel basket at the corncrib,

The same wind will now blow over the place here where his hands must dream of Illinois corn.

Carl Sandburg

Improved Farm Land

Tall timber stood here once, hee on a corn belt farm along the Monon.
Here the roots of a half-mile of trees dug their runners deep in the loam for a grip and a hold against wind storms.
Then the axemen came and the chips flew to the zing of steel and handle--the lank railsplitters cut the big ones first, the beeches and the oaks, then the brush.

Dynamite, wagons, and horses took the stumps--the plows sunk their teeth in-- now it is first class corn land--omproved property--and the hogs grunt over the fodder crops.

It would come hard now for this half mile of improved farm land along the Monon corn belt, on a piece of Grand Prarie, to remember once it had a great singing family of trees.

Carl Sandburg

In A Back Alley

Remembrance for a great man is this.
The newsies are pitching pennies.
And on the copper disk is the man's face.
Dead lover of boys, what do you ask for now?

Carl Sandburg

In A Breath

To the Williamson Brothers

High noon. White sun flashes on the Michigan Avenue
asphalt. Drum of hoofs and whirr of motors.
Women tramping along in flimsy clothes catching
play of sun-fire to their skin and eyes.

Inside the playhouse are movies from under the sea.
From the heat of pavements and the dust of sidewalks,
passers-by go in a breath to be witnesses of
large cool sponges, large cool fishes, large cool valleys
and ridges of coral spread silent in the soak of
the ocean floor thousands of years.

A naked swimmer dives. A knife in his right hand
shoots a streak at the throat of a shark. The tail
of the shark lashes. One swing would kill the swimmer. . .
Soon the knife goes into the soft under-
neck of the veering fish. . . Its mouthful of teeth,
each tooth a dagger itself, set row on row, glistens
when the shuddering, yawning cadaver is hauled up
by the brothers of the swimmer.

Outside in the street is the murmur and singing of life
in the sun--horses, motors, women tramping along
in flimsy clothes, play of sun-fire in their blood.

Carl Sandburg

In Tall Grass

BEES and a honeycomb in the dried head of a horse in a pasture corner-a skull in the tall grass and a buzz and a buzz of the yellow honey-hunters.

And I ask no better a winding sheet
(over the earth and under the sun.)

Let the bees go honey-hunting with yellow blur of wings in the dome of my head, in the rumbling, singing arch of my skull.

Let there be wings and yellow dust and the drone of dreams of honey-who loses and remembers?-who keeps and forgets?

In a blue sheen of moon over the bones and under the hanging honeycomb the bees come home and the bees sleep.

Carl Sandburg

In The Shadow Of The Palace

LET us go out of the fog, John, out of the filmy persistent drizzle on the streets of Stockholm, let us put down the collars of our raincoats, take off our hats and sit in the newspapers office.

Let us sit among the telegrams-clickety-click-the kaiser's crown goes into the gutter and the Hohenzollern throne of a thousand years falls to pieces a one-hoss shay.

It is a fog night out and the umbrellas are up and the collars of the raincoats-and all the steamboats up and down the Baltic sea have their lights out and the wheelsmen sober.

Here the telegrams come-one king goes and another-butter is costly: there is no butter to buy for our bread in Stockholm-and a little patty of butter costs more than all the crowns of Germany.

Let us go out in the fog, John, let us roll up our raincoat collars and go on the streets where men are sneering at the kings.

Carl Sandburg

Interior

In the cool of the night time
The clocks pick off the points
And the mainsprings loosen.
They will need winding.
One of these days
they will need winding.

Rabelais in red boards,
Walt Whitman in green,
Hugo in ten-cent paper covers,
Here they stand on shelves
In the cool of the night time
And there is nothing
To be said against them
Or for them
In the cool of the night time
And the docks.

A man in pigeon-gray pyjamas.
The open window begins at his feet
And goes taller than his head.
Eight feet high is the pattern.

Moon and mist make an oblong layout.
Silver at the man's bare feet.
He swings one foot in a moon silver.
And it costs nothing.

(One more day of bread and work.
One more dayso much rags .

The man barefoot in moon silver
Mutters "You" and "You"
To things hidden
In the cool of the night time,
In Rabelais, Whitman, Hugo,
In an oblong of moon mist.

Out from the window prairielands.

Moon mist whitens a golf ground.
Whiter yet is a limestone quarry.
The crickets keep on chirring.

Switch engines of the Great Western
Sidetrack box cars, make up trains
For Weehawken, Oskaloosa, Saskatchewan;
The cattle, the coal, the corn, must go
In the night on the prairielands.

Chuff-chuff go the pulses.
They beat in the cool of the night time.
Chuff-chuff and chuff-chuff
These heartbeats travel the night a mile
And touch the moon silver at the window
And the hones of the man.
It costs nothing.

Rabelais in red boards,
Whitman in green,
Hugo in ten-cent paper covers,
Here they stand on shelves
In the cool of the night time
And the clocks.

Carl Sandburg

Iron

Guns,
Long, steel guns,
Pointed from the war ships
In the name of the war god.
Straight, shining, polished guns,
Clambered over with jackies in white blouses,
Glory of tan faces, tousled hair, white teeth,
Laughing lithe jackies in white blouses,
Sitting on the guns singing war songs, war chanties.

Shovels,
Broad, iron shovels,
Scooping out oblong vaults,
Loosening turf and leveling sod.

I ask you
To witness--
The shovel is brother to the gun.

Carl Sandburg

Jabberers

I RISE out of my depths with my language.
You rise out of your depths with your language.

Two tongues from the depths,
Alike only as a yellow cat and a green parrot are alike,
Fling their staccato tantalizations
Into a wildcat jabber
Over a gossamer web of unanswerables.

The second and the third silence,
Even the hundredth silence,
Is better than no silence at all
(Maybe this is a jabber too-are we at it again, you and I?)

I rise out of my depths with my language.
You rise out of your depths with your language.

One thing there is much of; the name men call it by is time; into this gulf our
syllabic pronunciamentos empty by the way rockets of fire curve and are gone on
the night sky; into this gulf the jabberings go as the shower at a scissors
grinder's wheel...

Carl Sandburg

Jack

Jack was a swarthy, swaggering son-of-a-gun.

He worked thirty years on the railroad, ten hours a day, and his hands were tougher than sole leather.

He married a tough woman and they had eight children and the woman died and the children grew up and went away and wrote the old man every two years.

He died in the poorhouse sitting on a bench in the sun telling reminiscences to other old men whose women were dead and children scattered.

There was joy on his face when he died as there was joy on his face when he lived—he was a swarthy, swaggering son-of-a-gun.

Carl Sandburg

Jack London And O. Henry

BOTH were jailbirds; no speechmakers at all; speaking best with one foot on a brass rail; a beer glass in the left hand and the right hand employed for gestures.

And both were lights snuffed out... no warning... no lingering:

Who knew the hearts of these boozefighters?

Carl Sandburg

Jan Kubelik

Your bow swept over a string, and a long low note quivered to the air.
(A mother of Bohemia sobs over a new child perfect learning to suck milk.)

Your bow ran fast over all the high strings fluttering and wild.
(All the girls in Bohemia are laughing on a Sunday afternoon in the hills with their lovers.)

Carl Sandburg

Jaws

Seven nations stood with their hands on the jaws of death.
It was the first week in August, Nineteen Hundred Fourteen.
I was listening, you were listening, the whole world was listening,
And all of us heard a Voice murmuring:
"I am the way and the light,
He that believeth on me
Shall not perish
But shall have everlasting life."
Seven nations listening heard the Voice and answered:
"O Hell!"
The jaws of death began clicking and they go on clicking.
"O Hell!"

Carl Sandburg

Jazz Fantasia

Drum on your drums, batter on your banjos,
sob on the long cool winding saxophones.
Go to it, O jazzmen.

Sling your knuckles on the bottoms of the happy
tin pans, let your trombones ooze, and go hush-
husha-hush with the slippery sand-paper.

Moan like an autumn wind high in the lonesome treetops,
moan soft like you wanted somebody terrible, cry like a
racing car slipping away from a motorcycle cop, bang-bang!
you jazzmen, bang altogether drums, traps, banjos, horns,
tin cans — make two people fight on the top of a stairway
and scratch each other's eyes in a clinch tumbling down
the stairs.

Can the rough stuff . . . now a Mississippi steamboat pushes
up the night river with a hoo-hoo-hoo-oo . . . and the green
lanterns calling to the high soft stars . . . a red moon rides
on the humps of the low river hills . . . go to it, O jazzmen.

Carl Sandburg

Jerry

Six years I worked in a knitting mill at a machine
And then I married Jerry, the iceman, for a change.
He weighed 240 pounds, and could hold me,
Who weighed 105 pounds, outward easily with one hand.
He came home drunk and lay on me with the breath of stale
beer
Blowing from him and jumbled talk that didn't mean anything.
I stood it two years and one hot night when I refused him
And he struck his bare fist against my nose so it bled,
I waited till he slept, took a revolver from a bureau drawer,
Placed the end of it to his head and pulled the trigger.
From the stone walls where I am incarcerated for the natural
term
Of life, I proclaim I would do it again.

Carl Sandburg

John Ericsson Day Memorial, 1918

INTO the gulf and the pit of the dark night, the cold night, there is a man goes into the dark and the cold and when he comes back to his people he brings fire in his hands and they remember him in the years afterward as the fire bringer-they remember or forget-the man whose head kept singing to the want of his home, the want of his people.

For this man there is no name thought of-he has broken from jungles and the old oxen and the old wagons-circled the earth with ships-belted the earth with steel-sung with wings and a drumming motor in the high blue sky-shot his words on a wireless way through shattering sea storms:-out from the night and out from the jungles his head keeps singing-there is no road for him but on and on.

Against the sea bastions and the land bastions, against the great air pockets of stars and atoms, he points a finger, finds a release clutch, touches a button no man knew before.

The soldier with a smoking gun and a gas mask-the workshop man under the smokestacks and the blueprints-these two are brothers of the handshake never forgotten-for these two we give the salt tears of our eyes, the salute of red roses, the flame-won scarlet of poppies.

For the soldier who gives all, for the workshop man who gives all, for these the red bar is on the flag-the red bar is the heart's-blood of the mother who gave him, the land that gave him.

The gray foam and the great wheels of war go by and take all-and the years give mist and ashes-and our feet stand at these, the memory places of the known and the unknown, and our hands give a flame-won poppy-our hands touch the red bar of a flag for the sake of those who gave-and gave all.

Carl Sandburg

Joliet

ON the one hand the steel works.
On the other hand the penitentiary.
Sante Fe trains and Alton trains
Between smokestacks on the west
And gray walls on the east.
And Lockport down the river.

Part of the valley is God's.
And part is man's.
The river course laid out
A thousand years ago.
The canals ten years back.

The sun on two canals and one river
Makes three stripes of silver
Or copper and gold
Or shattered sunflower leaves.
 Talons of an iceberg
 Scraped out this valley.
 Claws of an avalanche loosed here.

Carl Sandburg

Joy

Let a joy keep you.
Reach out your hands
And take it when it runs by,
As the Apache dancer
Clutches his woman.
I have seen them
Live long and laugh loud,
Sent on singing, singing,
Smashed to the heart
Under the ribs
With a terrible love.
Joy always,
Joy everywhere--
Let joy kill you!
Keep away from the little deaths.

Carl Sandburg

Jug

THE SHALE and water thrown together so-so first of all,
Then a potter's hand on the wheel and his fingers shaping the jug; out of the
mud a mouth and a handle;
Slimpsy, loose and ready to fall at a touch, fire plays on it, slow fire coaxing all
the water out of the shale mix.
Dipped in glaze more fire plays on it till a molasses lava runs in waves, rises and
retreats, a varnish of volcanoes.
Take it now; out of mud now here is a mouth and handle; out of this now
mothers will pour milk and maple syrup and cider, vinegar, apple juice, and
sorghum.
There is nothing proud about this; only one out of many; the potter's wheel
slings them out and the fires harden them hours and hours thousands and
thousands.
'Be good to me, put me down easy on the floors of the new concrete houses; I
was poured out like a concrete house and baked in fire too.'

Carl Sandburg

June

Paula is digging and shaping the loam of a salvia,
Scarlet Chinese talker of summer.
Two petals of crabapple blossom blow fallen in Paula's
hair,
And fluff of white from a cottonwood.

Carl Sandburg

Jungheimer's

In western fields of corn and northern timber lands,
They talk about me, a saloon with a soul,
The soft red lights, the long curving bar,
The leather seats and dim corners,
Tall brass spittoons, a nigger cutting ham,
And the painting of a woman half-dressed thrown reckless across a bed after a
night of booze and riots.

Carl Sandburg

Just Before April Came

THE SNOW piles in dark places are gone.
Pools by the railroad tracks shine clear.
The gravel of all shallow places shines.
A white pigeon reels and somersaults.

Frogs plutter and squdge-and frogs beat the air with a recurring thin steel sliver
of melody.

Crows go in fives and tens; they march their black feathers past a blue pool;
they celebrate an old festival.

A spider is trying his webs, a pink bug sits on my hand washing his forelegs.
I might ask: Who are these people?

Carl Sandburg

Killers

I AM put high over all others in the city today.

I am the killer who kills for those who wish a killing today.

Here is a strong young man who killed.

There was a driving wind of city dust and horse dung blowing and he stood at an intersection of five sewers and there pumped the bullets of an automatic pistol into another man, a fellow citizen.

Therefore, the prosecuting attorneys, fellow citizens, and a jury of his peers, also fellow citizens, listened to the testimony of other fellow citizens, policemen, doctors, and after a verdict of guilty, the judge, a fellow citizen, said: I sentence you to be hanged by the neck till you are dead.

So there is a killer to be killed and I am the killer of the killer for today.

I don't know why it beats in my head in the lines I read once in an old school reader: I'm to be queen of the May, mother, I'm to be queen of the May. Anyhow it comes back in language just like that today.

I am the high honorable killer today.

There are five million people in the state, five million killers for whom I kill

I am the killer who kills today for five million killers who wish a killing.

Carl Sandburg

Killers

I am singing to you
Soft as a man with a dead child speaks;
Hard as a man in handcuffs,
Held where he cannot move:

Under the sun
Are sixteen million men,
Chosen for shining teeth,
Sharp eyes, hard legs,
And a running of young warm blood in their wrists.

And a red juice runs on the green grass;
And a red juice soaks the dark soil.
And the sixteen million are killing. . . and killing
and killing.

I never forget them day or night:
They beat on my head for memory of them;
They pound on my heart and I cry back to them,
To their homes and women, dreams and games.

I wake in the night and smell the trenches,
And hear the low stir of sleepers in lines--
Sixteen million sleepers and pickets in the dark:
Some of them long sleepers for always,
Some of them tumbling to sleep to-morrow for always,
Fixed in the drag of the world's heartbreak,
Eating and drinking, toiling. . . on a long job of
killing.
Sixteen million men.

Carl Sandburg

Kin

Brother, I am fire
Surging under the ocean floor.
I shall never meet you, brother—
Not for years, anyhow;
Maybe thousands of years, brother.
Then I will warm you,
Hold you close, wrap you in circles,
Use you and change you—
Maybe thousands of years, brother.

Carl Sandburg

Knucks

In Abraham Lincoln's city,
Where they remember his lawyer's shingle,
The place where they brought him
Wrapped in battle flags,
Wrapped in the smoke of memories
From Tallahassee to the Yukon,
The place now where the shaft of his tomb
Points white against the blue prairie dome,
In Abraham Lincoln's city ... I saw knucks
In the window of Mister Fischman's second-hand store
On Second Street.

I went in and asked, 'How much?'
'Thirty cents apiece,' answered Mister Fischman.
And taking a box of new ones off a shelf
He filled anew the box in the showcase
And said incidentally, most casually
And incidentally:
'I sell a carload a month of these.'

I slipped my fingers into a set of knucks,
Cast-iron knucks molded in a foundry pattern,
And there came to me a set of thoughts like these:
Mister Fischman is for Abe and the 'malice to none' stuff,
And the street car strikers and the strike-breakers,
And the sluggers, gunmen, detectives, policemen,

Judges, utility heads, newspapers, priests, lawyers,
They are all for Abe and the 'malice to none' stuff.

I started for the door.
'Maybe you want a lighter pair,'
Came Mister Fischman's voice.
I opened the door ... and the voice again:
'You are a funny customer.'

Wrapped in battle flags,
Wrapped in the smoke of memories,
This is the place they brought him,

This is Abraham Lincoln's home town.

Carl Sandburg

Kreisler

SELL me a violin, mister, of old mysterious wood.

Sell me a fiddle that has kissed dark nights on the forehead where men kiss sisters they love.

Sell me dried wood that has ached with passion clutching the knees and arms of a storm.

Sell me horsehair and rosin that has sucked at the breasts of the morning sun for milk.

Sell me something crushed in the heartsblood of pain readier than ever for one more song.

Carl Sandburg

Languages

There are no handles upon a language
Whereby men take hold of it
And mark it with signs for its remembrance.
It is a river, this language,
Once in a thousand years
Breaking a new course
Changing its way to the ocean.
It is mountain effluvia
Moving to valleys
And from nation to nation
Crossing borders and mixing.
Languages die like rivers.
Words wrapped round your tongue today
And broken to shape of thought
Between your teeth and lips speaking
Now and today
Shall be faded hieroglyphics
Ten thousand years from now.
Sing--and singing--remember
Your song dies and changes
And is not here to-morrow
Any more than the wind
Blowing ten thousand years ago.

Carl Sandburg

Last Answers

I wrote a poem on the mist
And a woman asked me what I meant by it.
I had thought till then only of the beauty of the mist,
how pearl and gray of it mix and reel,
And change the drab shanties with lighted lamps at evening
into points of mystery quivering with color.

I answered:

The whole world was mist once long ago and some day
it will all go back to mist,
Our skulls and lungs are more water than bone and tissue
And all poets love dust and mist because all the last answers
Go running back to dust and mist.

Carl Sandburg

Laughing Blue Steel

TWO fishes swimming in the sea,
Two birds flying in the air,
Two chisels on an anvil-maybe.
Beaten, hammered, laughing blue steel to each other-maybe.
Sure I would rather be a chisel with you than a fish.
Sure I would rather be a chisel with you than a bird.
Take these two chisel-pals, O God.
Take 'em and beat 'em, hammer 'em, hear 'em laugh.

Carl Sandburg

Laughing Corn

There was a high majestic fooling
Day before yesterday in the yellow corn.

And day after to-morrow in the yellow corn
There will be high majestic fooling.

The ears ripen in late summer
And come on with a conquering laughter,
Come on with a high and conquering laughter.

The long-tailed blackbirds are hoarse.
One of the smaller blackbirds chitters on a stalk
And a spot of red is on its shoulder
And I never heard its name in my life.

Some of the ears are bursting.
A white juice works inside.
Cornsilk creeps in the end and dangles in the wind.
Always--I never knew it any other way--
The wind and the corn talk things over together.
And the rain and the corn and the sun and the corn
Talk things over together.

Over the road is the farmhouse.
The siding is white and a green blind is slung loose.
It will not be fixed till the corn is husked.
The farmer and his wife talk things over together.

Carl Sandburg

Lawyer

When the jury files in to deliver a verdict after weeks of direct and cross
examinations, hot clashes
of lawyers and cool decisions of the judge,
There are points of high silence--twiddling of thumbs is at an end--bailiffs near
cuspidors take fresh
chews of tobacco and wait--and the clock has a chance for its ticking to be heard.

A lawyer for the defense clears his throat and holds himself ready if the word is
"Guilty" to enter
motion for a new trial, speaking in a soft voice, speaking in a voice slightly
colored with bitter wrongs
mingled with monumental patience, speaking with mythic Atlas shoulders of
many preposterous,
unjust circumstances.

Carl Sandburg

Leather Leggings

THEY have taken the ball of earth
and made it a little thing.

They were held to the land and horses;
they were held to the little seas.
They have changed and shaped and welded;
they have broken the old tools and made
new ones; they are ranging the white
scarves of cloudland; they are bumping
the sunken bells of the Carthaginians
and Phœnicians:
they are handling
the strongest sea
as a thing to be handled.

The earth was a call that mocked;
it is belted with wires and meshed with
steel; from Pittsburg to Vladivostok is
an iron ride on a moving house; from
Jerusalem to Tokyo is a reckoned span;
and they talk at night in the storm and
salt, the wind and the war.

They have counted the miles to the Sun
and Canopus; they have weighed a small
blue star that comes in the southeast
corner of the sky on a foretold errand.

We shall search the sea again.
We shall search the stars again.
There are no bars across the way.
There is no end to the plan and the clue,
the hunt and the thirst.
The motors are drumming, the leather leggings
and the leather coats wait:
Under the sea
and out to the stars
we go.

Legends

CLOWNS DYING FIVE circus clowns dying this year, morning newspapers told their lives, how each one horizontal in a last gesture of hands arranged by an undertaker, shook thousands into convulsions of laughter from behind rouge-red lips and powder-white face.

STEAMBOAT BILL When the boilers of the Robert E. Lee exploded, a steamboat winner of many races on the Mississippi went to the bottom of the river and never again saw the wharves of Natchez and New Orleans.

And a legend lives on that two gamblers were blown toward the sky and during their journey laid bets on which of the two would go higher and which would be first to set foot on the turf of the earth again.

FOOT AND MOUTH PLAGUE When the mysterious foot and mouth epidemic ravaged the cattle of Illinois, Mrs. Hector Smith wept bitterly over the government killing forty of her soft-eyed Jersey cows; through the newspapers she wept over her loss for millions of readers in the Great Northwest.

SEVEN The lady who has had seven lawful husbands has written seven years for a famous newspaper telling how to find love and keep it: seven thousand hungry girls in the Mississippi Valley have read the instructions seven years and found neither illicit loves nor lawful husbands.

PROFITEER I who saw ten strong young men die anonymously, I who saw ten old mothers hand over their sons to the nation anonymously, I who saw ten thousand touch the sunlit silver finalities of undistinguished human glory-why do I sneeze sardonically at a bronze drinking fountain named after one who participated in the war vicariously and bought ten farms?

Carl Sandburg

Let Love Go On

LET it go on; let the love of this hour be poured out till all the answers are made,
the last dollar spent and the last blood gone.

Time runs with an ax and a hammer, time slides down the hallways with a pass-
key and a master-key, and time gets by, time wins.

Let the love of this hour go on; let all the oaths and children and people of this
love be clean as a washed stone under a waterfall in the sun.

Time is a young man with ballplayer legs, time runs a winning race against life
and the clocks, time tickles with rust and spots.

Let love go on; the heartbeats are measured out with a measuring glass, so
many apiece to gamble with, to use and spend and reckon; let love go on.

Carl Sandburg

Letter S

THE RIVER is gold under a sunset of Illinois.
It is a molten gold someone pours and changes.
A woman mixing a wedding cake of butter and eggs
Knows what the sunset is pouring on the river here.
The river twists in a letter S.
A gold S now speaks to the Illinois sky.

Carl Sandburg

Letters To Dead Imagists

EMILY DICKINSON:

You gave us the bumble bee who has a soul,
The everlasting traveler among the hollyhocks,
And how God plays around a back yard garden.

STEVIE CRANE:

War is kind and we never knew the kindness of war till you came;
Nor the black riders and clashes of spear and shield out of the sea,
Nor the mumblings and shots that rise from dreams on call.

Carl Sandburg

Limited

I am riding on a limited express, one of the crack trains
of the nation.

Hurling across the prairie into blue haze and dark air
go fifteen all-steel coaches holding a thousand people.
(All the coaches shall be scrap and rust and all the men
and women laughing in the diners and sleepers shall
pass to ashes.)

I ask a man in the smoker where he is going and he
answers: "Omaha."

Carl Sandburg

Loam

In the loam we sleep,
In the cool moist loam,
To the lull of years that pass
And the break of stars,

From the loam, then,
The soft warm loam,
We rise:
To shape of rose leaf,
Of face and shoulder.

We stand, then,
To a whiff of life,
Lifted to the silver of the sun
Over and out of the loam
A day.

Carl Sandburg

Localities

Wagon wheel gap is a place I never saw
And Red Horse Gulch and the chutes of Cripple Creek.

Red-shirted miners picking in the sluices,
Gamblers with red neckties in the night streets,
The fly-by-night towns of Bull Frog and Skiddoo,
The night-cool limestone white of Death Valley,
The straight drop of eight hundred feet
From a shelf road in the Hasiampa Valley:
Men and places they are I never saw.

I have seen three White Horse taverns,
One in Illinois, one in Pennsylvania,
One in a timber-hid road of Wisconsin.

I bought cheese and crackers
Between sun showers in a place called White Pigeon
Nestling with a blacksmith shop, a post-office,
And a berry-crate factory, where four roads cross.

On the Pecatonica River near Freeport
I have seen boys run barefoot in the leaves
Throwing clubs at the walnut trees
In the yellow-and-gold of autumn,
And there was a brown mash dry on the inside of their hands.
On the Cedar Fork Creek of Knox County
I know how the fingers of late October
Loosen the hazel nuts.
I know the brown eyes of half-open hulls.
I know boys named Lindquist, Swanson, Hildebrand.
I remember their cries when the nuts were ripe.
And some are in machine shops; some are in the navy;
And some are not on payrolls anywhere.
Their mothers are through waiting for them to come home.

Carl Sandburg

Loin Cloth

BODY of Jesus taken down from the cross
Carved in ivory by a lover of Christ,
It is a child's handful you are here,
The breadth of a man's finger,
And this ivory loin cloth
Speaks an interspersal in the day's work,
The carver's prayer and whim
And Christ-love.

Carl Sandburg

Long Guns

THEN came, Oscar, the time of the guns.
And there was no land for a man, no land for a country,
Unless guns sprang up
And spoke their language.
The how of running the world was all in guns.

The law of a God keeping sea and land apart,
The law of a child sucking milk,
The law of stars held together,
They slept and worked in the heads of men
Making twenty mile guns, sixty mile guns,
Speaking their language
Of no land for a man, no land for a country
Unless... guns... unless... guns.

There was a child wanted the moon shot off the sky,
asking a long gun to get the moon,
to conquer the insults of the moon,
to conquer something, anything,
to put it over and win the day,
To show them the running of the world was all in guns.
There was a child wanted the moon shot off the sky.
They dreamed... in the time of the guns... of guns.

Carl Sandburg

Losers

IF I should pass the tomb of Jonah
I would stop there and sit for awhile;
Because I was swallowed one time deep in the dark
And came out alive after all.

If I pass the burial spot of Nero
I shall say to the wind, 'Well, well!'-
I who have fiddled in a world on fire,
I who have done so many stunts not worth doing.

I am looking for the grave of Sinbad too.
I want to shake his ghost-hand and say,
'Neither of us died very early, did we?'

And the last sleeping-place of Nebuchadnezzar-
When I arrive there I shall tell the wind:
'You ate grass; I have eaten crow-
Who is better off now or next year?'

Jack Cade, John Brown, Jesse James,
There too I could sit down and stop for awhile.
I think I could tell their headstones:
'God, let me remember all good losers.'

I could ask people to throw ashes on their heads
In the name of that sergeant at Belleau Woods,
Walking into the drumfires, calling his men,
'Come on, you ... Do you want to live forever?'

Carl Sandburg

Losses

I have love
And a child,
A banjo
And shadows.
(Losses of God,
All will go
And one day
We will hold
Only the shadows.)

Carl Sandburg

Lost

Desolate and lone
All night long on the lake
Where fog trails and mist creeps,
The whistle of a boat
Calls and cries unendingly,
Like some lost child
In tears and trouble
Hunting the harbor's breast
And the harbor's eyes.

Carl Sandburg

Love Beyond Keeping

She had a box
with a million red bandanas for him.
She gave them to him
one by one or by thousands,
saying then she had not enough for him.

She had languages and landscapes
on her lips and the end of her tongue,
landscapes of sunny hills and changing fogs,
of houses falling and people within falling,
of a left-handed man
who died for a woman who went out of her mind,
of a guitar player
who died with fingers reaching for strings,
of a man whose heart stopped
as his hand went out to put a pawn forward
on the fifth day of one game of chess,
of five gay women
stricken and lost
amid the javelins and chants
of love beyond keeping.

Carl Sandburg

Mag

I wish to God I never saw you, Mag.
I wish you never quit your job and came along with me.
I wish we never bought a license and a white dress
For you to get married in the day we ran off to a minister
And told him we would love each other and take care of each other
Always and always long as the sun and the rain lasts anywhere.
Yes, I'm wishing now you lived somewhere away from here
And I was a bum on the bumpers a thousand miles away dead broke.
I wish the kids had never come
And rent and coal and clothes to pay for
And a grocery man calling for cash,
Every day cash for beans and prunes.
I wish to God I never saw you, Mag.
I wish to God the kids had never come.

Carl Sandburg

Mamie

MAMIE beat her head against the bars of a little Indiana town and dreamed of romance and big things off somewhere the way the railroad trains all ran.

She could see the smoke of the engines get lost down where the streaks of steel flashed in the sun and when the newspapers came in on the morning mail she knew there was a big Chicago far off, where all the trains ran.

She got tired of the barber shop boys and the post office chatter and the church gossip and the old pieces the band played on the Fourth of July and Decoration Day And sobbed at her fate and beat her head against the bars and was going to kill herself

When the thought came to her that if she was going to die she might as well die struggling for a clutch of romance among the streets of Chicago.

She has a job now at six dollars a week in the basement of the Boston Store

And even now she beats her head against the bars in the same old way and wonders if there is a bigger place the railroads run to from Chicago where maybe there is

romance
and big things
and real dreams
that never go smash.

Carl Sandburg

Mammy Hums

THIS is the song I rested with:

The right shoulder of a strong man I leaned on.

The face of the rain that drizzled on the short neck of a canal boat.

The eyes of a child who slept while death went over and under.

The petals of peony pink that fluttered in a shot of wind come and gone.

This is the song I rested with:

Head, heels, and fingers rocked to the **** mammy humming of it, to the mile-off steamboat landing whistle of it.

The murmurs run with bees' wings

in a late summer sun.

They go and come with white surf

slamming on a beach all day.

Get this.

And then you may sleep with a late afternoon slumber sun.

Then you may slip your head in an elbow knowing nothing-only sleep.

If so you sleep in the house of our song,

If so you sleep under the apple trees of our song,

Then the face of sleep must be the one face you were looking for.

Carl Sandburg

Man, The Man-Hunter

I SAW Man, the man-hunter,
Hunting with a torch in one hand
And a kerosene can in the other,
Hunting with guns, ropes, shackles.

I listened
And the high cry rang,
The high cry of Man, the man-hunter:
We'll get you yet, you sbxyzch!

I listened later.
The high cry rang:
Kill him! kill him! the sbxyzch!

In the morning the sun saw
Two butts of something, a smoking rump,
And a warning in charred wood:

Well, we got him,
the sbxyzch.

Carl Sandburg

Manitoba Childe Roland

LAST night a January wind was ripping at the shingles over our house and whistling a wolf song under the eaves.

I sat in a leather rocker and read to a six-year-old girl the Browning poem, Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came.

And her eyes had the haze of autumn hills and it was beautiful to her and she could not understand.

A man is crossing a big prairie, says the poem, and nothing happens--and he goes on and on--and it's all lonesome and empty and nobody home.

And he goes on and on--and nothing happens--and he comes on a horse's skull, dry bones of a dead horse--and you know more than ever it's all lonesome and empty and nobody home.

And the man raises a horn to his lips and blows--he fixes a proud neck and forehead toward the empty sky and the empty land--and blows one last wonder-cry.

And as the shuttling automatic memory of man clicks off its results willy-nilly and inevitable as the snick of a mouse-trap or the trajectory of a 42-centimetre projectile,

I flash to the form of a man to his hips in snow drifts of Manitoba and Minnesota--in the sled derby run from Winnipeg to Minneapolis.

He is beaten in the race the first day out of Winnipeg--the lead dog is eaten by four team mates--and the man goes on and on--running while the other racers ride, running while the other racers sleep--

Lost in a blizzard twenty-four hours, repeating a circle of travel hour after hour--fighting the dogs who dig holes in the snow and whimper for sleep--pushing on--running and walking five hundred miles to the end of the race--almost a winner--one toe frozen, feet blistered and frost-bitten.

And I know why a thousand young men of the Northwest meet him in the finishing miles and yell cheers

--I know why judges of the race call him a winner
and give him a special prize even though he is a
loser.

I know he kept under his shirt and around his thudding
heart amid the blizzards of five hundred miles that
one last wonder-cry of Childe Roland--and I told
the six year old girl about it.

And while the January wind was ripping at the shingles
and whistling a wolf song under the eaves, her eyes
had the haze of autumn hills and it was beautiful
to her and she could not understand.

Carl Sandburg

Manual System

Mary has a thingamajig clamped on her ears
And sits all day taking plugs out and sticking plugs in.
Flashes and flashes--voies and voices
calling for ears to put words in
Faces at the ends of wires asking for other faces
at the ends of other wires:
All day taking plugs out and sticking plugs in,
Mary has a thingamajig clamped on her ears.

Carl Sandburg

Manufactured Gods

THEY put up big wooden gods.
Then they burned the big wooden gods
And put up brass gods and
Changing their minds suddenly
Knocked down the brass gods and put up
A doughface god with gold earrings.
The poor mutts, the pathetic slant heads,
They didn't know a little tin god
Is as good as anything in the line of gods
Nor how a little tin god answers prayer
And makes rain and brings luck
The same as a big wooden god or a brass
God or a doughface god with golden
Earrings.

Carl Sandburg

Margaret

Many birds and the beating of wings
Make a flinging reckless hum
In the early morning at the rocks
Above the blue pool
Where the gray shadows swim lazy.

In your blue eyes, O reckless child,
I saw today many little wild wishes,
Eager as the great morning.

Carl Sandburg

Mascots

I WILL keep you and bring hands to hold you against a great hunger.
I will run a spear in you for a great gladness to die with.
I will stab you between the ribs of the left side with a great love worth remembering.

Carl Sandburg

Mask

Fling your red scarf faster and faster, dancer.
It is summer and the sun loves a million green leaves, masses of green.
Your red scarf flashes across them calling and a-calling.
The silk and flare of it is a great soprano leading a chorus
Carried along in a rouse of voices reaching for the heart of the world.
Your toes are singing to meet the song of your arms:

Let the red scarf go swifter.
Summer and the sun command you.

Carl Sandburg

Masses

Among the mountains I wandered and saw blue haze and red crag and was amazed;

On the beach where the long push under the endless tide maneuvers, I stood silent;

Under the stars on the prairie watching the Dipper slant over the horizon's grass, I was full of thoughts.

Great men, pageants of war and labor, soldiers and workers, mothers lifting their children—these all I touched, and felt the solemn thrill of them.

And then one day I got a true look at the Poor, millions of the Poor, patient and toiling; more patient than crags, tides, and stars; innumerable, patient as the darkness of night—and all broken, humble ruins of nations.

Carl Sandburg

Maybe

Maybe he believes me, maybe not.
Maybe I can marry him, maybe not.

Maybe the wind on the prairie,
The wind on the sea, maybe,
Somebody, somewhere, maybe can tell.

I will lay my head on his shoulder
And when he asks me I will say yes,
Maybe.

Carl Sandburg

Medallion

The brass medallion profile of your face I keep always.

It is not jingling with loose change in my pockets.

It is not stuck up in a show place on the office wall.

I carry it in a special secret pocket in the day

And it is under my pillow at night.

The brass came from a long ways off: it was up against hell and high water, fire
and flood, before the

face was put on it.

It is the side of a head; a woman wishes; a woman waits; a woman swears
behind silent lips that the

sea will bring home what is gone.

Carl Sandburg

Memoir Of A Proud Boy

HE lived on the wings of storm.
The ashes are in Chihuahua.

Out of Ludlow and coal towns in Colorado
Sprang a vengeance of Slav miners, Italians, Scots, Cornishmen, Yanks.
Killings ran under the spoken commands of this boy
With eighty men and rifles on a hogback mountain.

They killed swearing to remember
The shot and charred wives and children
In the burnt camp of Ludlow,
And Louis Tikas, the laughing Greek,
Plugged with a bullet, clubbed with a gun butt.

As a home war
It held the nation a week
And one or two million men stood together
And swore by the retribution of steel.

It was all accidental.
He lived flecking lint off coat lapels
Of men he talked with.
He kissed the miners' babies
And wrote a Denver paper
Of picket silhouettes on a mountain line.

He had no mother but Mother Jones
Crying from a jail window of Trinidad:
'All I want is room enough to stand
And shake my fist at the enemies of the human race.'

Named by a grand jury as a murderer
He went to Chihuahua, forgot his old Scotch name,
Smoked cheroots with Pancho Villa
And wrote letters of Villa as a rock of the people.

How can I tell how Don Magregor went?

Three riders emptied lead into him.

He lay on the main street of an inland town.
A boy sat near all day throwing stones
To keep pigs away.

The Villa men buried him in a pit
With twenty Carranzistas.

There is drama in that point...
...the boy and the pigs.
Griffith would make a movie of it to fetch sobs.
Victor Herbert would have the drums whirr
In a weave with a high fiddle-string's single clamor.

'And the muchacho sat there all day throwing stones
To keep the pigs away,' wrote Gibbons to the Tribune.

Somewhere in Chihuahua or Colorado
Is a leather bag of poems and short stories.

Carl Sandburg

Memoranda

THIS handful of grass, brown, says little. This quarter mile field of it, waving seeds ripening in the sun, is a lake of luminous firefly lavender.

Prairie roses, two of them, climb down the sides of a road ditch. In the clear pool they find their faces along stiff knives of grass, and cat-tails who speak and keep thoughts in beaver brown.

These gardens empty; these fields only flower ghosts; these yards with faces gone; leaves speaking as feet and skirts in slow dances to slow winds; I turn my head and say good-by to no one who hears; I pronounce a useless good-by.

Carl Sandburg

Mill-Doors

You never come back.

I say good-by when I see you going in the doors,
The hopeless open doors that call and wait
And take you then for—how many cents a day?
How many cents for the sleepy eyes and fingers?

I say good-by because I know they tap your wrists,
In the dark, in the silence, day by day,
And all the blood of you drop by drop,
And you are old before you are young.
You never come back.

Carl Sandburg

Mist Forms

THE SHEETS of night mist travel a long valley.
I know why you came at sundown in a scarf mist.

What was it we touched asking nothing and asking all?
How many times can death come and pay back what we saw?

In the oath of the sod, the lips that swore,
In the oath of night mist, nothing and all,
A riddle is here no man tells, no woman.

Carl Sandburg

Mohammed Bek Hadjetlache

THIS Mohammedan colonel from the Caucasus yells with his voice and wigwags with his arms.

The interpreter translates, 'I was a friend of Kornilov, he asks me what to do and I tell him.'

A stub of a man, this Mohammedan colonel ... a projectile shape ... a bald head hammered ...

'Does he fight or do they put him in a cannon and shoot him at the enemy?'

This fly-by-night, this bull-roarer who knows everybody.

'I write forty books, history of Islam, history of Europe, true religion, scientific farming, I am the Roosevelt of the Caucasus, I go to America and ride horses in the moving pictures for \$500,000, you get \$50,000 ...'

'I have 30,000 acres in the Caucasus, I have a stove factory in Petrograd the bolsheviks take from me, I am an old friend of the Czar, I am an old family friend of Clemenceau ...'

These hands strangled three fellow workers for the czarist restoration, took their money, sent them in sacks to a river bottom ... and scandalized Stockholm with his gang of strangler women.

Mid-sea strangler hands rise before me illustrating a wish, 'I ride horses for the moving pictures in America, \$500,000, and you get ten per cent ...'

This rider of fugitive dawns....

Carl Sandburg

Momus

Momus is the name men give your face,
The brag of its tone, like a long low steamboat whistle
Finding a way mid mist on a shoreland,
Where gray rocks let the salt water shatter spray
Against horizons purple, silent.

Yes, Momus,
Men have flung your face in bronze
To gaze in gargoyle downward on a street-whirl of folk.
They were artists did this, shaped your sad mouth,
Gave you a tall forehead slanted with calm, broad wisdom;
All your lips to the corners and your cheeks to the high bones
Thrown over and through with a smile that forever wishes and wishes, purple,
silent, fled from all the iron things of life, evaded like a sought bandit, gone into
dreams, by God.

I wonder, Momus,
Whether shadows of the dead sit somewhere and look with deep laughter
On men who play in terrible earnest the old, known, solemn repetitions of
history.

A droning monotone soft as sea laughter hovers from your kindness of bronze,
You give me the human ease of a mountain peak, purple, silent;
Granite shoulders heaving above the earth curves,
Careless eye-witness of the spawning tides of men and women
Swarming always in a drift of millions to the dust of toil, the salt of tears,
And blood drops of undiminishing war.

Carl Sandburg

Monosyllabic

Let me be monosyllabic to-day, O Lord.

Yesterday I loosed a snarl of words on a fool, on a child.

To-day, let me be monosyllabic a crony of old men who wash sunlight in their fingers and enjoy slow-pacing clocks.

Carl Sandburg

Monotone

The monotone of the rain is beautiful,
And the sudden rise and slow relapse
Of the long multitudinous rain.

The sun on the hills is beautiful,
Or a captured sunset sea-flung,
Bannered with fire and gold.

A face I know is beautiful--
With fire and gold of sky and sea,
And the peace of long warm rain.

Carl Sandburg

Moonset

LEAVES of poplars pick Japanese prints against the west.

Moon sand on the canal doubles the changing pictures.

The moon's good-by ends pictures.

The west is empty. All else is empty. No moon-talk at all now.

Only dark listening to dark.

Carl Sandburg

Muckers

Twenty men stand watching the muckers.
Stabbing the sides of the ditch
Where clay gleams yellow,
Driving the blades of their shovels
Deeper and deeper for the new gas mains
Wiping sweat off their faces
With red bandanas
The muckers work on .. pausing .. to pull
Their boots out of suckholes where they slosh.

Of the twenty looking on
Ten murmur, "O, its a hell of a job,"
Ten others, "Jesus, I wish I had the job."

Carl Sandburg

Murmurings In A Field Hospital

[They picked him up in the grass where he had lain two days in the rain with a piece of shrapnel in his lungs.]

Come to me only with playthings now. . .
A picture of a singing woman with blue eyes
Standing at a fence of hollyhocks, poppies and sunflowers. . .
Or an old man I remember sitting with children telling stories
Of days that never happened anywhere in the world. . .

No more iron cold and real to handle,
Shaped for a drive straight ahead.
Bring me only beautiful useless things.
Only old home things touched at sunset in the quiet. . .
And at the window one day in summer
Yellow of the new crock of butter
Stood against the red of new climbing roses. . .
And the world was all playthings.

Carl Sandburg

My People

MY people are gray,
pigeon gray, dawn gray, storm gray.
I call them beautiful,
and I wonder where they are going.

Carl Sandburg

Near Keokuk

THIRTY-TWO Greeks are dipping their feet in a creek.
Sloshing their bare feet in a cool flow of clear water.
All one midsummer day ten hours the Greeks
 stand in leather shoes shoveling gravel.
Now they hold their toes and ankles
 to the drift of running water.
Then they go to the bunk cars
 and eat mulligan and prune sauce,
Smoke one or two pipefuls, look at the stars,
 tell smutty stories
About men and women they have known,
 countries they have seen,
Railroads they have built-
 and then the deep sleep of children.

Carl Sandburg

Neighbors

On Forty-first Street
near Eighth Avenue
a frame house wobbles.

If houses went on crutches
this house would be
one of the cripples.

A sign on the house:
Church of the Living God
And Rescue Home for Orphan Children.

From a Greek coffee house
Across the street
A cabalistic jargon
Jabbers back.
And men at tables
Spill Peloponnesian syllables
And speak of shovels for street work.
And the new embankments of the Erie Railroad
At Painted Post, Horse's Head, Salamanca.

Carl Sandburg

Never Born

THE TIME has gone by.
The child is dead.
The child was never even born.
Why go on? Why so much as begin?
How can we turn the clock back now
And not laugh at each other
As ashes laugh at ashes?

Carl Sandburg

New Farm Tractor

The rear axles hold the kick of twenty Missouri jackasses.

It is in the records of the patent office and the ads there is twenty horse power pull here.

The farm boy says hello to you instead of twenty mules-he sings to you instead of ten span of mules.

A bucket of oil and a can of grease is your hay and oats.

Rain proof and fool proof they stable you anywhere in the fields with the stars for a roof.

I carve a team of long ear mules on the steering wheel-it's good-by now to leather reins and the songs of the old mule skimmers.

Carl Sandburg

New Feet

EMPTY battlefields keep their phantoms.
Grass crawls over old gun wheels
And a nodding Canada thistle flings a purple
Into the summer's southwest wind,
Wrapping a root in the rust of a bayonet,
Reaching a blossom in rust of shrapnel.

Carl Sandburg

Nigger

I am the nigger.
Singer of songs,
Dancer...
Softer than fluff of cotton...
Harder than dark earth
Roads beaten in the sun
By the bare feet of slaves...
Foam of teeth ... breaking crash of laughter...
Red love of the blood of woman,
White love of the tumbling pickaninnies...
Lazy love of the banjo thrum...
Sweated and driven for the harvest-wage,
Loud laughter with hands like hams,
Fists toughened on the handles,
Smiling the slumber dreams of old jungles,
Crazy as the sun and dew and dripping, heaving life of the jungle,
Brooding and muttering with memories of shackles:
I am the nigger.
Look at me.
I am the nigger.

Carl Sandburg

Night Movement-New York

IN the night, when the sea-winds take the city in their arms,
And cool the loud streets that kept their dust noon and afternoon;
In the night, when the sea-birds call to the lights of the city,
The lights that cut on the skyline their name of a city;
In the night, when the trains and wagons start from a long way off
For the city where the people ask bread and want letters;
In the night the city lives too-the day is not all.
In the night there are dancers dancing and singers singing,
And the sailors and soldiers look for numbers on doors.
In the night the sea-winds take the city in their arms.

Carl Sandburg

Night Stuff

LISTEN a while, the moon is a lovely woman, a lonely woman, lost in a silver dress, lost in a circus rider's silver dress.

Listen a while, the lake by night is a lonely woman, a lovely woman, circled with birches and pines mixing their green and white among stars shattered in spray clear nights.

I know the moon and the lake have twisted the roots under my heart the same as a lonely woman, a lovely woman, in a silver dress, in a circus rider's silver dress.

Carl Sandburg

Nights Nothings Again

WHO knows what I know
when I have asked the night questions
and the night has answered nothing
only the old answers?

Who picked a crimson cryptogram,
the tail light of a motor car turning a corner,
or the midnight sign of a chile con carne place,
or a man out of the ashes of false dawn muttering 'hot-dog' to the night
watchmen:
Is there a spieler who has spoken the word or taken the number of night's
nothings? am I the spieler? or you?

Is there a tired head
the night has not fed and rested
and kept on its neck and shoulders?

Is there a wish
of man to woman
and woman to man
the night has not written
and signed its name under?

Does the night forget
as a woman forgets?
and remember
as a woman remembers?

Who gave the night
this head of hair,
this gipsy head
calling: Come-on?

Who gave the night anything at all
and asked the night questions
and was laughed at?

Who asked the night
for a long soft kiss

and lost the half-way lips?
who picked a red lamp in a mist?

Who saw the night
fold its Mona Lisa hands
and sit half-smiling, half-sad,
nothing at all,
and everything,
all the world ?

Who saw the night
let down its hair
and shake its bare shoulders
and blow out the candles of the moon,
whispering, snickering,
cutting off the snicker .. and sobbing ..
out of pillow-wet kisses and tears?

Is the night woven of anything else
than the secret wishes of women,
the stretched empty arms of women?
the hair of women with stars and roses?
I asked the night these questions.
I heard the night asking me these questions.

I saw the night
put these whispered nothings
across the city dust and stones,
across a single yellow sunflower,
one stalk strong as a woman's wrist;

And the play of a light rain,
the jig-time folly of a light rain,
the creepers of a drizzle on the sidewalks
for the policemen and the railroad men,
for the home-goers and the homeless,
silver fans and funnels on the asphalt,
the many feet of a fog mist that crept away;

I saw the night
put these nothings across
and the night wind came saying: Come-on:

and the curve of sky swept off white clouds
and swept on white stars over Battery to Bronx,
scooped a sea of stars over Albany, Dobbs Ferry, Cape Horn, Constantinople.

I saw the night's mouth and lips
strange as a face next to mine on a pillow
and now I know ... as I knew always ...
the night is a lover of mine ...
I know the night is ... everything.
I know the night is ... all the world.

I have seen gold lamps in a lagoon
play sleep and murmur
with never an eyelash,
never a glint of an eyelid,
quivering in the water-shadows.

A taxi whizzes by, an owl car clutters, passengers yawn reading street signs, a
bum on a park bench shifts, another bum keeps his majesty of stone stillness,
the forty-foot split rocks of Central Park sleep the sleep of stone whalebacks, the
cornices of the Metropolitan Art mutter their own nothings to the men with
rolled-up collars on the top of a bus:

Breaths of the sea salt Atlantic, breaths of two rivers, and a heave of hawsers
and smokestacks, the swish of multiplied sloops and war dogs, the hesitant hoo-
hoo of coal boats: among these I listen to Night calling:

I give you what money can never buy: all other lovers change: all others go
away and come back and go away again:

I am the one you slept with last night.

I am the one you sleep with tonight and tomorrow night.

I am the one whose passion kisses

keep your head wondering

and your lips aching

to sing one song

never sung before

at night's gipsy head

calling: Come-on.

These hands that slid to my neck and held me,

these fingers that told a story,

this gipsy head of hair calling: Come-on:

can anyone else come along now

and put across night's nothings again?

I have wanted kisses my heart stuttered at asking,
I have pounded at useless doors and called my people fools.
I have staggered alone in a winter dark making mumble songs
to the sting of a blizzard that clutched and swore.
It was the night in my blood:
open dreaming night,
night of tireless sheet-steel blue:
The hands of God washing something,
feet of God walking somewhere.

Carl Sandburg

Nocturne In A Deserted Brickyard

Stuff of the moon
Runs on the lapping sand
Out to the longest shadows.
Under the curving willows,
And round the creep of the wave line,
Fluxions of yellow and dusk on the waters
Make a wide dreaming pansy of an old pond in the night.

Carl Sandburg

Noon Hour

She sits in the dust at the walls
And makes cigars,
Bending at the bench
With fingers wage-anxious,
Changing her sweat for the day's pay.

Now the noon hour has come,
And she leans with her bare arms
On the window-sill over the river,
Leans and feels at her throat
Cool-moving things out of the free open ways:

At her throat and eyes and nostrils
The touch and the blowing cool
Of great free ways beyond the walls.

Carl Sandburg

North Atlantic

WHEN the sea is everywhere
from horizon to horizon ..
when the salt and blue
fill a circle of horizons ..
I swear again how I know
the sea is older than anything else
and the sea younger than anything else.

My first father was a landsman.
My tenth father was a sea-lover,
a gipsy sea-boy, a singer of chanties.
(Oh Blow the Man Down!)

The sea is always the same:
and yet the sea always changes.

The sea gives all,
and yet the sea keeps something back.

The sea takes without asking.
The sea is a worker, a thief and a loafer.
Why does the sea let go so slow?
Or never let go at all?

The sea always the same
day after day,
the sea always the same
night after night,
fog on fog and never a star,
wind on wind and running white sheets,
bird on bird always a sea-bird—
so the days get lost:
it is neither Saturday nor Monday,
it is any day or no day,
it is a year, ten years.

Fog on fog and never a star,
what is a man, a child, a woman,
to the green and grinding sea?

The ropes and boards squeak and groan.

On the land they know a child they have named Today.
On the sea they know three children they have named:
Yesterday, Today, To-morrow.

I made a song to a woman:—it ran:
I have wanted you.
I have called to you
on a day I counted a thousand years.

In the deep of a sea-blue noon
many women run in a man's head,
phantom women leaping from a man's forehead
.. to the railings ... into the sea ... to the
sea rim ...
.. a man's mother ... a man's wife ... other
women ...

I asked a sure-footed sailor how and he said:
I have known many women but there is only one sea.
I saw the North Star once
and our old friend, The Big Dipper,
only the sea between us:
"Take away the sea
and I lift The Dipper,
swing the handle of it,
drink from the brim of it."

I saw the North Star one night
and five new stars for me in the rigging ropes,
and seven old stars in the cross of the wireless
plunging by night,
plowing by night—
Five new cool stars, seven old warm stars.

I have been let down in a thousand graves by my kinfolk.
I have been left alone with the sea and the sea's wife, the wind, for my last
friends
And my kinfolk never knew anything about it at all.

Salt from an old work of eating our graveclothes is here.

The sea-kin of my thousand graves,
The sea and the sea's wife, the wind,
They are all here to-night
 between the circle of horizons,
 between the cross of the wireless
 and the seven old warm stars.

Out of a thousand sea-holes I came yesterday.
Out of a thousand sea-holes I come to-morrow.

I am kin of the changer.
I am a son of the sea
and the sea's wife, the wind.

Carl Sandburg

Offering And Rebuff

I could love you
as dry roots love rain.
I could hold you
as branches in the wind
brandish petals.
Forgive me for speaking so soon.

Let your heart look
on white sea spray
and be lonely.

Love is a fool star.

You and a ring of stars
may mention my name
and then forget me.

Love is a fool star.

Carl Sandburg

Old Osawatomie

JOHN BROWN'S body under the morning stars.
Six feet of dust under the morning stars.
And a panorama of war performs itself
Over the six-foot stage of circling armies.
Room for Gettysburg, Wilderness, Chickamauga,
On a six-foot stage of dust.

Carl Sandburg

Old Timers

I am an ancient reluctant conscript.

On the soup wagons of Xerxes I was a cleaner of pans.
On the march of Miltiades' phalanx I had a haft and head;
I had a bristling gleaming spear-handle.

Red-headed Cæsar picked me for a teamster.
He said, "Go to work, you Tuscan bastard,
Rome calls for a man who can drive horses."

The units of conquest led by Charles the Twelfth,
The whirling whimsical Napoleonic columns:
They saw me one of the horseshoers.

I trimmed the feet of a white horse Bonaparte swept the night stars with.

Lincoln said, "Get into the game; your nation takes you."
And I drove a wagon and team and I had my arm shot off
At Spottsylvania Court House.

I am an ancient reluctant conscript.

Carl Sandburg

Old Woman

The owl-car clatters along, dogged by the echo
From building and battered paving-stone.
The headlight scoffs at the mist,
And fixes its yellow rays in the cold slow rain;
Against a pane I press my forehead
And drowsily look on the walls and sidewalks.

The headlight finds the way
And life is gone from the wet and the welter—
Only an old woman, bloated, disheveled and bleared.
Far-wandered waif of other days,
Huddles for sleep in a doorway,
Homeless.

Carl Sandburg

Old-Fashioned Requited Love

I HAVE ransacked the encyclopedias
And slid my fingers among topics and titles
Looking for you.

And the answer comes slow.
There seems to be no answer.

I shall ask the next banana peddler the who and the why of it.

Or-the iceman with his iron tongs gripping a clear cube in summer sunlight-
maybe he will know.

Carl Sandburg

Omaha

Red barns and red heiffers spot the green
grass circles around Omaha--the farmers
haul tanks of cream and wagon-loads of
cheese.

Shale hogbacks across the river at Council
Bluffs--and shanties hang by an eyelash to
the hill slants back around Omaha.

A span of steel ties up the kin of Iowa and
Nebraska across the yellow, big-hoofed Missouri
River.

Omaha, the roughneck, feeds armies,
Eats and swears from a dirty face.
Omaha works to get the world a breakfast.

Carl Sandburg

On The Breakwater

On the breakwater in the summer dark, a man and a girl are sitting,
She across his knee and they are looking face into face
Talking to each other without words, singing rythms in silence to each other.

A funnel of white ranges the blue dusk from an outgoing boat,
Playing its searchlight, puzzled, abrupt, over a streak of green,
And two on the breakwater keep their silence, she on his knee.

Carl Sandburg

On The Way

Little one, you have been buzzing in the books,
Flittering in the newspapers and drinking beer with lawyers
And amid the educated men of the clubs you have been getting an earful of
speech from trained tongues.

Take an earful from me once, go with me on a hike
Along sand stretches on the great inland sea here
And while the eastern breeze blows on us and the restless surge
Of the lake waves on the breakwater breaks with an ever fresh monotone,
Let us ask ourselves: What is truth? what do you or I know?
How much do the wisest of the world's men know about where the massed
human procession is going?

You have heard the mob laughed at?

I ask you: Is not the mob rough as the mountains are rough?

And all things human rise from the mob and relapse and rise again as rain to the
sea?

Carl Sandburg

Onion Days

Mrs. Gabrielle Giovannitti comes along Peoria Street
every morning at nine o'clock
With kindling wood piled on top of her head, her eyes
looking straight ahead to find the way for her old feet.
Her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Pietro Giovannitti, whose
husband was killed in a tunnel explosion through
the negligence of a fellow-servant,
Works ten hours a day, sometimes twelve, picking onions
for Jasper on the Bowmanville road.
She takes a street car at half-past five in the morning,
Mrs. Pietro Giovannitti does,
And gets back from Jasper's with cash for her day's
work, between nine and ten o'clock at night.
Last week she got eight cents a box, Mrs. Pietro
Giovannitti, picking onions for Jasper,
But this week Jasper dropped the pay to six cents a
box because so many women and girls were answering
the ads in the Daily News.
Jasper belongs to an Episcopal church in Ravenswood
and on certain Sundays
He enjoys chanting the Nicene creed with his daughters
on each side of him joining their voices with his.
If the preacher repeats old sermons of a Sunday, Jasper's
mind wanders to his 700-acre farm and how he
can make it produce more efficiently
And sometimes he speculates on whether he could word
an ad in the Daily News so it would bring more
women and girls out to his farm and reduce operating
costs.
Mrs. Pietro Giovannitti is far from desperate about life;
her joy is in a child she knows will arrive to her in
three months.
And now while these are the pictures for today there are
other pictures of the Giovannitti people I could give
you for to-morrow,
And how some of them go to the county agent on winter
mornings with their baskets for beans and cornmeal
and molasses.
I listen to fellows saying here's good stuff for a novel or

it might be worked up into a good play.
I say there's no dramatist living can put old Mrs.
Gabrielle Giovannitti into a play with that kindling
wood piled on top of her head coming along Peoria
Street nine o'clock in the morning.

Carl Sandburg

Ossawatomie

I DON'T know how he came,
shambling, dark, and strong.

He stood in the city and told men:

My people are fools, my people are young and strong, my people must learn, my
people are terrible workers and fighters.

Always he kept on asking: Where did that blood come from?

They said: You for the fool killer, you for the booby hatch and a necktie party.

They hauled him into jail.

They sneered at him and spit on him,

And he wrecked their jails,

Singing, 'God damn your jails,'

And when he was most in jail

Crummy among the crazy in the dark

Then he was most of all out of jail

Shambling, dark, and strong,

Always asking: Where did that blood come from?

They laid hands on him

And the fool killers had a laugh

And the necktie party was a go, by God.

They laid hands on him and he was a goner.

They hammered him to pieces and he stood up.

They buried him and he walked out of the grave, by God,

Asking again: Where did that blood come from?

Carl Sandburg

Our Prayer Of Thanks

For the gladness here where the sun is shining at evening on the weeds at the river,
Our prayer of thanks.

For the laughter of children who tumble barefooted and bareheaded in the summer grass,
Our prayer of thanks.

For the sunset and the stars, the women and the white arms that hold us,
Our prayer of thanks.

God,
If you are deaf and blind, if this is all lost to you,
God, if the dead in their coffins amid the silver handles on the edge of town, or
the reckless dead of war days thrown unknown in pits, if these dead are forever
deaf and blind and lost,
Our prayer of thanks.

God,
The game is all your way, the secrets and the signals and the system; and so for
the break of the game and the first play and the last.
Our prayer of thanks.

Carl Sandburg

Out Of White Lips

OUT of white lips a question: Shall seven million dead ask for their blood a little land for the living wives and children, a little land for the living brothers and sisters?

Out of white lips:-Shall they have only air that sweeps round the earth for breath of their nostrils and no footing on the dirt of the earth for their battle-draped, battle-soaked shoes?

Out of white lips:-Is the red in the flag the blood of a free man on a piece of land his own or is it the red of a sheep slit in the throat for mutton?

Out of white lips a white pain murmurs: Who shall have land? Him who has stood ankle deep in the blood of his comrades, in the red trenches dug in the land?

Carl Sandburg

Palladiums

IN the newspaper office-who are the spooks?
Who wears the mythic coat invisible?

Who ****foots from desk to desk
with a speaking forefinger?
Who gumshoes amid the copy paper
with a whispering thumb?

Speak softly-the sacred cows may hear.
Speak easy-the sacred cows must be fed.

Carl Sandburg

Pals

Take a hold now
On the silver handles here,
Six silver handles,
One for each of his old pals.

Take hold
And lift him down the stairs,
Put him on the rollers
Over the floor of the hearse.

Take him on the last haul,
To the cold straight house,
The level even house,
To the last house of all.

The dead say nothing
And the dead know much
And the dead hold under their tongues
A locked-up story.

Carl Sandburg

Panels

THE WEST window is a panel of marching onions.
Five new lilacs nod to the wind and fence boards.
The rain dry fence boards, the stained knot holes, heliograph a peace.
(How long ago the knee drifts here and a blizzard howling at the knot holes,
whistling winter war drums?)

Carl Sandburg

Passers-By

Passers-by,
Out of your many faces
Flash memories to me
Now at the day end
Away from the sidewalks
Where your shoe soles traveled
And your voices rose and blent
To form the city's afternoon roar
Hindering an old silence.

Passers-by,
I remember lean ones among you,
Throats in the clutch of a hope,
Lips written over with strivings,
Mouths that kiss only for love.
Records of great wishes slept with,
Held long
And prayed and toiled for. .

Yes,
Written on
Your mouths
And your throats
I read them
When you passed by.

Carl Sandburg

Paula

NOTHING else in this song-only your face.
Nothing else here-only your drinking, night-gray eyes.

The pier runs into the lake straight as a rifle barrel.
I stand on the pier and sing how I know you mornings.
It is not your eyes, your face, I remember.
It is not your dancing, race-horse feet.
It is something else I remember you for on the pier mornings.

Your hands are sweeter than nut-brown bread when you touch me.
Your shoulder brushes my arm-a south-west wind crosses the pier.
I forget your hands and your shoulder and I say again:

Nothing else in this song-only your face.
Nothing else here-only your drinking, night-gray eyes.

Carl Sandburg

Peach Blossoms

WHAT cry of peach blossoms
let loose on the air today
I heard with my face thrown
in the pink-white of it all?
in the red whisper of it all?

What man I heard saying:
Christ, these are beautiful!

And Christ and Christ was in his mouth,
over these peach blossoms?

Carl Sandburg

Pearl Fog

Open the door now.
Go roll up the collar of your coat
To walk in the changing scarf of mist.

Tell your sins here to the pearl fog
And know for once a deepening night
Strange as the half-meanings
Alurk in a wise woman's mousey eyes.

Yes, tell your sins
And know how careless a pearl fog is
Of the laws you have broken.

Carl Sandburg

Pencils

telling where the wind comes from
open a story.

Pencils
telling where the wind goes
end a story.

These eager pencils
come to a stop
.. only.. when the stars high over
come to a stop.

Out of cabalistic to-morrows
come cryptic babies calling life
a strong and a lovely thing.
I have seen neither these
nor the stars high over
come to a stop.
Neither these nor the sea horses
running with the clocks of the moon.
Nor even a shooting star
snatching a pencil of fire
writing a curve of gold and white.
Like you.. I counted the shooting stars of a winter
night and my head was dizzy with all
of them calling one by one:

Look for us again.

Carl Sandburg

Pennsylvania

I have been in Pennsylvania,
In the Monongahela and Hocking Valleys.

In the blue Susquehanna
On a Saturday morning
I saw a mounted constabulary go by,
I saw boys playing marbles.
Spring and the hills laughed.

And in places
Along the Appalachian chain,
I saw steel arms handling coal and iron,
And I saw the white-cauliflower faces
Of miner's wives waiting for the men to come home from the day's work.

I made color studies in crimson and violet
Over the dust and domes of culm at sunset.

Carl Sandburg

People Who Must

I painted on the roof of a skyscraper.

I painted a long while and called it a day's work.

The people on the corner swarmed and the traffic cop's whistle never let up all afternoon.

They were the same as bugs, many bugs on their way--

These people on the go or at a standstill;

And the traffic cop a spot of blue, a splinter of brass,

Where the black tids ran around him

And he kept the street. I painted a long while

And called it a day's work.

Carl Sandburg

People With Proud Chins

I TELL them where the wind comes from,
Where the music goes when the fiddle is in the box.

Kids-I saw one with a proud chin, a sleepyhead,
And the moonline creeping white on her pillow.
I have seen their heads in the starlight
And their proud chins marching in a mist of stars.

They are the only people I never lie to.
I give them honest answers,
Answers shrewd as the circles of white on brown chestnuts.

Carl Sandburg

Personality

Musings of a Police Reporter in the Identification Bureau

You have loved forty women, but you have only one thumb.
You have led a hundred secret lives, but you mark only
one thumb.

You go round the world and fight in a thousand wars and
win all the world's honors, but when you come back
home the print of the one thumb your mother gave
you is the same print of thumb you had in the old
home when your mother kissed you and said good-by.

Out of the whirling womb of time come millions of men
and their feet crowd the earth and they cut one anothers'
throats for room to stand and among them all
are not two thumbs alike.

Somewhere is a Great God of Thumbs who can tell the
inside story of this.

Carl Sandburg

Pick Offs

THE TELESCOPE picks off star dust
on the clean steel sky and sends it to me.

The telephone picks off my voice and
sends it cross country a thousand miles.

The eyes in my head pick off pages of
Napoleon memoirs ... a rag handler,
a head of dreams walks in a sheet of
mist ... the palace panels shut in nobodies
drinking nothings out of silver
helmets ... in the end we all come to a
rock island and the hold of the sea-walls.

Carl Sandburg

Picnic Boat

Sunday night and the park policemen tell each other it
is dark as a stack of black cats on Lake Michigan.

A big picnic boat comes home to Chicago from the peach
farms of Saugatuck.

Hundreds of electric bulbs break the night's darkness, a
flock of red and yellow birds with wings at a standstill.

Running along the deck railings are festoons and leaping
in curves are loops of light from prow and stern
to the tall smokestacks.

Over the hoarse crunch of waves at my pier comes a
hoarse answer in the rhythmic oompa of the brasses
playing a Polish folk-song for the home-comers.

Carl Sandburg

Pigeon

THE FLUTTER of blue pigeon's wings
Under a river bridge
Hunting a clean dry arch,
A corner for a sleep-
This flutters here in a woman's hand.

A singing sleep cry,
A drunken poignant two lines of song,
Somebody looking clean into yesterday
And remembering, or looking clean into
To-morrow, and reading,-
This sings here as a woman's sleep cry sings.

Pigeon friend of mine,
Fly on, sing on.

Carl Sandburg

Places

ROSES and gold
For you today,
And the flash of flying flags.

I will have
Ashes,
Dust in my hair,
Crushes of hoofs.

Your name
Fills the mouth
Of rich man and poor.
Women bring
Armfuls of flowers
And throw on you.

I go hungry
Down in dreams
And loneliness,
Across the rain
To slashed hills
Where men wait and hope for me.

Carl Sandburg

Plaster

'I KNEW a real man once,' says Agatha in the splendor of a shagbark hickory tree.

Did a man touch his lips to Agatha? Did a man hold her in his arms? Did a man only look at her and pass by?

Agatha, far past forty in a splendor of remembrance, says, 'I knew a real man once.'

Carl Sandburg

Plowboy

After the last red sunset glimmer,
Black on the line of a low hill rise,
Formed into moving shadows, I saw
A plowboy and two horses lined against the gray,
Plowing in the dusk the last furrow.
The turf had a gleam of brown,
And smell of soil was in the air,
And, cool and moist, a haze of April.

I shall remember you long,
Plowboy and horses against the sky in shadow.
I shall remember you and the picture
You made for me,
Turning the turf in the dusk
And haze of an April gloaming.

Carl Sandburg

Pods

PEA pods cling to stems.
Neponset, the village,
Clings to the Burlington railway main line.
Terrible midnight limiteds roar through
Hauling sleepers to the Rockies and Sierras.
The earth is slightly shaken
And Neponset trembles slightly in its sleep.

Carl Sandburg

Poems Done On A Late Night Car

I. CHICKENS

I am The Great White Way of the city:
When you ask what is my desire, I answer:
"Girls fresh as country wild flowers,
With young faces tired of the cows and barns,
Eager in their eyes as the dawn to find my mysteries,
Slender supple girls with shapely legs,
Lure in the arch of their little shoulders
And wisdom from the prairies to cry only softly at
the ashes of my mysteries."

II. USED UP

Lines based on certain regrets that come with rumination
upon the painted faces of women on
North Clark Street, Chicago

Roses,
Red roses,
Crushed
In the rain and wind
Like mouths of women
Beaten by the fists of
Men using them.
O little roses
And broken leaves
And petal wisps:
You that so flung your crimson
To the sun
Only yesterday.

III. HOME

Here is a thing my heart wishes the world had more of:
I heard it in the air of one night when I listened
To a mother singing softly to a child restless and angry
in the darkness.

Pool

Out of the fire
Came a man sunken
To less than cinders,
A tea-cup of ashes or so.
And I,
The gold in the house,
Writhed into a stiff pool.

Carl Sandburg

Poppies

She loves blood-red poppies for a garden to walk in.
In a loose white gown she walks
 and a new child tugs at cords in her body.
Her head to the west at evening when the dew is creeping,
A shudder of gladness runs in her bones and torsal fiber:
She loves blood-red poppies for a garden to walk in.

Carl Sandburg

Population Drifts

New-mown hay smell and wind of the plain made her
a woman whose ribs had the power of the hills in
them and her hands were tough for work and there
was passion for life in her womb.

She and her man crossed the ocean and the years that
marked their faces saw them haggling with landlords
and grocers while six children played on the stones
and prowled in the garbage cans.

One child coughed its lungs away, two more have adenoids
and can neither talk nor run like their mother,
one is in jail, two have jobs in a box factory

And as they fold the pasteboard, they wonder what the
wishing is and the wistful glory in them that flutters
faintly when the glimmer of spring comes on
the air or the green of summer turns brown:

They do not know it is the new-mown hay smell calling
and the wind of the plain praying for them to come
back and take hold of life again with tough hands
and with passion.

Carl Sandburg

Portrait

(For S. A.)TO write one book in five years
or five books in one year,
to be the painter and the thing painted,
... where are we, bo?

Wait-get his number.
The barber shop handling is here
and the tweeds, the cheviot, the Scotch Mist,
and the flame orange scarf.

Yet there is more-he sleeps under bridges
with lonely crazy men; he sits in country
jails with bootleggers; he adopts the children
of broken-down burlesque actresses; he has
cried a heart of tears for Windy MacPherson's
father; he pencils wrists of lonely women.

Can a man sit at a desk in a skyscraper in Chicago
and be a harnessmaker in a corn town in Iowa
and feel the tall grass coming up in June
and the ache of the cottonwood trees
singing with the prairie wind?

Carl Sandburg

Portrait Of A Motor Car

IT'S a lean car ... a long-legged dog of a car ... a gray-ghost eagle car.
The feet of it eat the dirt of a road ... the wings of it eat the hills.
Danny the driver dreams of it when he sees women in red skirts and red sox in
his sleep.
It is in Danny's life and runs in the blood of him ... a lean gray-ghost car.

Carl Sandburg

Potato Blossom Songs And Jigs

RUM tiddy um,

tiddy um,

tiddy um tum tum.

My knees are loose-like, my feet want to sling their selves.

I feel like tickling you under the chin-honey-and a-asking: Why Does a Chicken Cross the Road?

When the hens are a-laying eggs, and the roosters pluck-pluck-put-akut and you-honey-put new potatoes and gravy on the table, and there ain't too much rain or too little:

Say, why do I feel so gabby?

Why do I want to holler all over the place? . . .

Do you remember I held empty hands to you

and I said all is yours

the handfuls of nothing? . . .

I ask you for white blossoms.

I bring a concertina after sunset under the apple trees.

I bring out 'The Spanish Cavalier' and 'In the Gloaming, O My Darling.'

The orchard here is near and home-like.

The oats in the valley run a mile.

Between are the green and marching potato vines.

The lightning bugs go criss-cross carrying a zigzag of fire: the potato bugs are asleep under their stiff and yellow-striped wings: here romance stutters to the western stars, 'Excuse ... me...'. . .

Old foundations of rotten wood.

An old barn done-for and out of the wormholes ten-legged roaches shook up and scared by sunlight.

So a pickax digs a long tooth with a short memory.

Fire can not eat this rubbish till it has lain in the sun.. . .

The story lags.

The story has no connections.

The story is nothing but a lot of banjo plinka planka plunks.

The roan horse is young and will learn: the roan horse buckles into harness and feels the foam on the collar at the end of a haul: the roan horse points four legs to the sky and rolls in the red clover: the roan horse has a rusty jag of hair between the ears hanging to a white star between the eyes.. . .

In Burlington long ago

And later again in Ashtabula

I said to myself:

I wonder how far Ophelia went with Hamlet.

What else was there Shakespeare never told?

There must have been something.

If I go bugs I want to do it like Ophelia.

There was class to the way she went out of her head.. . .

Does a famous poet eat watermelon?

Excuse me, ask me something easy.

I have seen farmhands with their faces in fried catfish on a Monday morning.

And the Japanese, two-legged like us,

The Japanese bring slices of watermelon into pictures.

The black seeds make oval polka dots on the pink meat.

Why do I always think of ****s and buck-and-wing dancing whenever I see watermelon?

Summer mornings on the docks I walk among bushel peach baskets piled ten feet high.

Summer mornings I smell new wood and the river wind along with peaches.

I listen to the steamboat whistle hong-honging, hong-honging across the town.

And once I saw a teameo straddling a street with a hayrack load of melons.. . .

.

****s play banjos because they want to.

The explanation is easy.

It is the same as why people pay fifty cents for tickets to a policemen's masquerade ball or a grocers-and-butchers' picnic with a fat man's foot race.

It is the same as why boys buy a nickel's worth of peanuts and eat them and then buy another nickel's worth.

Newsboys shooting craps in a back alley have a fugitive understanding of the scientific principle involved.

The jockey in a yellow satin shirt and scarlet boots, riding a sorrel pony at the county fair, has a grasp of the theory.

It is the same as why boys go running lickety-split away from a school-room geography lesson

in April when the crawfishes come out

and the young frogs are calling

and the ****willows and the cat-tails

know something about geography themselves.. . .

I ask you for white blossoms.

I offer you memories and people.

I offer you a fire zigzag over the green and marching vines.
I bring a concertina after supper under the home-like apple trees.
I make up songs about things to look at:
 potato blossoms in summer night mist filling the garden with white spots;
 a cavalryman's yellow silk handkerchief stuck in a flannel pocket over the left
side of the shirt, over the ventricles of blood, over the pumps of the heart.

Bring a concertina after sunset under the apple trees.
Let romance stutter to the western stars, 'Excuse ... me...'

Carl Sandburg

Potomac River Mist

All the policemen, saloonkeepers and efficiency experts in Toledo
knew Bern Dailey; secretary ten years when Whitlock was mayor.
Pickpockets, yeggs, three card men, he knew them all and how they flit
from zone to zone, birds of wind and weather, singers, fighters,
scavengers.

The Washington monument pointed to a new moon for us
and a gang from over the river sang ragtime to a ukelele.
The river mist marched up and down the Potomac, we hunted
the fog-swept Lincoln Memorial, white as a blond woman's arm.
We circled the city of Washington and came back home four o'clock in the
morning,
passing a sign: House Where Abraham Lincoln Died, Admission Cents.

I got a letter from him in Sweden and I sent him a postcard from Norway ..
every newspaper from America ran news of 'the flu.'

The path of a night fog swept up the river to the Lincoln Memorial
when I saw it again and alone at a winter's end, the marble in the mist
white as a blond woman's arm.

Carl Sandburg

Potomac Town In February

THE BRIDGE says: Come across, try me; see how good I am.

The big rock in the river says: Look at me; learn how to stand up.

The white water says: I go on; around, under, over, I go on.

A kneeling, scraggly pine says: I am here yet; they nearly got me last year.

A sliver of moon slides by on a high wind calling: I know why; I'll see you to-morrow; I'll tell you everything to-morrow.

Carl Sandburg

Prairie

I WAS born on the prairie and the milk of its wheat, the red of its clover, the eyes of its women, gave me a song and a slogan.

Here the water went down, the icebergs slid with gravel, the gaps and the valleys hissed, and the black loam came, and the yellow sandy loam.

Here between the sheds of the Rocky Mountains and the Appalachians, here now a morning star fixes a fire sign over the timber claims and cow pastures, the corn belt, the cotton belt, the cattle ranches.

Here the gray geese go five hundred miles and back with a wind under their wings honking the cry for a new home.

Here I know I will hanker after nothing so much as one more sunrise or a sky moon of fire doubled to a river moon of water.

The prairie sings to me in the forenoon and I know in the night I rest easy in the prairie arms, on the prairie heart.. . .

After the sunburn of the day
handling a pitchfork at a hayrack,
after the eggs and biscuit and coffee,
the pearl-gray haystacks
in the gloaming
are cool prayers
to the harvest hands.

In the city among the walls the overland passenger train is choked and the pistons hiss and the wheels curse.

On the prairie the overland flits on phantom wheels and the sky and the soil between them muffle the pistons and cheer the wheels.. . .

I am here when the cities are gone.

I am here before the cities come.

I nourished the lonely men on horses.

I will keep the laughing men who ride iron.

I am dust of men.

The running water babbled to the deer, the cottontail, the gopher.

You came in wagons, making streets and schools,

Kin of the ax and rifle, kin of the plow and horse,
Singing Yankee Doodle, Old Dan Tucker, Turkey in the Straw,
You in the coonskin cap at a log house door hearing a lone wolf howl,
You at a sod house door reading the blizzards and chinooks let loose from
Medicine Hat,
I am dust of your dust, as I am brother and mother
To the copper faces, the worker in flint and clay,
The singing women and their sons a thousand years ago
Marching single file the timber and the plain.

I hold the dust of these amid changing stars.
I last while old wars are fought, while peace broods mother-like,
While new wars arise and the fresh killings of young men.
I fed the boys who went to France in great dark days.
Appomattox is a beautiful word to me and so is Valley Forge and the Marne and
Verdun,
I who have seen the red births and the red deaths
Of sons and daughters, I take peace or war, I say nothing and wait.

Have you seen a red sunset drip over one of my cornfields, the shore of night
stars, the wave lines of dawn up a wheat
valley?
Have you heard my threshing crews yelling in the chaff of a strawpile and the
running wheat of the wagonboards, my
cornhuskers, my harvest hands hauling crops, singing dreams of women, worlds,
horizons? . . .

Rivers cut a path on flat lands.
The mountains stand up.
The salt oceans press in
And push on the coast lines.
The sun, the wind, bring rain
And I know what the rainbow writes across the east or west in a half-circle:
A love-letter pledge to come again.. . .
Towns on the Soo Line,
Towns on the Big Muddy,
Laugh at each other for cubs
And tease as children.

Omaha and Kansas City, Minneapolis and St. Paul, sisters in a house together,
throwing slang, growing up.
Towns in the Ozarks, Dakota wheat towns, Wichita, Peoria, Buffalo, sisters
throwing slang, growing up.. . .

Out of prairie-brown grass crossed with a streamer of wigwam smoke—out of a
smoke pillar, a blue promise—out of
wild ducks woven in greens and purples—
Here I saw a city rise and say to the peoples round world: Listen, I am strong, I
know what I want.

Out of log houses and stumps—canoes stripped from tree-sides—flatboats
coaxed with an ax from the timber
claims—in the years when the red and the white men met—the houses and
streets rose.

A thousand red men cried and went away to new places for corn and women: a
million white men came and put up skyscrapers,
threw out rails and wires, feelers to the salt sea: now the smokestacks bite the
skyline with stub teeth.

In an early year the call of a wild duck woven in greens and purples: now the
riveter's chatter, the police patrol, the
song-whistle of the steamboat.

To a man across a thousand years I offer a handshake.
I say to him: Brother, make the story short, for the stretch of a thousand years
is short.. . .

What brothers these in the dark?
What eaves of skyscrapers against a smoke moon?
These chimneys shaking on the lumber shanties
When the coal boats plow by on the river—
The hunched shoulders of the grain elevators—
The flame sprockets of the sheet steel mills
And the men in the rolling mills with their shirts off
Playing their flesh arms against the twisting wrists of steel:
 what brothers these
 in the dark
 of a thousand years?. . .

A headlight searches a snowstorm.
A funnel of white light shoots from over the pilot of the Pioneer Limited crossing
Wisconsin.

In the morning hours, in the dawn,
The sun puts out the stars of the sky
And the headlight of the Limited train.

The fireman waves his hand to a country school teacher on a bobsled.

A boy, yellow hair, red scarf and mittens, on the bobsled, in his lunch box a pork chop sandwich and a V of gooseberry pie.

The horses fathom a snow to their knees.

Snow hats are on the rolling prairie hills.

The Mississippi bluffs wear snow hats.. . .

Keep your hogs on changing corn and mashes of grain,
O farmerman.

Cram their insides till they waddle on short legs

Under the drums of bellies, hams of fat.

Kill your hogs with a knife slit under the ear.

Hack them with cleavers.

Hang them with hooks in the hind legs.. . .

A wagonload of radishes on a summer morning.

Sprinkles of dew on the crimson-purple balls.

The farmer on the seat dangles the reins on the rumps of dapple-gray horses.

The farmer's daughter with a basket of eggs dreams of a new hat to wear to the county fair.. . .

On the left-and right-hand side of the road,

Marching corn—

I saw it knee high weeks ago—now it is head high—tassels of red silk creep at the ends of the ears.. . .

I am the prairie, mother of men, waiting.

They are mine, the threshing crews eating beefsteak, the farmboys driving steers to the railroad cattle pens.

They are mine, the crowds of people at a Fourth of July basket picnic, listening to a lawyer read the Declaration of

Independence, watching the pinwheels and Roman candles at night, the young men and women two by two hunting the bypaths and kissing bridges.

They are mine, the horses looking over a fence in the frost of late October saying good-morning to the horses hauling wagons of rutabaga to market.

They are mine, the old zigzag rail fences, the new barb wire.. . .

The cornhuskers wear leather on their hands.

There is no let-up to the wind.

Blue bandannas are knotted at the ruddy chins.

Falltime and winter apples take on the smolder of the five-o'clock November sunset: falltime, leaves, bonfires, stubble, the old things go, and the earth is grizzled.

The land and the people hold memories, even among the anthills and the

angleworms, among the toads and woodroaches—among
gravestone writings rubbed out by the rain—they keep old things that never grow
old.

The frost loosens corn husks.

The Sun, the rain, the wind

loosen corn husks.

The men and women are helpers.

They are all cornhuskers together.

I see them late in the western evening

in a smoke-red dust.. . .

The phantom of a yellow rooster flaunting a scarlet comb, on top of a dung pile
crying hallelujah to the streaks of daylight,

The phantom of an old hunting dog nosing in the underbrush for muskrats,
barking at a coon in a treetop at midnight, chewing

a bone, chasing his tail round a corncrib,

The phantom of an old workhorse taking the steel point of a plow across a forty-
acre field in spring, hitched to a harrow in

summer, hitched to a wagon among cornshocks in fall,

These phantoms come into the talk and wonder of people on the front porch of a
farmhouse late summer nights.

“The shapes that are gone are here,” said an old man with a cob pipe
in his teeth one night in Kansas with a hot

wind on the alfalfa.. . .

Look at six eggs

In a mockingbird's nest.

Listen to six mockingbirds

Flinging follies of O-be-joyful

Over the marshes and uplands.

Look at songs

Hidden in eggs.. . .

When the morning sun is on the trumpet-vine blossoms, sing at the kitchen
pans: Shout All Over God's Heaven.

When the rain slants on the potato hills and the sun plays a silver shaft on the
last shower, sing to the bush at the

backyard fence: Mighty Lak a Rose.

When the icy sleet pounds on the storm windows and the house lifts to a great
breath, sing for the outside hills: The Ole

Sheep Done Know the Road, the Young Lambs Must Find the Way.. . .

Spring slips back with a girl face calling always: “Any new songs for me?”

Any new songs?"

O prairie girl, be lonely, singing, dreaming, waiting—your lover comes—your child comes—the years creep with toes of April rain on new-turned sod.

O prairie girl, whoever leaves you only crimson poppies to talk with, whoever puts a good-by kiss on your lips and never comes back—

There is a song deep as the falltime redhaws, long as the layer of black loam we go to, the shine of the morning star over the corn belt, the wave line of dawn up a wheat valley.. . .

O prairie mother, I am one of your boys.

I have loved the prairie as a man with a heart shot full of pain over love.

Here I know I will hanker after nothing so much as one more sunrise or a sky moon of fire doubled to a river moon of water..

. . .
I speak of new cities and new people.
I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes.
I tell you yesterday is a wind gone down,
a sun dropped in the west.
I tell you there is nothing in the world
only an ocean of to-morrows,
a sky of to-morrows.

I am a brother of the cornhuskers who say
at sundown:

To-morrow is a day.

Carl Sandburg

Prairie Waters By Night

Chatter of birds two by two raises a night song joining a litany of running water--
sheer waters
showing the russet of old stones remembering many rains.

And the long willows drowse on the shoulders of the running water, and sleep
from much music;
joined songs of day-end, feathery throats and stony waters, in a choir chanting
new psalms.

It is too much for the long willows when low laughter of a red moon comes down;
and the willows
drowse and sleep on the shoulders of the running water.

Carl Sandburg

Prayers After World War

WANDERING oversea dreamer,
Hunting and hoarse, Oh daughter and mother,
Oh daughter of ashes and mother of blood,
Child of the hair let down, and tears,
Child of the cross in the south
And the star in the north,
Keeper of Egypt and Russia and France,
Keeper of England and Poland and Spain,
Make us a song for to-morrow.
Make us one new dream, us who forget,
Out of the storm let us have one star.

Struggle, Oh anvils, and help her.
Weave with your wool. Oh winds and skies.
Let your iron and copper help,
 Oh dirt of the old dark earth.

Wandering oversea singer,
Singing of ashes and blood,
Child of the scars of fire,
Make us one new dream, us who forget.
Out of the storm let us have one star.

Carl Sandburg

Prayers Of Steel

Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar.
Let me pry loose old walls.
Let me lift and loosen old foundations.

Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a steel spike.
Drive me into the girders that hold a skyscraper together.
Take red-hot rivets and fasten me into the central girders.
Let me be the great nail holding a skyscraper through blue nights into white stars.

Carl Sandburg

Primer Lesson

Look out how you use proud words.

When you let proud words go, it is not easy to call them back.

They wear long boots, hard boots; they walk off proud; they can't hear you calling--

Look out how you use proud words.

Carl Sandburg

Proud And Beautiful

AFTER you have spent all the money modistes and manicures and mannikins will take for fixing you over into a thing the people on the streets call proud and beautiful,

After the shops and fingers have worn out all they have and know and can hope to have and know for the sake of making you what the people on the streets call proud and beautiful,

After there is absolutely nothing more to be done for the sake of staging you as a great enigmatic bird of paradise and they must all declare you to be proud and beautiful,

After you have become the last word in good looks, insofar as good looks may be fixed and formulated, then, why then, there is nothing more to it then, it is then you listen and see how voices and eyes declare you to be proud and beautiful

Carl Sandburg

Purple Martins

IF we were such and so, the same as these,
maybe we too would be slingers and sliders,
tumbling half over in the water mirrors,
tumbling half over at the horse heads of the sun,
tumbling our purple numbers.

Twirl on, you and your satin blue.
Be water birds, be air birds.
Be these purple tumblers you are.

Dip and get away
From loops into slip-knots,
Write your own ciphers and figure eights.
It is your wooded island here in Lincoln park.
Everybody knows this belongs to you.

Five fat geese
Eat grass on a sod bank
And never count your slinging ciphers,
your sliding figure eights,

A man on a green paint iron bench,
Slouches his feet and sniffs in a book,
And looks at you and your loops and slip-knots,
And looks at you and your sheaths of satin blue,
And slouches again and sniffs in the book,
And mumbles: It is an idle and a doctrinaire exploit.
Go on tumbling half over in the water mirrors.
Go on tumbling half over at the horse heads of the sun.
Be water birds, be air birds.
Be these purple tumblers you are.

Carl Sandburg

Put Off The Wedding Five Times And Nobody Comes To It

(Handbook for Quarreling Lovers) I THOUGHT of offering you apothegms.

I might have said, 'Dogs bark and the wind carries it away.'

I might have said, 'He who would make a door of gold must knock a nail in every day.'

So easy, so easy it would have been to inaugurate a high impetuous moment for you to look on before the final farewells were spoken.

You who assumed the farewells in the manner of people buying newspapers and reading the headlines-and all peddlers of gossip who buttonhole each other and wag their heads saying, 'Yes, I heard all about it last Wednesday.'

I considered several apothegms.

'There is no love but service,' of course, would only initiate a quarrel over who has served and how and when.

'Love stands against fire and flood and much bitterness,' would only initiate a second misunderstanding, and bickerings with lapses of silence.

What is there in the Bible to cover our case, or Shakespeare? What poetry can help? Is there any left but Epictetus?

Since you have already chosen to interpret silence for language and silence for despair and silence for contempt and silence for all things but love,

Since you have already chosen to read ashes where God knows there was something else than ashes,

Since silence and ashes are two identical findings for your eyes and there are no apothegms worth handing out like a hung jury's verdict for a record in our own hearts as well as the community at large,

I can only remember a Russian peasant who told me his grandfather warned him: If you ride too good a horse you will not take the straight road to town.

It will always come back to me in the blur of that hokku: The heart of a woman of thirty is like the red ball of the sun seen through a mist.

Or I will remember the witchery in the eyes of a girl at a barn dance one winter night in Illinois saying: Put off the wedding five times and nobody comes to it.

Carl Sandburg

Questionnaire

HAVE I told any man to be a liar for my sake?

Have I sold ice to the poor in summer and coal to the poor in winter for the sake of daughters who nursed brindle bull terriers and led with a leash their dogs clothed in plaid wool jackets?

Have I given any man an earful too much of my talk-or asked any man to take a snootful of booze on my account?

Have I put wool in my own ears when men tried to tell me what was good for me? Have I been a bum listener?

Have I taken dollars from the living and the unborn while I made speeches on the retributions that shadow the heels of the dishonest?

Have I done any good under cover? Or have I always put it in the show windows and the newspapers?

Carl Sandburg

Ready To Kill

Ten minutes now I have been looking at this.
I have gone by here before and wondered about it.
This is a bronze memorial of a famous general
Riding horseback with a flag and a sword and a revolver
on him.
I want to smash the whole thing into a pile of junk to be
hailed away to the scrap yard.
I put it straight to you,
After the farmer, the miner, the shop man, the factory
hand, the fireman and the teamster,
Have all been remembered with bronze memorials,
Shaping them on the job of getting all of us
Something to eat and something to wear,
When they stack a few silhouettes
Against the sky
Here in the park,
And show the real huskies that are doing the work of
the world, and feeding people instead of butchering them,
Then maybe I will stand here
And look easy at this general of the army holding a flag
in the air,
And riding like hell on horseback
Ready to kill anybody that gets in his way,
Ready to run the red blood and slush the bowels of men
all over the sweet new grass of the prairie.

Carl Sandburg

Real Estate News

ARMOUR AVENUE was the name of this street and door signs on empty houses read 'The Silver Dollar,' 'Swede Annie' and the Christian names of madams such as 'Myrtle' and 'Jenny.'

Scrap iron, rags and bottles fill the front rooms hither and yon and signs in Yiddish say Abe Kaplan & Co. are running junk shops in **** houses of former times.

The segregated district, the Tenderloin, is here no more; the red-lights are gone; the ring of shovels handling scrap iron replaces the banging of pianos and the bawling songs of go, 1915.

Carl Sandburg

Red-Headed Restaurant Cashier

SHAKE back your hair, O red-headed girl.

Let go your laughter and keep your two proud freckles on your chin.

Somewhere is a man looking for a red-headed girl and some day maybe he will look into your eyes for a restaurant cashier and find a lover, maybe.

Around and around go ten thousand men hunting a red headed girl with two freckles on her chin.

I have seen them hunting, hunting.

Shake back your hair; let go your laughter.

Carl Sandburg

Remembered Women

FOR a woman's face remembered as a spot of quick light on the flat land of dark night,

For this memory of one mouth and a forehead they go on in the gray rain and the mud, they go on among the boots and guns.

The horizon ahead is a thousand fang flashes, it is a row of teeth that bite on the flanks of night, the horizon sings of a new kill and a big kill.

The horizon behind is a wall of dark etched with a memory, fixed with a woman's face-they fight on and on, boots in the mud and heads in the gray rain-for the women they hate and the women they love-for the women they left behind, they fight on.

Carl Sandburg

Remorse

THE HORSE'S name was Remorse.
There were people said, 'Gee, what a nag!'
And they were Edgar Allan Poe bugs and so
They called him Remorse.

When he was a gelding
He flashed his heels to other ponies
And threw dust in the noses of other ponies
And won his first race and his second
And another and another and hardly ever
Came under the wire behind the other runners.

And so, Remorse, who is gone, was the hero of a play
By Henry Blossom, who is now gone.

What is there to a monicker? Call me anything.
A nut, a cheese, something that the cat brought in.
Nick me with any old name.
Class me up for a fish, a gorilla, a slant head, an egg, a ham.
Only ... slam me across the ears sometimes ... and hunt for a white star
In my forehead and twist the bang of my forelock around it.
Make a wish for me. Maybe I will light out like a streak of wind.

Carl Sandburg

Repetitions

THEY are crying salt tears
Over the beautiful beloved body
Of Inez Milholland,
Because they are glad she lived,
Because she loved open-armed,
Throwing love for a cheap thing
Belonging to everybody-
Cheap as sunlight,
And morning air.

Carl Sandburg

River Moons

THE DOUBLE moon, one on the high back drop of the west, one on the curve of the river face,
The sky moon of fire and the river moon of water, I am taking these home in a basket, hung on an elbow, such a teeny weeny elbow, in my head.
I saw them last night, a cradle moon, two horns of a moon, such an early hopeful moon, such a child's moon for all young hearts to make a picture of.
The river-I remember this like a picture-the river was the upper twist of a written question mark.
I know now it takes many many years to write a river, a twist of water asking a question.
And white stars moved when the moon moved, and one red star kept burning, and the Big Dipper was almost overhead.

Carl Sandburg

River Roads

Let the crows go by hawking their caw and caw.
They have been swimming in midnights of coal mines somewhere.
Let 'em hawk their caw and caw.

Let the woodpecker drum and drum on a hickory stump.
He has been swimming in red and blue pools somewhere hundreds of years
And the blue has gone to his wings and the red has gone to his head.
Let his red head drum and drum.

Let the dark pools hold the birds in a looking-glass.
And if the pool wishes, let it shiver to the blur of many wings, old swimmers from
old places.

Let the redwing streak a line of vermillion on the green wood lines.
And the mist along the river fix its purple in lines of a woman's shawl on lazy
shoulders.

Carl Sandburg

Rusty Crimson

(Christmas Day, 1917) THE FIVE O'CLOCK prairie sunset is a strong man going to sleep after a long day in a cornfield.

The red dust of a rusty crimson is fixed with two fingers of lavender. A hook of smoke, a woman's nose in charcoal and ... nothing.

The timberline turns in a cover of purple. A grain elevator humps a shoulder. One steel star whisks out a pointed fire. Moonlight comes on the stubble.

'Jesus in an Illinois barn early this morning, the baby Jesus ... in flannels ...'

Carl Sandburg

Salvage

Guns on the battle lines have pounded now a year
between Brussels and Paris.
And, William Morris, when I read your old chapter on
the great arches and naves and little whimsical
corners of the Churches of Northern France--Brr-rr!
I'm glad you're a dead man, William Morris, I'm glad
you're down in the damp and mouldy, only a memory
instead of a living man--I'm glad you're gone.
You never lied to us, William Morris, you loved the
shape of those stones piled and carved for you to
dream over and wonder because workmen got joy
of life into them,
Workmen in aprons singing while they hammered, and
praying, and putting their songs and prayers into
the walls and roofs, the bastions and cornerstones
and gargoyles--all their children and kisses of
women and wheat and roses growing.
I say, William Morris, I'm glad you're gone, I'm glad
you're a dead man.
Guns on the battle lines have pounded a year now between
Brussels and Paris.

Carl Sandburg

Sand Scribblings

THE WIND stops, the wind begins.
The wind says stop, begin.

A sea shovel scrapes the sand floor.
The shovel changes, the floor changes.

The sandpipers, maybe they know.
Maybe a three-pointed foot can tell.
Maybe the fog moon they fly to, guesses.

The sandpipers cheep 'Here' and get away.
Five of them fly and keep together flying.

Night hair of some sea woman
Curls on the sand when the sea leaves
The salt tide without a good-by.

Boxes on the beach are empty.
Shake 'em and the nails loosen.
They have been somewhere.

Carl Sandburg

Sandhill People

I TOOK away three pictures.

One was a white gull forming a half-mile arch from the pines toward Waukegan.
One was a whistle in the little sandhills, a bird crying either to the sunset gone or
the dusk come.

One was three spotted waterbirds, zigzagging, cutting scrolls and jags, writing a
bird Sanscrit of wing points, half over the sand, half over the water, a half-love
for the sea, a half-love for the land.

I took away three thoughts.

One was a thing my people call 'love,' a shut-in river hunting the sea, breaking
white falls between tall clefs of hill country.

One was a thing my people call 'silence,' the wind running over the butter faced
sand-flowers, running over the sea, and never heard of again.

One was a thing my people call 'death,' neither a whistle in the little sandhills,
nor a bird Sanscrit of wing points, yet a coat all the stars and seas have worn,
yet a face the beach wears between sunset and dusk.

Carl Sandburg

Sandpipers

Sandland where the salt water kills the sweet potatoes.

Homes for sandpipers—the script of their feet is on the sea shingles—they write in the morning, it is gone at noon—they write at noon, it is gone at night.

Pity the land, the sea, the ten mile flats, pity anything but the sandpiper's wire legs and feet.

Carl Sandburg

Savoir Faire

CAST a bronze of my head and legs and put them on the king's street.

Set the cast of me here alongside Carl XII, making two Carls for the Swedish people and the utlanders to look at between the palace and the Grand Hotel.

The summer sun will shine on both the Carls, and November drizzles wrap the two, one in tall leather boots, one in wool leggings.

Also I place it in the record: the Swedish people may name boats after me or change the name of a long street and give it one of my nicknames.

The old men who beset the soil of Sweden and own the titles to the land-the old men who enjoy a silken shimmer to their chin whiskers when they promenade the streets named after old kings-if they forget me-the old men whose varicose veins stand more and more blue on the calves of their legs when they take their morning baths attended by old women born to the bath service of old men and young-if these old men say another King Carl should have a bronze on the king's street rather than a Fool Carl-

Then I would hurl them only another fool's laugh-

I would remember last Sunday when I stood on a jutland of fire-born red granite watching the drop of the sun in the middle of the afternoon and the full moon shining over Stockholm four o'clock in the afternoon.

If the young men will read five lines of one of my poems I will let the kings have all the bronze-I ask only that one page of my writings be a knapsack keepsake of the young men who are the bloodkin of those who laughed nine hundred years ago: We are afraid of nothing-only-the sky may fall on us.

Carl Sandburg

Sea Slant

On up the sea slant,
On up the horizon,
The ship limps.

The bone of her nose fog-gray,
The heart of her sea-strong,
She came a long way,
She goes a long way.

On up the sea slant,
On up the horizon,
She limps sea-strong, fog-gray

She is a green-lit night gray.
She comes and goes in sea-fog.
Up the horizon slant she limps.

Carl Sandburg

Sea-Wash

The sea-wash never ends.
The sea-wash repeats, repeats.
Only old songs? Is that all the sea knows?
Only the old strong songs?
Is that all?
The sea-wash repeats, repeats.

Carl Sandburg

Shagbark Hickory

IN the moonlight under a shag-bark hickory tree
Watching the yellow shadows melt in hoof-pools,
Listening to the yes and the no of a woman's hands,
I kept my guess why the night was glad.

The night was lit with a woman's eyes.
The night was crossed with a woman's hands,
The night kept humming an undersong.

Carl Sandburg

Sheep

Thousands of sheep, soft-footed, black-nosed sheep--
one by one going up the hill and over the fence--one by
one four-footed pattering up and over--one by one wiggling
their stub tails as they take the short jump and go
over--one by one silently unless for the multitudinous
drumming of their hoofs as they move on and go over--
thousands and thousands of them in the grey haze of
evening just after sundown--one by one slanting in a
long line to pass over the hill--

I am the slow, long-legged Sleepyman and I love you
sheep in Persia, California, Argentine, Australia, or
Spain--you are the thoughts that help me when I, the
Sleepyman, lay my hands on the eyelids of the children
of the world at eight o'clock every night--you thousands
and thousands of sheep in a procession of dusk making
an endless multitudinous drumming on the hills with
your hoofs.

Carl Sandburg

Shenandoah

IN the Shenandoah Valley, one rider gray and one rider blue, and the sun on the riders wondering.

Piled in the Shenandoah, riders blue and riders gray, piled with shovels, one and another, dust in the Shenandoah taking them quicker than mothers take children done with play.

The blue nobody remembers, the gray nobody remembers, it's all old and old nowadays in the Shenandoah.. . .

And all is young, a butter of dandelions slung on the turf, climbing blue flowers of the wishing woodlands wondering: a midnight purple violet claims the sun among old heads, among old dreams of repeating heads of a rider blue and a rider gray in the Shenandoah.

Carl Sandburg

Shirt

My shirt is a token and symbol,
more than a cover for sun and rain,
my shirt is a signal,
and a teller of souls.

I can take off my shirt and tear it,
and so make a ripping razzly noise,
and the people will say,
"Look at him tear his shirt."

I can keep my shirt on.
I can stick around and sing like a little bird
and look 'em all in the eye and never be fazed.
I can keep my shirt on.

Carl Sandburg

Silver Nails

A man was crucified. He came to the city a stranger, was accused, and nailed to a cross. He lingered hanging. Laughed at the crowd. "The nails are iron," he said, "You are cheap. In my country when we crucify we use silver nails. . ." So he went jeering. They did not understand him at first. Later they talked about him in changed voices in the saloons, bowling alleys, and churches. It came over them every man is crucified only once in his life and the law of humanity dictates silver nails be used for the job. A statue was erected to him in a public square. Not having gathered his name when he was among them, they wrote him as John Silvernail on the statue.

Carl Sandburg

Silver Wind

DO you know how the dream looms? how if summer misses one of us the two of us miss summer-

Summer when the lungs of the earth take a long breath for the change to low contralto singing mornings when the green corn leaves first break through the black loam-

And another long breath for the silver soprano melody of the moon songs in the light nights when the earth is lighter than a feather, the iron mountains lighter than a goose down-

So I shall look for you in the light nights then, in the laughter of slats of silver under a hill hickory.

In the listening tops of the hickories, in the wind motions of the hickory shingle leaves, in the imitations of slow sea water on the shingle silver in the wind-

I shall look for you.

Carl Sandburg

Singing ****

YOUR bony head, Jazbo, O dock walloper,
Those grappling hooks, those wheelbarrow handlers,
The dome and the wings of you, ****,
The red roof and the door of you,
I know where your songs came from.
I know why God listens to your, 'Walk All Over God's Heaven.'
I heard you shooting craps, 'My baby's going to have a new dress.'
I heard you in the cinders, 'I'm going to live anyhow until I die.'
I saw five of you with a can of beer on a summer night and I listened to the five
of you
 harmonizing six ways to sing, 'Way Down Yonder in the Cornfield.'
I went away asking where I come from.

Carl Sandburg

Sixteen Months

On the lips of the child Janet float changing dreams.
It is a thin spiral of blue smoke,
A morning campfire at a mountain lake.

On the lips of the child Janet,
Wisps of haze on ten miles of corn,
Young light blue calls to young light gold of morning.

Carl Sandburg

Sketch

The shadows of the ships
Rock on the crest
In the low blue lustre
Of the tardy and the soft inrolling tide.

A long brown bar at the dip of the sky
Puts an arm of sand in the span of salt.

The lucid and endless wrinkles
Draw in, lapse and withdraw.
Wavelets crumble and white spent bubbles
Wash on the floor of the beach.

Rocking on the crest
In the low blue lustre
Are the shadows of the ships.

Carl Sandburg

Skyscraper

By day the skyscraper looms in the smoke and sun and
has a soul.

Prairie and valley, streets of the city, pour people into
it and they mingle among its twenty floors and are
poured out again back to the streets, prairies and
valleys.

It is the men and women, boys and girls so poured in and
out all day that give the building a soul of dreams
and thoughts and memories.

(Dumped in the sea or fixed in a desert, who would care
for the building or speak its name or ask a policeman
the way to it?)

Elevators slide on their cables and tubes catch letters and
parcels and iron pipes carry gas and water in and
sewage out.

Wires climb with secrets, carry light and carry words,
and tell terrors and profits and loves--curses of men
grappling plans of business and questions of women
in plots of love.

Hour by hour the caissons reach down to the rock of the
earth and hold the building to a turning planet.

Hour by hour the girders play as ribs and reach out and
hold together the stone walls and floors.

Hour by hour the hand of the mason and the stuff of the
mortar clinch the pieces and parts to the shape an
architect voted.

Hour by hour the sun and the rain, the air and the rust,
and the press of time running into centuries, play
on the building inside and out and use it.

Men who sunk the pilings and mixed the mortar are laid
in graves where the wind whistles a wild song
without words

And so are men who strung the wires and fixed the pipes
and tubes and those who saw it rise floor by floor.

Souls of them all are here, even the hod carrier begging

at back doors hundreds of miles away and the brick-layer who went to state's prison for shooting another man while drunk.

(One man fell from a girder and broke his neck at the end of a straight plunge--he is here--his soul has gone into the stones of the building.)

On the office doors from tier to tier--hundreds of names and each name standing for a face written across with a dead child, a passionate lover, a driving ambition for a million dollar business or a lobster's ease of life.

Behind the signs on the doors they work and the walls tell nothing from room to room.

Ten-dollar-a-week stenographers take letters from corporation officers, lawyers, efficiency engineers, and tons of letters go bundled from the building to all ends of the earth.

Smiles and tears of each office girl go into the soul of the building just the same as the master-men who rule the building.

Hands of clocks turn to noon hours and each floor empties its men and women who go away and eat and come back to work.

Toward the end of the afternoon all work slackens and all jobs go slower as the people feel day closing on them.

One by one the floors are emptied. . . The uniformed elevator men are gone. Pails clang. . . Scrubbers work, talking in foreign tongues. Broom and water and mop clean from the floors human dust and spit, and machine grime of the day.

Spelled in electric fire on the roof are words telling miles of houses and people where to buy a thing for money. The sign speaks till midnight.

Darkness on the hallways. Voices echo. Silence holds. . . Watchmen walk slow from floor to floor and try the doors. Revolvers bulge from their hip pockets. . . Steel safes stand in corners. Money

is stacked in them.

A young watchman leans at a window and sees the lights
of barges butting their way across a harbor, nets of
red and white lanterns in a railroad yard, and a span
of glooms splashed with lines of white and blurs of
crosses and clusters over the sleeping city.

By night the skyscraper looms in the smoke and the stars
and has a soul.

Carl Sandburg

Slants At Buffalo, New York

A FOREFINGER of stone, dreamed by a sculptor, points to the sky.
It says: This way! this way!

Four lions snore in stone at the corner of the shaft.
They too are the dream of a sculptor.
They too say: This way! this way!

The street cars swing at a curve.
The middle-class passengers witness low life.
The car windows frame low life all day in pictures.

Two Italian cellar delicatessens
 sell red and green peppers.
The Florida bananas furnish a burst of yellow.
The lettuce and the cabbage give a green.

Boys play marbles in the cinders.
The boys' hands need washing.
The boys are glad; they fight among each other.

A plank bridge leaps the Lehigh Valley railroad.
Then acres of steel rails, freight cars, smoke,
And then ... the blue lake shore
...Erie with Norse blue eyes ... and the white sun.

Carl Sandburg

Sleepyheads

SLEEP is a maker of makers. Birds sleep. Feet cling to a perch. Look at the balance. Let the legs loosen, the backbone untwist, the head go heavy over, the whole works tumbles a done bird off the perch.

Fox cubs sleep. The pointed head curls round into hind legs and tail. It is a ball of red hair. It is a muff waiting. A wind might whisk it in the air across pastures and rivers, a cocoon, a pod of seeds. The snooze of the black nose is in a circle of red hair.

Old men sleep. In chimney corners, in rocking chairs, at wood stoves, steam radiators. They talk and forget and nod and are out of talk with closed eyes. Forgetting to live. Knowing the time has come useless for them to live. Old eagles and old dogs run and fly in the dreams.

Babies sleep. In flannels the papoose faces, the bambino noses, and dodo, dodo the song of many matushkas. Babies-a leaf on a tree in the spring sun. A nub of a new thing sucks the sap of a tree in the sun, yes a new thing, a what-is-it? A left hand stirs, an eyelid twitches, the milk in the belly bubbles and gets to be blood and a left hand and an eyelid. Sleep is a maker of makers.

Carl Sandburg

Slippery

THE SIX month child
Fresh from the tub
Wiggles in our hands.
This is our fish child.
Give her a nickname: Slippery.

Carl Sandburg

Smoke

I SIT in a chair and read the newspapers.

Millions of men go to war, acres of them are buried, guns and ships broken, cities burned, villages sent up in smoke, and children where cows are killed off amid hoarse barbecues vanish like finger-rings of smoke in a north wind.

I sit in a chair and read the newspapers.

Carl Sandburg

Smoke And Steel

SMOKE of the fields in spring is one,
Smoke of the leaves in autumn another.
Smoke of a steel-mill roof or a battleship funnel,
They all go up in a line with a smokestack,
Or they twist ... in the slow twist ... of the wind.

If the north wind comes they run to the south.
If the west wind comes they run to the east.
By this sign
all smokes
know each other.
Smoke of the fields in spring and leaves in autumn,
Smoke of the finished steel, chilled and blue,
By the oath of work they swear: 'I know you.'

Hunted and hissed from the center
Deep down long ago when God made us over,
Deep down are the cinders we came from—
You and I and our heads of smoke.

Some of the smokes God dropped on the job
Cross on the sky and count our years
And sing in the secrets of our numbers;
Sing their dawns and sing their evenings,
Sing an old log-fire song:

You may put the damper up,
You may put the damper down,
The smoke goes up the chimney just the same.

Smoke of a city sunset skyline,
Smoke of a country dusk horizon—
They cross on the sky and count our years.

Smoke of a brick-red dust
Winds on a spiral
Out of the stacks
For a hidden and glimpsing moon.
This, said the bar-iron shed to the blooming mill,

This is the slang of coal and steel.
The day-gang hands it to the night-gang,
The night-gang hands it back.

Stammer at the slang of this—
Let us understand half of it.
In the rolling mills and sheet mills,
In the harr and boom of the blast fires,
The smoke changes its shadow
And men change their shadow;
A ****, a wop, a bohunk changes.

A bar of steel—it is only
Smoke at the heart of it, smoke and the blood of a man.
A runner of fire ran in it, ran out, ran somewhere else,
And left—smoke and the blood of a man
And the finished steel, chilled and blue.

So fire runs in, runs out, runs somewhere else again,
And the bar of steel is a gun, a wheel, a nail, a shovel,
A rudder under the sea, a steering-gear in the sky;
And always dark in the heart and through it,
Smoke and the blood of a man.
Pittsburg, Youngstown, Gary—they make their steel with men.

In the blood of men and the ink of chimneys
The smoke nights write their oaths:
Smoke into steel and blood into steel;
Homestead, Braddock, Birmingham, they make their steel with men.
Smoke and blood is the mix of steel.

The birdmen drone
in the blue; it is steel
a motor sings and zooms.

Steel barb-wire around The Works.
Steel guns in the holsters of the guards at the gates of The Works.
Steel ore-boats bring the loads clawed from the earth by steel, lifted and lugged
by arms of steel, sung on its way by the
clanking clam-shells.
The runners now, the handlers now, are steel; they dig and clutch and haul; they
hoist their automatic knuckles from job to

job; they are steel making steel.

Fire and dust and air fight in the furnaces; the pour is timed, the billets wriggle;
the clinkers are dumped:

Liners on the sea, skyscrapers on the land; diving steel in the sea, climbing steel
in the sky.

Finders in the dark, you Steve with a dinner bucket, you Steve clumping in the
dusk on the sidewalks with an evening paper
for the woman and kids, you Steve with your head wondering where we all end
up—

Finders in the dark, Steve: I hook my arm in cinder sleeves; we go down the
street together; it is all the same to us; you
Steve and the rest of us end on the same stars; we all wear a hat in hell
together, in hell or heaven.

Smoke nights now, Steve.

Smoke, smoke, lost in the sieves of yesterday;
Dumped again to the scoops and hooks today.

Smoke like the clocks and whistles, always.

Smoke nights now.

To-morrow something else.

Luck moons come and go:

Five men swim in a pot of red steel.

Their bones are kneaded into the bread of steel:

Their bones are knocked into coils and anvils

And the sucking plungers of sea-fighting turbines.

Look for them in the woven frame of a wireless station.

So ghosts hide in steel like heavy-armed men in mirrors.

Peepers, skulkers—they shadow-dance in laughing tombs.

They are always there and they never answer.

One of them said: 'I like my job, the company is good to me, America is a
wonderful country.'

One: 'Jesus, my bones ache; the company is a liar; this is a free country, like
hell.'

One: 'I got a girl, a peach; we save up and go on a farm and raise pigs and be
the boss ourselves.'

And the others were roughneck singers a long ways from home.

Look for them back of a steel vault door.

They laugh at the cost.

They lift the birdmen into the blue.
It is steel a motor sings and zooms.

In the subway plugs and drums,
In the slow hydraulic drills, in gumbo or gravel,
Under dynamo shafts in the webs of armature spiders,
They shadow-dance and laugh at the cost.

The ovens light a red dome.
Spools of fire wind and wind.
Quadrangles of crimson sputter.
The lashes of dying maroon let down.
Fire and wind wash out the slag.
Forever the slag gets washed in fire and wind.
The anthem learned by the steel is:
Do this or go hungry.
Look for our rust on a plow.
Listen to us in a threshing-engine razz.
Look at our job in the running wagon wheat.

Fire and wind wash at the slag.
Box-cars, clocks, steam-shovels, churns, pistons, boilers, scissors—
Oh, the sleeping slag from the mountains, the slag-heavy pig-iron will go down
many roads.
Men will stab and shoot with it, and make butter and tunnel rivers, and mow hay
in swaths, and slit hogs and skin beeves, and
steer airplanes across North America, Europe, Asia, round the world.

Hacked from a hard rock country, broken and baked in mills and smelters, the
rusty dust waits
Till the clean hard weave of its atoms cripples and blunts the drills chewing a
hole in it.
The steel of its plinths and flanges is reckoned, O God, in one-millionth of an
inch.

Once when I saw the curves of fire, the rough scarf women dancing,
Dancing out of the flues and smoke-stacks—flying hair of fire, flying feet upside
down;
Buckets and baskets of fire exploding and chortling, fire running wild out of the
steady and fastened ovens;
Sparks cracking a harr-harr-huff from a solar-plexus of rock-ribs of the earth
taking a laugh for themselves;

Ears and noses of fire, gibbering gorilla arms of fire, gold mud-pies, gold bird-wings, red jackets riding purple mules,
scarlet autocrats tumbling from the humps of camels, assassinated czars straddling vermilion balloons;
I saw then the fires flash one by one: good-by: then smoke, smoke;
And in the screens the great sisters of night and cool stars, sitting women arranging their hair,
Waiting in the sky, waiting with slow easy eyes, waiting and half-murmuring:
'Since you know all
and I know nothing,
tell me what I dreamed last night.'

Pearl cobwebs in the windy rain,
in only a flicker of wind,
are caught and lost and never known again.

A pool of moonshine comes and waits,
but never waits long: the wind picks up
loose gold like this and is gone.

A bar of steel sleeps and looks slant-eyed
on the pearl cobwebs, the pools of moonshine;
sleeps slant-eyed a million years,
sleeps with a coat of rust, a vest of moths,
a shirt of gathering sod and loam.

The wind never bothers ... a bar of steel.
The wind picks only.. pearl cobwebs.. pools of moonshine.

Carl Sandburg

Smoke Rose Gold

THE DOME of the capitol looks to the Potomac river.

Out of haze over the sunset,

Out of a smoke rose gold:

One star shines over the sunset.

Night takes the dome and the river, the sun and the smoke rose gold,

The haze changes from sunset to star.

The pour of a thin silver struggles against the dark.

A star might call: It's a long way across.

Carl Sandburg

Snow

SNOW took us away from the smoke valleys into white mountains, we saw velvet blue cows eating a vermillion grass and they gave us a pink milk.

Snow changes our bones into fog streamers caught by the wind and spelled into many dances.

Six bits for a sniff of snow in the old days bought us bubbles beautiful to forget floating long arm women across sunny autumn hills.

Our bones cry and cry, no let-up, cry their telegrams:
More, more-a yen is on, a long yen and God only knows when it will end.

In the old days six bits got us snow and stopped the yen-now the government says: No, no, when our bones cry their telegrams: More, more.

The blue cows are dying, no more pink milk, no more floating long arm women, the hills are empty-us for the smoke valleys-sneeze and shiver and croak, you dopes-the government says: No, no.

Carl Sandburg

Soiled Dove

Let us be honest; the lady was not a harlot until she
married a corporation lawyer who picked her from
a Ziegfeld chorus.

Before then she never took anybody's money and paid
for her silk stockings out of what she earned singing
and dancing.

She loved one man and he loved six women and the
game was changing her looks, calling for more and
more massage money and high coin for the beauty
doctors.

Now she drives a long, underslung motor car all by herself,
reads in the day's papers what her husband is
doing to the inter-state commerce commission, requires
a larger corsage from year to year, and wonders
sometimes how one man is coming along with
six women.

Carl Sandburg

Soup

I saw a famous man eating soup.
I say he was lifting a fat broth
Into his mouth with a spoon.
His name was in the newspapers that day
Spelled out in tall black headlines
And thousands of people were talking about him.

When I saw him,
He sat bending his head over a plate
Putting soup in his mouth with a spoon.

Carl Sandburg

Southern Pacific

HUNTINGTON sleeps in a house six feet long.
Huntington dreams of railroads he built and owned.
Huntington dreams of ten thousand men saying: Yes, sir.

Blithery sleeps in a house six feet long.
Blithery dreams of rails and ties he laid.
Blithery dreams of saying to Huntington: Yes, sir.

Huntington,
Blithery, sleep in houses six feet long.

Carl Sandburg

Spanish

FASTEN black eyes on me.

I ask nothing of you under the peach trees,

Fasten your black eyes in my gray with the spear of a storm.

The air under the peach blossoms is a haze of pink.

Carl Sandburg

Splinter

The voice of the last cricket
across the first frost
is one kind of good-by.
It is so thin a splinter of singing.

Carl Sandburg

Stars, Songs, Faces

Gather the stars if you wish it so.
Gather the songs and keep them.
Gather the faces of women.
Gather for keeping years and years.
And then . . .
Loosen your hands, let go and say goodbye.
Let the stars and songs go.
Let the faces and years go.
Loosen your hands and say goodbye.

Carl Sandburg

Statistics

Napoleon shifted,
Restless in the old sarcophagus
And murmured to a watchguard:
"Who goes there?"
"Twenty-one million men,
Soldiers, armies, guns,
Twenty-one million
Afoot, horseback,
In the air,
Under the sea."
And Napoleon turned to his sleep:
"It is not my world answering;
It is some dreamer who knows not
The world I marched in
From Calais to Moscow."
And he slept on
In the old sarcophagus
While the aeroplanes
Droned their motors
Between Napoleon's mausoleum
And the cool night stars.

Carl Sandburg

Still Life

COOL your heels on the rail of an observation car.
Let the engineer open her up for ninety miles an hour.
Take in the prairie right and left, rolling land and new hay crops, swaths of new
hay laid in the sun.
A gray village flecks by and the horses hitched in front of the post-office never
blink an eye.
A barnyard and fifteen Holstein cows, dabs of white on a black wall map, never
blink an eye.
A signalman in a tower, the outpost of Kansas City, keeps his place at a window
with the serenity of a bronze statue on a dark night when lovers pass whispering.

Sumach And Birds

IF you never came with a pigeon rainbow purple
Shining in the six o'clock September dusk:
If the red sumach on the autumn roads
Never danced on the flame of your eyelashes:
If the red-haws never burst in a million
Crimson fingertwists of your heartcrying:
If all this beauty of yours never crushed me
Then there are many flying acres of birds for me,
Many drumming gray wings going home I shall see,
Many crying voices riding the north wind.

Carl Sandburg

Street Window

The pawn-shop man knows hunger,
And how far hunger has eaten the heart
Of one who comes with an old keepsake.
Here are wedding rings and baby bracelets,
Scarf pins and shoe buckles, jeweled garters,
Old-fashioned knives with inlaid handles,
Watches of old gold and silver,
Old coins worn with finger-marks.
They tell stories.

Carl Sandburg

Streets Too Old

I WALKED among the streets of an old city and the streets were lean as the throats of hard seafish soaked in salt and kept in barrels many years.

How old, how old, how old, we are:-the walls went on saying, street walls leaning toward each other like old women of the people, like old midwives tired and only doing what must be done.

The greatest the city could offer me, a stranger, was statues of the kings, on all corners bronzes of kings-ancient bearded kings who wrote books and spoke of God's love for all people-and young kings who took forth armies out across the frontiers splitting the heads of their opponents and enlarging their kingdoms.

Strangest of all to me, a stranger in this old city, was the murmur always whistling on the winds twisting out of the armpits and fingertips of the kings in bronze:-Is there no loosening? Is this for always?

In an early snowflurry one cried:-Pull me down where the tired old midwives no longer look at me, throw the bronze of me to a fierce fire and make me into neckchains for dancing children.

Carl Sandburg

Stripes

POLICEMAN in front of a bank 3 A.M. ... lonely.

Policeman State and Madison ... high noon ... mobs ... cars ... parcels ... lonely.

Woman in suburbs ... keeping night watch on a sleeping typhoid patient ... only a clock to talk to ... lonesome.

Woman selling gloves ... bargain day department store ... furious crazy-work of many hands slipping in and out of gloves ... lonesome.

Carl Sandburg

Style

Style--go ahead talking about style.

You can tell where a man gets his style just
as you can tell where Pavlowa got her legs
or Ty Cobb his batting eye.

Go on talking.

Only don't take my style away.

It's my face.

Maybe no good

but anyway, my face.

I talk with it, I sing with it, I see, taste and feel with it,
I know why I want to keep it.

Kill my style

and you break Pavlowa's legs,

and you blind Ty Cobb's batting eye.

Carl Sandburg

Subway

Down between the walls of shadow
Where the iron laws insist,
 The hunger voices mock.

The worn wayfaring men
With the hunched and humble shoulders,
 Throw their laughter into toil.

Carl Sandburg

Summer Stars

Bend low again, night of summer stars.
So near you are, sky of summer stars,
So near, a long-arm man can pick off stars,
Pick off what he wants in the sky bowl,
So near you are, summer stars,
So near, strumming, strumming,
So lazy and hum-strumming.

Carl Sandburg

Sunset From Omaha Hotel Window

Into the blue river hills
The red sun runners go
And the long sand changes
And to-day is a goner
And to-day is not worth haggling over.

Here in Omaha
The gloaming is bitter
As in Chicago
Or Kenosha.

The long sand changes.
To-day is a goner.
Time knocks in another brass nail.
Another yellow plunger shoots the dark.

Constellations
Wheeling over Omaha
As in Chicago
Or Kenosha.

The long sand is gone
and all the talk is stars.
They circle in a dome over Nebraska.

Carl Sandburg

Swirl

A SWIRL in the air where your head was once, here.
You walked under this tree, spoke to a moon for me
I might almost stand here and believe you alive.

Carl Sandburg

Tangibles

(Washington, August, 1918) I HAVE seen this city in the day and the sun.
I have seen this city in the night and the moon.
And in the night and the moon I have seen a thing this city gave me nothing of in
the day and the sun.

The float of the dome in the day and the sun is one thing.
The float of the dome in the night and the moon is another thing.
In the night and the moon the float of the dome is a dream-whisper, a croon of a
hope: 'Not today, child, not today, lover; maybe tomorrow, child, maybe
tomorrow, lover.'

Can a dome of iron dream deeper than living men?
Can the float of a shape hovering among tree-tops-can this speak an oratory sad,
singing and red beyond the speech of the living men?

A mother of men, a sister, a lover, a woman past the dreams of the living-
Does she go sad, singing and red out of the float of this dome?

There is ... something ... here ... men die for.

Carl Sandburg

Tawny

THESE are the tawny days: your face comes back.

The grapes take on purple: the sunsets redden early on the trellis.

The bashful mornings hurl gray mist on the stripes of sunrise.

Creep, silver on the field, the frost is welcome.

Run on, yellow balls on the hills, and you tawny pumpkin flowers, chasing your lines of orange.

Tawny days: and your face again.

Carl Sandburg

Telegram

I SAW a telegram handed a two hundred pound man at a desk. And the little scrap of paper charged the air like a set of crystals in a chemist's tube to a whispering pinch of salt.

Cross my heart, the two hundred pound man had just cracked a joke about a new hat he got his wife, when the messenger boy slipped in and asked him to sign. He gave the boy a nickel, tore the envelope and read.

Then he yelled 'Good God,' jumped for his hat and raincoat, ran for the elevator and took a taxi to a railroad depot.

As I say, it was like a set of crystals in a chemist's tube and a whispering pinch of salt.

I wonder what Diogenes who lived in a tub in the sun would have commented on the affair.

I know a shoemaker who works in a cellar slamming half-soles onto shoes, and when I told him, he said: 'I pay my bills, I love my wife, and I am not afraid of anybody.'

Carl Sandburg

Testament

I GIVE the undertakers permission to haul my body
to the graveyard and to lay away all, the head, the
feet, the hands, all: I know there is something left
over they can not put away.

Let the nanny goats and the billy goats of the shanty
people eat the clover over my grave and if any yellow
hair or any blue smoke of flowers is good enough to grow
over me let the dirty-fisted children of the shanty
people pick these flowers.

I have had my chance to live with the people who have
too much and the people who have too little and I chose
one of the two and I have told no man why.

Carl Sandburg

Testimony Regarding A Ghost

THE ROSES slanted crimson sobs
On the night sky hair of the women,
And the long light-fingered men
Spoke to the dark-haired women,
'Nothing lovelier, nothing lovelier.'
How could he sit there among us all
Guzzling blood into his guts,
Goblets, mugs, buckets-
Leaning, toppling, laughing
With a slobber on his mouth,
A smear of red on his strong raw lips,
How could he sit there
And only two or three of us see him?
There was nothing to it.
He wasn't there at all, of course.

The roses leaned from the pots.
The sprays snot roses gold and red
And the roses slanted crimson sobs
In the night sky hair
And the voices chattered on the way
To the frappe, speaking of pictures,
Speaking of a strip of black velvet
Crossing a girlish woman's throat,
Speaking of the mystic music flash
Of pots and sprays of roses,
'Nothing lovelier, nothing lovelier.'

Carl Sandburg

The Answer

You have spoken the answer.
A child searches far sometimes
Into the red dust
On a dark rose leaf
And so you have gone far
For the answer is:
Silence.

In the republic
Of the winking stars
and spent cataclysms
Sure we are it is off there the answer
is hidden and folded over,
Sleeping in the sun, careless whether
it is Sunday or any other day of
the week,

Knowing silence will bring all one way or another.

Have we not seen
Purple of the pansy
out of the mulch
and mold
crawl
into a dusk
of velvet?
blur of yellow?

Almost we thought from nowhere but it was the silence,
the future,
working.

Carl Sandburg

The Four Brothers

MAKE war songs out of these;
Make chants that repeat and weave.
Make rhythms up to the ragtime chatter of the machine guns;
Make slow-booming psalms up to the boom of the big guns.
Make a marching song of swinging arms and swinging legs,
 Going along,
 Going along,
On the roads from San Antonio to Athens, from Seattle to Bagdad-
The boys and men in winding lines of khaki, the circling squares of bayonet
points.

Cowpunchers, cornhuskers, shopmen, ready in khaki;
Ballplayers, lumberjacks, ironworkers, ready in khaki;
A million, ten million, singing, 'I am ready.'
This the sun looks on between two seaboard,
In the land of Lincoln, in the land of Grant and Lee.

I heard one say, 'I am ready to be killed.'
I heard another say, 'I am ready to be killed.'
O sunburned clear-eyed boys!
I stand on sidewalks and you go by with drums and guns and bugles,
 You-and the flag!
And my heart tightens, a fist of something feels my throat
 When you go by,
You on the kaiser hunt, you and your faces saying, 'I am ready to be killed.'

They are hunting death,
Death for the one-armed mastoid kaiser.
They are after a Hohenzollern head:
There is no man-hunt of men remembered like this.

The four big brothers are out to kill.
France, Russia, Britain, America-
The four republics are sworn brothers to kill the kaiser.

Yes, this is the great man-hunt;
And the sun has never seen till now
Such a line of toothed and tusked man-killers,
In the blue of the upper sky,

In the green of the undersea,
In the red of winter dawns.
Eating to kill,
Sleeping to kill,
Asked by their mothers to kill,
Wished by four-fifths of the world to kill-
To cut the kaiser's throat,
To hack the kaiser's head,
To hang the kaiser on a high-horizon gibbet.

And is it nothing else than this?
Three times ten million men thirsting the blood
Of a half-cracked one-armed child of the German kings?
Three times ten million men asking the blood
Of a child born with his head wrong-shaped,
The blood of rotted kings in his veins?
If this were all, O God,
I would go to the far timbers
And look on the gray wolves
Tearing the throats of moose:
I would ask a wilder drunk of blood.

Look! It is four brothers in joined hands together.
 The people of bleeding France,
 The people of bleeding Russia,
 The people of Britain, the people of America-
These are the four brothers, these are the four republics.

At first I said it in anger as one who clenches his fist in wrath to fling his knuckles
into the face of some one taunting;
Now I say it calmly as one who has thought it over and over again at night,
among the mountains, by the seacombers in storm.
I say now, by God, only fighters to-day will save the world, nothing but fighters
will keep alive the names of those who left red prints of bleeding feet at Valley
Forge in Christmas snow.
On the cross of Jesus, the sword of Napoleon, the skull of Shakespeare, the pen
of Tom Jefferson, the ashes of Abraham Lincoln, or any sign of the red and
running life poured out by the mothers of the world,
By the God of morning glories climbing blue the doors of quiet homes, by the
God of tall hollyhocks laughing glad to children in peaceful valleys, by the God of
new mothers wishing peace to sit at windows nursing babies,
I swear only reckless men, ready to throw away their lives by hunger,

deprivation, desperate clinging to a single purpose imperturbable and undaunted,
men with the primitive guts of rebellion,
Only fighters gaunt with the red brand of labor's sorrow on their brows and
labor's terrible pride in their blood, men with souls asking danger-only these will
save and keep the four big brothers.

Good-night is the word, good-night to the kings, to the czars,
 Good-night to the kaiser.
The breakdown and the fade-away begins.
The shadow of a great broom, ready to sweep out the trash, is here.

One finger is raised that counts the czar,
The ghost who beckoned men who come no more-
The czar gone to the winds on God's great dustpan,
The czar a pinch of nothing,
The last of the gibbering Romanoffs.

Out and good-night-
The ghosts of the summer palaces
And the ghosts of the winter palaces!
Out and out, good-night to the kings, the czars, the kaisers.

Another finger will speak,
And the kaiser, the ghost who gestures a hundred million sleeping-waking
ghosts,
The kaiser will go onto God's great dustpan-
The last of the gibbering Hohenzollerns.
Look! God pities this trash, God waits with a broom and a dustpan,
God knows a finger will speak and count them out.

It is written in the stars;
It is spoken on the walls;
It clicks in the fire-white zigzag of the Atlantic wireless;
It mutters in the bastions of thousand-mile continents;
It sings in a whistle on the midnight winds from Walla Walla to Mesopotamia:
Out and good-night.

The millions slow in khaki,
The millions learning Turkey in the Straw and John Brown's Body,
The millions remembering windrows of dead at Gettysburg, Chickamauga, and
Spottsylvania Court House,
The millions dreaming of the morning star of Appomattox,

The millions easy and calm with guns and steel, planes and prows:
There is a hammering, drumming hell to come.
The killing gangs are on the way.

God takes one year for a job.
God takes ten years or a million.
God knows when a doom is written.
God knows this job will be done and the words spoken:
Out and good-night.

The red tubes will run,
And the great price be paid,
And the homes empty,
And the wives wishing,
And the mothers wishing.

There is only one way now, only the way of the red tubes and the great price.

Well...

Maybe the morning sun is a five-cent yellow balloon,
And the evening stars the joke of a God gone crazy.
Maybe the mothers of the world,
And the life that pours from their torsal folds-
Maybe it's all a lie sworn by liars,
And a God with a cackling laughter says:
'I, the Almighty God,
I have made all this,
I have made it for kaisers, czars, and kings.'

Three times ten million men say: No.
Three times ten million men say:
God is a God of the People.
And the God who made the world
And fixed the morning sun,
And flung the evening stars,
And shaped the baby hands of life,
This is the God of the Four Brothers;
This is the God of bleeding France and bleeding Russia;
This is the God of the people of Britain and America.

The graves from the Irish Sea to the Caucasus peaks are ten times a million.
The stubs and stumps of arms and legs, the eyesockets empty, the cripples, ten
times a million.

The crimson thumb-print of this anathema is on the door panels of a hundred million homes.

Cows gone, mothers on sick-beds, children cry a hunger and no milk comes in the noon-time or at night.

The death-yells of it all, the torn throats of men in ditches calling for water, the shadows and the hacking lungs in dugouts, the steel paws that clutch and squeeze a scarlet drain day by day-the storm of it is hell.

But look! child! the storm is blowing for a clean air.

Look! the four brothers march
And hurl their big shoulders
And swear the job shall be done.

Out of the wild finger-writing north and south, east and west, over the blood-crossed, blood-dusty ball of earth,
Out of it all a God who knows is sweeping clean,
Out of it all a God who sees and pierces through, is breaking and cleaning out an old thousand years, is making ready for a new thousand years.
The four brothers shall be five and more.

Under the chimneys of the winter time the children of the world shall sing new songs.
Among the rocking restless cradles the mothers of the world shall sing new sleepy-time songs.

Carl Sandburg

The Great Hunt

I cannot tell you now;
When the wind's drive and whirl
Blow me along no longer,
And the wind's a whisper at last—
Maybe I'll tell you then—
some other time.

When the rose's flash to the sunset
Reels to the rack and the twist,
And the rose is a red bygone,
When the face I love is going
And the gate to the end shall clang,
And it's no use to beckon or say, "So long"—
Maybe I'll tell you then—
some other time.

I never knew any more beautiful than you:
I have hunted you under my thoughts,
I have broken down under the wind
And into the roses looking for you.
I shall never find any
greater than you.

Carl Sandburg

The Hammer

I have seen
The old gods go
And the new gods come.

Day by day
And year by year
The idols fall
And the idols rise.

Today
I worship the hammer.

Carl Sandburg

The Hangman At Home

What does a hangman think about
When he goes home at night from work?
When he sits down with his wife and
Children for a cup of coffee and a
Plate of ham and eggs, do they ask
Him if it was a good day's work
And everything went well or do they
Stay off some topics and kill about
The weather, baseball, politics
And the comic strips in the papers
And the movies? Do they look at his
Hands when he reaches for the coffee
Or the ham and eggs? If the little
Ones say, Daddy, play horse, here's
A rope--does he answer like a joke:
I seen enough rope for today?
Or does his face light up like a
Bonfire of joy and does he say:
It's a good and dandy world we live
'In. And if a white face moon looks
In through a window where a baby girl
Sleeps and the moon-gleams mix with
Baby ears and baby hair--the hangman--
How does he act then? It must be easy
For him. Anything is easy for a hangman,
I guess.

Carl Sandburg

The Harbor

Passing through huddled and ugly walls
By doorways where women
Looked from their hunger-deep eyes,
Haunted with shadows of hunger-hands,
Out from the huddled and ugly walls,
I came sudden, at the city's edge,
On a blue burst of lake,
Long lake waves breaking under the sun
On a spray-flung curve of shore;
And a fluttering storm of gulls,
Masses of great gray wings
And flying white bellies
Veering and wheeling free in the open.

Carl Sandburg

The Has-Been

A stone face higher than six horses stood five thousand years gazing at the world seeming to clutch a secret.

A boy passes and throws a niggerhead that chips off the end of the nose from the stone face; he lets fly a mud ball that spatters the right eye and cheek of the old looker-on.

The boy laughs and goes whistling "ee-ee-ee ee-ee-ee." The stone face stands silent, seeming to clutch a secret.

Carl Sandburg

The Junk Man

I am glad God saw Death
And gave Death a job taking care of all who are tired of living:

When all the wheels in a clock are worn and slow and the connections loose
And the clock goes on ticking and telling the wrong time from hour to hour
And people around the house joke about what a bum clock it is,
How glad the clock is when the big Junk Man drives his wagon
Up to the house and puts his arms around the clock and says:
"You don't belong here,
You gotta come
Along with me,"
How glad the clock is then, when it feels the arms of the Junk Man close around
it and carry it away.

Carl Sandburg

The Lawyers Know Too Much

The lawyers, Bob, know too much.
They are chums of the books of old John Marshall.
They know it all, what a dead hand wrote,
A stiff dead hand and its knuckles crumbling,
The bones of the fingers a thin white ash.
 The lawyers know
 a dead man's thought too well.

In the heels of the higgling lawyers, Bob,
Too many slippery ifs and buts and howevers,
Too much hereinbefore provided whereas,
Too many doors to go in and out of.

When the lawyers are through
What is there left, Bob?
Can a mouse nibble at it
And find enough to fasten a tooth in?

Why is there always a secret singing
When a lawyer cashes in?
Why does a hearse horse snicker
Hauling a lawyer away?

The work of a bricklayer goes to the blue.
The knack of a mason outlasts a moon.
The hands of a plasterer hold a room together.
The land of a farmer wishes him back again.
 Singers of songs and dreamers of plays
 Build a house no wind blows over.
The lawyers- tell me why a hearse horse snickers
 hauling a lawyer's bones.

Carl Sandburg

The Liars

(March, 1919)A LIAR goes in fine clothes.

A liar goes in rags.

A liar is a liar, clothes or no clothes.

A liar is a liar and lives on the lies he tells and dies in a life of lies.

And the stonecutters earn a living-with lies-on the tombs of liars.

Aliar looks 'em in the eye

And lies to a woman,

Lies to a man, a pal, a child, a fool.

And he is an old liar; we know him many years back.

A liar lies to nations.

A liar lies to the people.

A liar takes the blood of the people

And drinks this blood with a laugh and a lie,

A laugh in his neck,

A lie in his mouth.

And this liar is an old one; we know him many years.

He is straight as a dog's hind leg.

He is straight as a corkscrew.

He is white as a black cat's foot at midnight.

The tongue of a man is tied on this,

On the liar who lies to nations,

The liar who lies to the people.

The tongue of a man is tied on this

And ends: To hell with 'em all.

To hell with 'em all.

It's a song hard as a riveter's hammer,

Hard as the sleep of a crummy hobo,

Hard as the sleep of a lousy doughboy,

Twisted as a shell-shock idiot's gibber.

The liars met where the doors were locked.

They said to each other: Now for war.

The liars fixed it and told 'em: Go.

Across their tables they fixed it up,

Behind their doors away from the mob.
And the guns did a job that nicked off millions.
The guns blew seven million off the map,
The guns sent seven million west.
Seven million shoving up the daisies.
Across their tables they fixed it up,
The liars who lie to nations.

And now
Out of the butcher's job
And the boneyard junk the maggots have cleaned,
Where the jaws of skulls tell the jokes of war ghosts,
Out of this they are calling now: Let's go back where we were.
Let us run the world again, us, us.

Where the doors are locked the liars say: Wait and we'll cash in again.

So I hear The People talk.
I hear them tell each other:
Let the strong men be ready.
Let the strong men watch.
Let your wrists be cool and your head clear.
Let the liars get their finish,
The liars and their waiting game, waiting a day again
To open the doors and tell us: War! get out to your war again.

So I hear The People tell each other:
Look at to-day and to-morrow.
Fix this clock that nicks off millions
When The Liars say it's time.
Take things in your own hands.
To hell with 'em all,
The liars who lie to nations,
The liars who lie to The People.

Carl Sandburg

The Long Shadow of Lincoln: A Litany

(We can succeed only by concert. . . . The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves. . . . December 1, 1862. The President's Message to Congress.)

Be sad, be cool, be kind,
remembering those now dreamdust
hallowed in the ruts and gullies,
solemn bones under the smooth blue sea,
faces warblown in a falling rain.

Be a brother, if so can be,
to those beyond battle fatigue
each in his own corner of earth
 or forty fathoms undersea
 beyond all boom of guns,
 beyond any bong of a great bell,
 each with a bosom and number,
 each with a pack of secrets,
each with a personal dream and doorway
and over them now the long endless winds
 with the low healing song of time,
 the hush and sleep murmur of time.

Make your wit a guard and cover.
Sing low, sing high, sing wide.
Let your laughter come free
remembering looking toward peace:
"We must disenthrall ourselves."

Be a brother, if so can be,
to those thrown forward
for taking hardwon lines,
for holding hardwon points
 and their reward so-so,
little they care to talk about,
their pay held in a mute calm,

highspot memories going unspoken,
what they did being past words,
what they took being hardwon.

Be sad, be kind, be cool.

Weep if you must

And weep open and shameless
before these altars.

There are wounds past words.

There are cripples less broken
than many who walk whole.

There are dead youths

with wrists of silence

who keep a vast music

under their shut lips,

what they did being past words,

their dreams like their deaths

beyond any smooth and easy telling,

having given till no more to give.

There is dust alive

with dreams of The Republic,

with dreams of the Family of Man

flung wide on a shrinking globe

with old timetables,

old maps, old guide-posts

torn into shreds,

shot into tatters

burnt in a firewind,

lost in the shambles,

faded in rubble and ashes.

There is dust alive.

Out of a granite tomb,

Out of a bronze sarcophagus,

Loose from the stone and copper

Steps a whitesmoke ghost

Lifting an authoritative hand

In the name of dreams worth dying for,

In the name of men whose dust breathes

of those dreams so worth dying for,

what they did being past words,

beyond all smooth and easy telling.

Be sad, be kind, be cool,
remembering, under God, a dreamdust
hallowed in the ruts and gullies,
solemn bones under the smooth blue sea,
faces warblown in a falling rain.

Sing low, sing high, sing wide.
Make your wit a guard and cover.
Let your laughter come free
like a help and a brace of comfort.

The earth laughs, the sun laughs
over every wise harvest of man,
over man looking toward peace
by the light of the hard old teaching:
 "We must disenthral ourselves."

Carl Sandburg

The Mayor Of Gary

I asked the mayor of Gary about the 12-hour day and the 7-day week.

And the mayor of Gary answered more workmen steal time on the job in Gary than any other place in the United States.

"Go into the plants and you will see men sitting around doing nothing--machinery does everything," said the mayor of Gary when I asked him about the 12-hour day and the 7-day week.

And he wore cool cream pants, the Mayor of Gary, and white shoes, and a barber had fixed him up with a shampoo and a shave and he was east and imperturbable though the government weather bureau thermometer said 96 and children were soaking their heads at bubbling fountains on the street corners. And I said good-bye to the Mayor of Gary and I went out from the city hall and turned the corner into Broadway.

And I saw workmen wearing leather shoes scuffed with fire and cinders, and pitted with little holes from running molten steel, And some had bunches of specialized muscles around their shoulder blades hard as pig iron, muscles of their forearms were sheet steel and they looked to me like men who had been somewhere.

Carl Sandburg

The Mist

I am the mist, the impalpable mist,
Back of the thing you seek.
My arms are long,
Long as the reach of time and space.

Some toil and toil, believing,
Looking now and again on my face,
Catching a vital, olden glory.

But no one passes me,
I tangle and snare them all.
I am the cause of the Sphinx,
The voiceless, baffled, patient Sphinx.

I was at the first of things,
I will be at the last.
I am the primal mist
And no man passes me;
My long impalpable arms
Bar them all.

Carl Sandburg

The Noon Hour

She sits in the dust at the walls
And makes cigars,
Bending at the bench
With fingers wage-anxious,
Changing her sweat for the day's pay.

Now the noon hour has come,
And she leans with her bare arms
On the window-sill over the river,
Leans and feels at her throat
Cool-moving things out of the free open ways:

At her throat and eyes and nostrils
The touch and the blowing cool
Of great free ways beyond the walls.

Carl Sandburg

The People, Yes

Lincoln?

He was a mystery in smoke and flags
Saying yes to the smoke, yes to the flags,
Yes to the paradoxes of democracy,
Yes to the hopes of government
Of the people by the people for the people,
No to debauchery of the public mind,
No to personal malice nursed and fed,
Yes to the Constitution when a help,
No to the Constitution when a hindrance
Yes to man as a struggler amid illusions,
Each man fated to answer for himself:
Which of the faiths and illusions of mankind
Must I choose for my own sustaining light
To bring me beyond the present wilderness?

Lincoln? Was he a poet?
And did he write verses?

'I have not willingly planted a thorn
in any man's bosom.'
I shall do nothing through malice: what
I deal with is too vast for malice.'

Death was in the air.
So was birth.

Carl Sandburg

The Plowboy

AFTER the last red sunset glimmer,
Black on the line of a low hill rise,
Formed into moving shadows, I saw
A plowboy and two horses lined against the gray,
Plowing in the dusk the last furrow.
The turf had a gleam of brown,
And smell of soil was in the air,
And, cool and moist, a haze of April.

I shall remember you long,
Plowboy and horses against the sky in shadow.
I shall remember you and the picture
You made for me,
Turning the turf in the dusk
And haze of an April gloaming.

Carl Sandburg

The Red Son

I love your faces I saw the many years
I drank your milk and filled my mouth
With your home talk, slept in your house
And was one of you.

 But a fire burns in my heart.
Under the ribs where pulses thud
And flitting between bones of skull
Is the push, the endless mysterious command,
 Saying:

"I leave you behind--
You for the little hills and the years all alike,
You with your patient cows and old houses
Protected from the rain,
I am going away and I never come back to you;
Craggs and high rough places call me,
Great places of death
Where men go empty handed
And pass over smiling
To the star-drift on the horizon rim.
My last whisper shall be alone, unknown;
I shall go to the city and fight against it,
And make it give me passwords
Of luck and love, women worth dying for,
And money.

 I go where you wist not of
 Nor I nor any man nor woman.
 I only know I go to storms
 Grappling against things wet and naked."
There is no pity of it and no blame.
None of us is in the wrong.
After all it is only this:
 You for the little hills and I go away.

Carl Sandburg

The Right To Grief

To Certain Poets About to Die

Take your fill of intimate remorse, perfumed sorrow,
Over the dead child of a millionaire,
And the pity of Death refusing any check on the bank
Which the millionaire might order his secretary to
 scratch off
And get cashed.

 Very well,
You for your grief and I for mine.
Let me have a sorrow my own if I want to.

I shall cry over the dead child of a stockyards hunky.
His job is sweeping blood off the floor.
He gets a dollar seventy cents a day when he works
And it's many tubs of blood he shoves out with a broom
 day by day.

Now his three year old daughter
Is in a white coffin that cost him a week's wages.
Every Saturday night he will pay the undertaker fifty
 cents till the debt is wiped out.

The hunky and his wife and the kids
Cry over the pinched face almost at peace in the white box.

They remember it was scrawny and ran up high doctor bills.
They are glad it is gone for the rest of the family now
 will have more to eat and wear.

Yet before the majesty of Death they cry around the coffin
And wipe their eyes with red bandanas and sob when
 the priest says, "God have mercy on us all."

I have a right to feel my throat choke about this.
You take your grief and I mine--see?
To-morrow there is no funeral and the hunky goes back
 to his job sweeping blood off the floor at a dollar

seventy cents a day.

All he does all day long is keep on shoving hog blood
ahead of him with a broom.

Carl Sandburg

The Road And The End

I shall foot it
Down the roadway in the dusk,
Where shapes of hunger wander
And the fugitives of pain go by.

I shall foot it
In the silence of the morning,
See the night slur into dawn,
Hear the slow great winds arise
Where tall trees flank the way
And shoulder toward the sky.

The broken boulders by the road
Shall not commemorate my ruin.
Regret shall be the gravel under foot.
I shall watch for
Slim birds swift of wing
That go where wind and ranks of thunder
Drive the wild processions of rain.

The dust of the traveled road
Shall touch my hands and face.

Carl Sandburg

The Sea Hold

THE SEA is large.

The sea hold on a leg of land in the Chesapeake hugs an early sunset and a last morning star over the oyster beds and the late clam boats of lonely men.
Five white houses on a half-mile strip of land ... five white dice rolled from a tube.

Not so long ago ... the sea was large...

And to-day the sea has lost nothing ... it keeps all.

I am a loon about the sea.

I make so many sea songs, I cry so many sea cries, I forget so many sea songs and sea cries.

I am a loon about the sea.

So are five men I had a fish fry with once in a tar-paper shack trembling in a sand storm.

The sea knows more about them than they know themselves.

They know only how the sea hugs and will not let go.

The sea is large.

The sea must know more than any of us.

Carl Sandburg

The Shovel Man

On the street
Slung on his shoulder is a handle half way across,
Tied in a big knot on the scoop of cast iron
Are the overalls faded from sun and rain in the ditches;
Spatter of dry clay sticking yellow on his left sleeve
 And a flimsy shirt open at the throat,
 I know him for a shovel man,
 A dago working for a dollar six bits a day
And a dark-eyed woman in the old country dreams of
 him for one of the world's ready men with a pair
 of fresh lips and a kiss better than all the wild
 grapes that ever grew in Tuscany.

Carl Sandburg

The Sins Of Kalamazoo

THE SINS of Kalamazoo are neither scarlet nor crimson.

The sins of Kalamazoo are a convict gray, a dishwater drab.

And the people who sin the sins of Kalamazoo are neither scarlet nor crimson.

They run to drabs and grays-and some of them sing they shall be washed whiter than snow-and some: We should worry.

Yes, Kalamazoo is a spot on the map
And the passenger trains stop there
And the factory smokestacks smoke
And the grocery stores are open Saturday nights
And the streets are free for citizens who vote
And inhabitants counted in the census.
Saturday night is the big night.
Listen with your ears on a Saturday night in Kalamazoo
And say to yourself: I hear America, I hear, what do I hear?

Main street there runs through the middle of the town
And there is a dirty postoffice
And a dirty city hall
And a dirty railroad station
And the United States flag cries, cries the Stars and Stripes to the four winds on
Lincoln's birthday and the Fourth of July.

Kalamazoo kisses a hand to something far off.

Kalamazoo calls to a long horizon, to a shivering silver angel, to a creeping
mystic what-is-it.

'We're here because we're here,' is the song of Kalamazoo.

'We don't know where we're going but we're on our way,' are the words.

There are hound dogs of bronze on the public square, hound dogs looking far
beyond the public square.

Sweethearts there in Kalamazoo

Go to the general delivery window of the postoffice
And speak their names and ask for letters
And ask again, 'Are you sure there is nothing for me?
I wish you'd look again-there must be a letter for me.'

And sweethearts go to the city hall
And tell their names and say, 'We want a license.'
And they go to an installment house and buy a bed on time and a clock
And the children grow up asking each other, 'What can we do to kill time?'
They grow up and go to the railroad station and buy tickets for Texas,
Pennsylvania, Alaska.
'Kalamazoo is all right,' they say. 'But I want to see the world.'
And when they have looked the world over they come back saying it is all like
Kalamazoo.

The trains come in from the east and hoot for the crossings,
And buzz away to the peach country and Chicago to the west
Or they come from the west and shoot on to the Battle Creek breakfast bazaars
And the speedbug heavens of Detroit.

'I hear America, I hear, what do I hear?'
Said a loafer lagging along on the sidewalks of Kalamazoo,
Lagging along and asking questions, reading signs.

Oh yes, there is a town named Kalamazoo,
A spot on the map where the trains hesitate.
I saw the sign of a five and ten cent store there
And the Standard Oil Company and the International Harvester
And a graveyard and a ball grounds
And a short order counter where a man can get a stack of wheats
And a pool hall where a rounder leered confidential like and said:
'Lookin' for a quiet game?'

The loafer lagged along and asked,
'Do you make guitars here?
Do you make boxes the singing wood winds ask to sleep in?
Do you rig up strings the singing wood winds sift over and sing low?'
The answer: 'We manufacture musical instruments here.'

Here I saw churches with steeples like hatpins,
Undertaking rooms with sample coffins in the show window
And signs everywhere satisfaction is guaranteed,

Shooting galleries where men kill imitation pigeons,
And there were doctors for the sick,
And lawyers for people waiting in jail,
And a dog catcher and a superintendent of streets,
And telephones, water-works, trolley cars,
And newspapers with a splatter of telegrams from sister cities of Kalamazoo the
round world over.

And the loafer lagging along said:
Kalamazoo, you ain't in a class by yourself;
I seen you before in a lot of places.
If you are nuts America is nuts.
And lagging along he said bitterly:
Before I came to Kalamazoo I was silent.
Now I am gabby, God help me, I am gabby.

Kalamazoo, both of us will do a fadeaway.
I will be carried out feet first
And time and the rain will chew you to dust
And the winds blow you away.
And an old, old mother will lay a green moss cover on my bones
And a green moss cover on the stones of your postoffice and city hall.

Best of all
I have loved your kiddies playing run-sheep-run
And cutting their initials on the ball ground fence.
They knew every time I fooled them who was fooled and how.

Best of all
I have loved the red gold smoke of your sunsets;
I have loved a moon with a ring around it
Floating over your public square;
I have loved the white dawn frost of early winter silver
And purple over your railroad tracks and lumber yards.

The wishing heart of you I loved, Kalamazoo.
I sang bye-lo, bye-lo to your dreams.
I sang bye-lo to your hopes and songs.
I wished to God there were hound dogs of bronze on your public square,
Hound dogs with bronze paws looking to a long horizon with a shivering silver
angel, a creeping mystic what-is-it.

The Skyscraper Loves Night

ONE by one lights of a skyscraper fling their checkering cross work on the velvet gown of night.

I believe the skyscraper loves night as a woman and brings her playthings she asks for, brings her a velvet gown,
And loves the white of her shoulders hidden under the dark feel of it all.

The masonry of steel looks to the night for somebody it loves,
He is a little dizzy and almost dances ... waiting ... dark ...

Carl Sandburg

The South Wind Say So

IF the oriole calls like last year
when the south wind sings in the oats,
if the leaves climb and climb on a bean pole
saying over a song learnt from the south wind,
if the crickets send up the same old lessons
found when the south wind keeps on coming,
we will get by, we will keep on coming,
we will get by, we will come along,
we will fix our hearts over,
the south wind says so.

Carl Sandburg

The Walking Man Of Rodin

Legs hold a torso away from the earth.
And a regular high poem of legs is here.
Powers of bone and cord raise a belly and lungs
Out of ooze and over the loam where eyes look and ears hear
And arms have a chance to hammer and shoot and run motors.
 You make us
 Proud of our legs, old man.

And you left off the head here,
The skull found always crumbling neighbor of the ankles.

Carl Sandburg

The Wind Sings Welcome In Early Spring

(For Paula)THE GRIP of the ice is gone now.
The silvers chase purple.
The purples tag silver.
They let out their runners
Here where summer says to the lilies:
'Wish and be wistful,
Circle this wind-hunted, wind-sung water.'

Come along always, come along now.
You for me, kiss me, pull me by the ear.
Push me along with the wind push.
Sing like the whinnying wind.
Sing like the hustling obstreperous wind.

Have you ever seen deeper purple ...
this in my wild wind fingers?
Could you have more fun with a pony or a goat?
Have you seen such flicking heels before,
Silver jig heels on the purple sky rim?
Come along always, come along now.

Carl Sandburg

The Windy City [sections 1 and 6]

1

The lean hands of wagon men
put out pointing fingers here,
picked this crossway, put it on a map,
set up their sawbucks, fixed their shotguns,
found a hitching place for the pony express,
made a hitching place for the iron horse,
the one-eyed horse with the fire-spit head,
found a homelike spot and said, "Make a home,"
saw this corner with a mesh of rails, shuttling
 people, shunting cars, shaping the junk of
 the earth to a new city.

The hands of men took hold and tugged
And the breaths of men went into the junk
And the junk stood up into skyscrapers and asked:
Who am I? Am I a city? And if I am what is my name?
And once while the time whistles blew and blew again
The men answered: Long ago we gave you a name,
Long ago we laughed and said: You? Your name is Chicago.

Early the red men gave a name to the river,
 the place of the skunk,
 the river of the wild onion smell,
 Shee-caw-go.

Out of the payday songs of steam shovels,
Out of the wages of structural iron rivets,
The living lighted skyscrapers tell it now as a name,
Tell it across miles of sea blue water, gray blue land:
I am Chicago, I am a name given out by the breaths of working men,
 laughing men, a child, a belonging.

So between the Great Lakes,
The Grand De Tour, and the Grand Prairie,
The living lighted skyscrapers stand,
Spotting the blue dusk with checkers of yellow,
 streamers of smoke and silver,

parallelograms of night-gray watchmen,
Singing a soft moaning song: I am a child, a belonging.

6

The wheelbarrows grin, the shovels and the mortar
hoist an exploit.

The stone shanks of the Monadnock, the Transportation,
the People's Gas Building, stand up and scrape
at the sky.

The wheelbarrows sing, the bevels and the blueprints
whisper.

The library building named after Crerar, naked
as a stock farm silo, light as a single eagle
feather, stripped like an airplane propeller,
takes a path up.

Two cool new rivets says, "Maybe it is morning."
&"God knows."

Put the city up; tear the city down;
put it up again; let us find a city.

Let us remember the little violet-eyed
man who gave all, praying, "Dig and
dream, dream and hammer, till your
city comes."

Every day the people sleep and the city dies;
every day the people shake loose, awake and
build the city again.

The city is a tool chest opened every day,
a time clock punched every morning,
a shop door, bunkers and overalls
counting every day.

The city is a balloon and a bubble plaything
shot to the sky every evening, whistled in
a ragtime jig down the sunset.

The city is made, forgotten, and made again,
trucks hauling it away haul it back

steered by drivers whistling ragtime
against the sunsets.

Every day the people get up and carry the city,
carry the bunkers and balloons of the city,
lift it and put it down.

 'I will die as many times
 as you make me over again,
 says the city to the people,
I am the woman, the home, the family,
I get breakfast and pay the rent;
I telephone the doctor, the milkman, the undertaker;
 I fix the streets
 for your first and your last ride—
Come clean with me, come clean or dirty,
I am stone and steel of your sleeping numbers;
 I remember all you forget.
 I will die as many times
 as you make me over again.'

Under the foundations,
Over the roofs,
The bevels and the blueprints talk it over.
The wind of the lake shore waits and wanders.
The heave of the shore wind hunches the sand piles.
The winkers of the morning stars count out cities
And forget the numbers.

Carl Sandburg

The Year

I

A storm of white petals,
Buds throwing open baby fists
Into hands of broad flowers.

II

Red roses running upward,
Clambering to the clutches of life
Soaked in crimson.

III

Rabbles of tattered leaves
Holding golden flimsy hopes
Against the tramlings
Into the pits and gullies.

IV

Hoarfrost and silence:
Only the muffling
Of winds dark and lonesome--
Great lullabies to the long sleepers.

Carl Sandburg

Theme In Yellow

I spot the hills
With yellow balls in autumn.
I light the prairie cornfields
Orange and tawny gold clusters
And I am called pumpkins.
On the last of October
When dusk is fallen
Children join hands
And circle round me
Singing ghost songs
And love to the harvest moon;
I am a jack-o'-lantern
With terrible teeth
And the children know
I am fooling.

Carl Sandburg

They All Want To Play Hamlet

They all want to play Hamlet.

They have not exactly seen their fathers killed

Nor their mothers in a frame-up to kill,

Nor an Ophelia lying with dust gagging the heart,

Not exactly the spinning circles of singing golden spiders,

Not exactly this have they got at nor the meaning of flowers--O flowers, flowers
slung by a dancing girl--in the saddest play the inkfish, Shakespeare ever wrote;

Yet they all want to play Hamlet because it is sad like all actors are sad and to
stand by an open grave with a joker's skull in the hand and then to say over slow
and over slow wise, keen, beautiful words asking the heart that's breaking,
breaking,

This is something that calls and calls to their blood.

They are acting when they talk about it and they know it is acting to be particular
about it and yet: They all want to play Hamlet.

Carl Sandburg

They Ask Each Other Where They Came From

AM I the river your white birds fly over?

Are you the green valley my silver channels roam?

The two of us a bowl of blue sky day time and a bowl of red stars night time?

Who picked you

out of the first great whirl of nothings

and threw you here?

Carl Sandburg

They Buy With An Eye To Looks

THE FINE cloth of your love might be a fabric of Egypt,
Something Sinbad, the sailor, took away from robbers,
Something a traveler with plenty of money might pick up
And bring home and stick on the walls and say:
'There's a little thing made a hit with me
When I was in Cairo-I think I must see Cairo again some day.'
So there are cornice manufacturers, chewing gum kings,
Young Napoleons who corner eggs or corner cheese,
Phenoms looking for more worlds to corner,
And still other phenoms who lard themselves in
And make a killing in steel, copper, permanganese,
And they say to random friends in for a call:
'Have you had a look at my wife? Here she is.
Haven't I got her dolled up for fair?'
O-ee! the fine cloth of your love might be a fabric of Egypt.

Carl Sandburg

They Will Say

Of my city the worst that men will ever say is this:
You took little children away from the sun and the dew,
And the glimmers that played in the grass under the great sky,
And the reckless rain; you put them between walls
To work, broken and smothered, for bread and wages,
To eat dust in their throats and die empty-hearted
For a little handful of pay on a few Saturday nights.

Carl Sandburg

Thin Strips

IN a jeweler's shop I saw a man beating
out thin sheets of gold. I heard a woman
laugh many years ago.

Under a peach tree I saw petals scattered
.. torn strips of a bride's dress. I heard
a woman laugh many years ago.

Carl Sandburg

Three Balls

JABOWSKY'S place is on a side street and only the rain washes the dusty three balls.

When I passed the window a month ago, there rested in proud isolation:
A family bible with hasps of brass twisted off, a wooden clock with pendulum gone,
And a porcelain crucifix with the glaze nicked where the left elbow of Jesus is represented.

I passed to-day and they were all there, resting in proud isolation, the clock and the crucifix saying no more and no less than before, and a yellow cat sleeping in a patch of sun alongside the family bible with the hasps off.

Only the rain washes the dusty three balls in front of Jabowsky's place on a side street.

Carl Sandburg

Three Ghosts

THREE tailors of Tooley Street wrote: We, the People.
The names are forgotten. It is a joke in ghosts.

Cutters or bushelmen or armhole basters, they sat
cross-legged stitching, snatched at scissors, stole each
other thimbles.

Cross-legged, working for wages, joking each other
as misfits cut from the cloth of a Master Tailor,
they sat and spoke their thoughts of the glory of
The People, they met after work and drank beer to
The People.

Faded off into the twilights the names are forgotten.
It is a joke in ghosts. Let it ride. They wrote: We,
The People.

Carl Sandburg

Three Pieces On The Smoke Of Autumn

SMOKE of autumn is on it all.
The streamers loosen and travel.
The red west is stopped with a gray haze.
They fill the ash trees, they wrap the oaks,
They make a long-tailed rider
In the pocket of the first, the earliest evening star.. . .
Three muskrats swim west on the Desplaines River.

There is a sheet of red ember glow on the river; it is dusk; and the muskrats one by one go on patrol routes west.

Around each slippery padding rat, a fan of ripples; in the silence of dusk a faint wash of ripples, the padding of the rats going west, in a dark and shivering river gold.

(A newspaper in my pocket says the Germans pierce the Italian line; I have letters from poets and sculptors in Greenwich Village; I have letters from an ambulance man in France and an I. W. W. man in Vladivostok.)

I lean on an ash and watch the lights fall, the red ember glow, and three muskrats swim west in a fan of ripples on a sheet of river gold.. . .
Better the blue silence and the gray west,
The autumn mist on the river,
And not any hate and not any love,
And not anything at all of the keen and the deep:
Only the peace of a dog head on a barn floor,
And the new corn shoveled in bushels
And the pumpkins brought from the corn rows,
Umber lights of the dark,
Umber lanterns of the loam dark.

Here a dog head dreams.
Not any hate, not any love.
Not anything but dreams.
Brother of dusk and umber.

Carl Sandburg

Three Spring Notations On Bipeds

THE DOWN drop of the blackbird,
The wing catch of arrested flight,
The stop midway and then off: off for triangles, circles, loops of new hieroglyphs-
This is April's way: a woman:
'O yes, I'm here again and your heart
knows I was coming.'

White pigeons rush at the sun,
A marathon of wing feats is on:
'Who most loves danger? Who most loves wings? Who somersaults for God's
sake in the name of wing power in the sun and blue on an April Thursday.'
So ten winged heads, ten winged feet, race their white forms over Elmhurst.
They go fast: once the ten together were a feather of foam bubble, a
chrysanthemum whirl speaking to silver and azure.

The child is on my shoulders.
In the prairie moonlight the child's legs hang over my shoulders.
She sits on my neck and I hear her calling me a good horse.
She slides down-and into the moon silver of a prairie stream
She throws a stone and laughs at the clug-clug.

Carl Sandburg

Three Violins

THREE violins are trying their hearts.

The piece is MacDowell's Wild Rose.

And the time of the wild rose

And the leaves of the wild rose

And the dew-shot eyes of the wild rose

Sing in the air over three violins.

Somebody like you was in the heart of MacDowell.

Somebody like you is in three violins.

Carl Sandburg

Threes

I was a boy when I heard three red words
a thousand Frenchmen died in the streets
for: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity--I asked
why men die for words.

I was older; men with mustaches, sideburns,
lilacs, told me the high golden words are:
Mother, Home, and Heaven--other older men with
face decorations said: God, Duty, Immortality
--they sang these threes slow from deep lungs.

Years ticked off their say-so on the great clocks
of doom and damnation, soup, and nuts: meteors flashed
their say-so: and out of great Russia came three
dusky syllables workmen took guns and went out to die
for: Bread, Peace, Land.

And I met a marine of the U.S.A., a leatherneck with a girl on his knee
for a memory in ports circling the earth and he said: Tell me how to say
three things and I always get by--gimme a plate of ham and eggs--how
much--and--do you love me, kid?

Carl Sandburg

Throw Roses

THROW roses on the sea where the dead went down.

The roses speak to the sea,

And the sea to the dead.

Throw roses, O lovers-

Let the leaves wash on the salt in the sun.

Carl Sandburg

Throwbacks

SOMEWHERE you and I remember we came.
Stairways from the sea and our heads dripping.
Ladders of dust and mud and our hair snarled.
Rags of drenching mist and our hands clawing, climbing.
You and I that snickered in the crotches and corners, in the gab of our first
talking.
Red dabs of dawn summer mornings and the rain sliding off our shoulders
summer afternoons.
Was it you and I yelled songs and songs in the nights of big yellow moons?

Carl Sandburg

Timber Wings

THERE was a wild pigeon came often to Hinkley's timber.

Gray wings that wrote their loops and triangles on the walnuts and the hazel.

There was a wild pigeon.

There was a summer came year by year to Hinkley's timber.

Rainy months and sunny and pigeons calling and one pigeon best of all who came.

There was a summer.

It is so long ago I saw this wild pigeon and listened.

It is so long ago I heard the summer song of the pigeon who told me why night comes, why death and stars come, why the whippoorwill remembers three notes only and always.

It is so long ago; it is like now and today; the gray wing pigeon's way of telling it all, telling it to the walnuts and hazel, telling it to me.

So there is memory.

So there is a pigeon, a summer, a gray wing beating my shoulder.

Carl Sandburg

Timesweep

I was born in the morning of the world,
So I know how morning looks
morning in the valley wanting,
morning on a mountain wanting.
Morning looks like people look,
like a cornfield wanting corn,
like a sea wanting ships.
Tell me about any strong, beautiful wanting,
And there is your morning, my morning,
everybody's morning.

Carl Sandburg

To A Contemporary Bunkshooter

You come along. . . tearing your shirt. . . yelling about
Jesus.

Where do you get that stuff?

What do you know about Jesus?

Jesus had a way of talking soft and outside of a few
bankers and higher-ups among the con men of Jerusalem
everybody liked to have this Jesus around because
he never made any fake passes and everything
he said went and he helped the sick and gave the
people hope.

You come along squirting words at us, shaking your fist
and calling us all damn fools so fierce the froth slobbers
over your lips. . . always blabbing we're all
going to hell straight off and you know all about it.

I've read Jesus' words. I know what he said. You don't
throw any scare into me. I've got your number. I
know how much you know about Jesus.

He never came near clean people or dirty people but
they felt cleaner because he came along. It was your
crowd of bankers and business men and lawyers
hired the sluggers and murderers who put Jesus out
of the running.

I say the same bunch backing you nailed the nails into
the hands of this Jesus of Nazareth. He had lined
up against him the same crooks and strong-arm men
now lined up with you paying your way.

This Jesus was good to look at, smelled good, listened
good. He threw out something fresh and beautiful
from the skin of his body and the touch of his hands
wherever he passed along.

You slimy bunkshooter, you put a smut on every human
blossom in reach of your rotten breath belching

about hell-fire and hiccupping about this Man who
lived a clean life in Galilee.

When are you going to quit making the carpenters build
emergency hospitals for women and girls driven
crazy with wrecked nerves from your gibberish about
Jesus--I put it to you again: Where do you get that
stuff; what do you know about Jesus?

Go ahead and bust all the chairs you want to. Smash
a whole wagon load of furniture at every performance.
Turn sixty somersaults and stand on your
nutty head. If it wasn't for the way you scare the
women and kids I'd feel sorry for you and pass the hat.
I like to watch a good four-flusher work, but not when
he starts people puking and calling for the doctors.
I like a man that's got nerve and can pull off a great
original performance, but you--you're only a bug-
house peddler of second-hand gospel--you're only
shoving out a phoney imitation of the goods this
Jesus wanted free as air and sunlight.

You tell people living in shanties Jesus is going to fix it
up all right with them by giving them mansions in
the skies after they're dead and the worms have
eaten 'em.

You tell \$6 a week department store girls all they need
is Jesus; you take a steel trust wop, dead without
having lived, gray and shrunken at forty years of
age, and you tell him to look at Jesus on the cross
and he'll be all right.

You tell poor people they don't need any more money
on pay day and even if it's fierce to be out of a job,
Jesus'll fix that up all right, all right--all they gotta
do is take Jesus the way you say.

I'm telling you Jesus wouldn't stand for the stuff you're
handing out. Jesus played it different. The bankers
and lawyers of Jerusalem got their sluggers and
murderers to go after Jesus just because Jesus
wouldn't play their game. He didn't sit in with
the big thieves.

I don't want a lot of gab from a bunkshooter in my religion.
I won't take my religion from any man who never works
except with his mouth and never cherishes any memory
except the face of the woman on the American
silver dollar.

I ask you to come through and show me where you're
pouring out the blood of your life.

I've been to this suburb of Jerusalem they call Golgotha,
where they nailed Him, and I know if the story is
straight it was real blood ran from His hands and
the nail-holes, and it was real blood spurted in red
drops where the spear of the Roman soldier rammed
in between the ribs of this Jesus of Nazareth.

Carl Sandburg

To A Dead Man

Over the dead line we have called to you
To come across with a word to us,
Some beaten whisper of what happens
Where you are over the dead line
Deaf to our calls and voiceless.

The flickering shadows have not answered
Nor your lips sent a signal
Whether love talks and roses grow
And the sun breaks at morning
Splattering the sea with crimson.

Carl Sandburg

To Beachey, 1912

Riding against the east,
A veering, steady shadow
Purrs the motor-call
Of the man-bird
Ready with the death-laughter
In his throat
And in his heart always
The love of the big blue beyond.

Only a man,
A far fleck of shadow on the east
Sitting at ease
With his hands on a wheel
And around him the large gray wings.
Hold him, great soft wings,
Keep and deal kindly, O wings,
With the cool, calm shadow at the wheel.

Carl Sandburg

To Certain Journeymen

Undertakers, hearse drivers, grave diggers,
I speak to you as one not afraid of your business.

You handle dust going to a long country,
You know the secret behind your job is the same whether
 you lower the coffin with modern, automatic machinery,
 well-oiled and noiseless, or whether the
 body is laid in by naked hands and then covered
 by the shovels.

Your day's work is done with laughter many days of the year,
And you earn a living by those who say good-by today
 in thin whispers.

Carl Sandburg

Trafficker

Among the shadows where two streets cross,
A woman lurks in the dark and waits
To move on when a policeman heaves in view.
Smiling a broken smile from a face
Painted over haggard bones and desperate eyes,
All night she offers passers-by what they will
Of her beauty wasted, body faded, claims gone,
And no takers.

Carl Sandburg

Trinity Place

THE GRAVE of Alexander Hamilton is in Trinity yard at the end of Wall Street.

The grave of Robert Fulton likewise is in Trinity yard where Wall Street stops.

And in this yard stenogs, bundle boys, scrubwomen, sit on the tombstones, and walk on the grass of graves, speaking of war and weather, of babies, wages and love.

An iron picket fence ... and streaming thousands along Broadway sidewalks ... straw hats, faces, legs ... a singing, talking, hustling river ... down the great street that ends with a Sea.

... easy is the sleep of Alexander Hamilton.

... easy is the sleep of Robert Fulton.

... easy are the great governments and the great steamboats.

Carl Sandburg

Troths

Yellow dust on a bumble
bee's wing,
Grey lights in a woman's
asking eyes,
Red ruins in the changing
sunset embers:
I take you and pile high
the memories.
Death will break her claws
on some I keep.

Carl Sandburg

Two

Memory of you is . . . a blue spear of flower.
I cannot remember the name of it.
Alongside a bold dripping poppy is fire and silk.
And they cover you.

Carl Sandburg

Two Items

STRONG rocks hold up the riksdag bridge ... always strong river waters shoving their shoulders against them ...

In the riksdag to-night three hundred men are talking to each other about more potatoes and bread for the Swedish people to eat this winter.

In a boat among calm waters next to the running waters a fisherman sits in the dark and I, leaning at a parapet, see him lift a net and let it down ... he waits ... the waters run ... the riksdag talks ... he lifts the net and lets it down ...

Stars lost in the sky ten days of drizzle spread over the sky saying yes-yes.

Every afternoon at four o'clock fifteen apple women who have sold their apples in Christiania meet at a coffee house and gab.

Every morning at nine o'clock a girl wipes the windows of a hotel across the street from the post-office in Stockholm.

I have pledged them when I go to California next summer and see the orange groves splattered with yellow balls

I shall remember other people half way round the world.

Carl Sandburg

Two Neighbors

Faces of two eternities keep looking at me.
One is Omar Khayam and the red stuff
 wherein men forget yesterday and to-morrow
 and remember only the voices and songs,
 the stories, newspapers and fights of today.
One is Louis Cornaro and a slim trick
 of slow, short meals across slow, short years,
 letting Death open the door only in slow, short inches.
I have a neighbor who swears by Omar.
I have a neighbor who swears by Cornaro.
 Both are happy.
Faces of two eternities keep looking at me.
 Let them look.

Carl Sandburg

Two Strangers Breakfast

THE LAW says you and I belong to each other, George.

The law says you are mine and I am yours, George.

And there are a million miles of white snowstorms, a million furnaces of hell,
Between the chair where you sit and the chair where I sit.

The law says two strangers shall eat breakfast together after nights on the horn
of an Arctic moon.

Carl Sandburg

Under

I

I am the undertow
Washing tides of power
Battering the pillars
Under your things of high law.

II

I am a sleepless
Slowfaring eater,
Maker of rust and rot
In your bastioned fastenings,
Caissons deep.

III

I am the Law
Older than you
And your builders proud.

I am deaf
In all days
Whether you
Say "Yes" or "No".

I am the crumbler:
To-morrow.

Carl Sandburg

Under A Hat Rim

While the hum and the hurry
Of passing footfalls
Beat in my ear like the restless surf
Of a wind-blown sea,
A soul came to me
Out of the look on a face.

Eyes like a lake
Where a storm-wind roams
Caught me from under
The rim of a hat.

I thought of a midsea wreck
and bruised fingers clinging
to a broken state-room door.

Carl Sandburg

Under A Telephone Pole

I am a copper wire slung in the air,
Slim against the sun I make not even a clear line of shadow.
Night and day I keep singing--humming and thrumming:
It is love and war and money; it is the fighting and the
tears, the work and want,
Death and laughter of men and women passing through
me, carrier of your speech,
In the rain and the wet dripping, in the dawn and the
shine drying,
A copper wire.

Carl Sandburg

Under The Harvest Moon

Under the harvest moon,
When the soft silver
Drips shimmering
Over the garden nights,
Death, the gray mocker,
Comes and whispers to you
As a beautiful friend
Who remembers.

Under the summer roses
When the fragrant crimson
Lurks in the dusk
Of the wild red leaves,
Love, with little hands,
Comes and touches you
With a thousand memories,
And asks you
Beautiful, unanswerable questions.

Carl Sandburg

Uplands In May

Wonder as of old things
Fresh and fair come back
Hangs over pasture and road.
Lush in the lowland grasses rise
And upland beckons to upland.
The great strong hills are humble.

Carl Sandburg

Upstairs

I too have a garret of old playthings.
I have tin soldiers with broken arms upstairs.
I have a wagon and the wheels gone upstairs.
I have guns and a drum, a jumping-jack and a magic lantern.
And dust is on them and I never look at them upstairs.
I too have a garret of old playthings.

Carl Sandburg

Upstream

The strong men keep coming on.
They go down shot, hanged, sick, broken.
They live on, fighting, singing, lucky as plungers.

The strong men ... they keep coming on.
The strong mothers pulling them from a dark sea, a great prairie, a
long mountain.

Call hallelujah, call amen, call deep thanks.
The strong men keep coming on.

Carl Sandburg

Valley Song

Your eyes and the valley are memories.
Your eyes fire and the valley a bowl.
It was here a moonrise crept over the timberline.
It was here we turned the coffee cups upside down.
And your eyes and the moon swept the valley.

I will see you again to-morrow.
I will see you again in a million years.
I will never know your dark eyes again.
These are three ghosts I keep.
These are three sumach-red dogs I run with.

All of it wraps and knots to a riddle:
I have the moon, the timberline, and you.
All three are gone -- and I keep all three.

Carl Sandburg

Vaudeville Dancer

ELSIE FLIMMERWON, you got a job now with a jazz outfit in vaudeville.

The houses go wild when you finish the act shimmying a fast shimmy to The Livery Stable Blues.

It is long ago, Elsie Flimmerwon, I saw your mother over a washtub in a grape arbor when your father came with the locomotor ataxia shuffle.

It is long ago, Elsie, and now they spell your name with an electric sign.

Then you were a little thing in checked gingham and your mother wiped your nose and said: You little fool, keep off the streets.

Now you are a big girl at last and streetfuls of people read your name and a line of people shaped like a letter S stand at the box office hoping to see you shimmy.

Carl Sandburg

Village In Late Summer

LIPS half-willing in a doorway.
Lips half-singing at a window.
Eyes half-dreaming in the walls.
Feet half-dancing in a kitchen.
Even the clocks half-yawn the hours
And the farmers make half-answers.

Carl Sandburg

Waiting

Today I will let the old boat stand
Where the sweep of the harbor tide comes in
To the pulse of a far, deep-steady sway.
And I will rest and dream and sit on the deck
 Watching the world go by
And take my pay for many hard days gone I remember.

I will choose what clouds I like
In the great white fleets that wander the blue
As I lie on my back or loaf at the rail.
And I will listen as the veering winds kiss me and fold me
And put on my brow the touch of the world's great will.

Daybreak will hear the heart of the boat beat,
 Engine throb and piston play
In the quiver and leap at call of life.
To-morrow we move in the gaps and heights
On changing floors of unlevel seas
And no man shall stop us and no man follow
For ours is the quest of an unknown shore
And we are husky and lusty and shouting-gay.

Carl Sandburg

Wars

In the old wars drum of hoofs and the beat of shod feet.
In the new wars hum of motors and the tread of rubber tires.
In the wars to come silent wheels and whirr of rods not
yet dreamed out in the heads of men.

In the old wars clutches of short swords and jabs into
faces with spears.
In the new wars long range guns and smashed walls, guns
running a spit of metal and men falling in tens and
twenties.
In the wars to come new silent deaths, new silent hurlers
not yet dreamed out in the heads of men.

In the old wars kings quarreling and thousands of men
following.
In the new wars kings quarreling and millions of men
following.
In the wars to come kings kicked under the dust and
millions of men following great causes not yet
dreamed out in the heads of men.

Carl Sandburg

Washerwoman

THE WASHERWOMAN is a member of the Salvation Army.
And over the tub of suds rubbing underwear clean
She sings that Jesus will wash her sins away
And the red wrongs she has done God and man
Shall be white as driven snow.
Rubbing underwear she sings of the Last Great Washday.

Carl Sandburg

Weeds

FROM the time of the early radishes
To the time of the standing corn
Sleepy Henry Hackerman hoes.

There are laws in the village against weeds.
The law says a weed is wrong and shall be killed.
The weeds say life is a white and lovely thing
And the weeds come on and on in irrepressible regiments.
Sleepy Henry Hackerman hoes; and the village law uttering a ban on weeds is
unchangeable law.

Carl Sandburg

Whiffletree

GIVE me your anathema.
Speak new damnations on my head.
The evening mist in the hills is soft.
The boulders on the road say communion.
The farm dogs look out of their eyes and keep thoughts from the corn cribs.
Dirt of the reeling earth holds horseshoes.
The rings in the whiffletree count their secrets.
Come on, you.

Carl Sandburg

Whirls

NEITHER rose leaves gathered in a jar-respectably in Boston-these-nor drops of
Christ blood for a chalice-decently in Philadelphia or Baltimore.

Cinders-these-hissing in a marl and lime of Chicago-also these-the howling of
northwest winds across North and South Dakota-or the spatter of winter spray on
sea rocks of Kamchatka.

Carl Sandburg

White Ash

THERE is a woman on Michigan Boulevard keeps a parrot and goldfish and two white mice.

She used to keep a houseful of girls in kimonos and three pushbuttons on the front door.

Now she is alone with a parrot and goldfish and two white mice ... but these are some of her thoughts:

The love of a soldier on furlough or a sailor on shore leave burns with a bonfire red and saffron.

The love of an emigrant workman whose wife is a thousand miles away burns with a blue smoke.

The love of a young man whose sweetheart married an older man for money burns with a sputtering uncertain flame.

And there is a love ... one in a thousand ... burns clean and is gone leaving a white ash....

And this is a thought she never explains to the parrot and goldfish and two white mice.

Carl Sandburg

White Hands

FOR the second time in a year this lady with the white hands is brought to the west room second floor of a famous sanatorium.

Her husband is a cornice manufacturer in an Iowa town and the lady has often read papers on Victorian poets before the local literary club.

Yesterday she washed her hands forty seven times during her waking hours and in her sleep moaned restlessly attempting to clean imaginary soiled spots off her hands.

Now the head physician touches his chin with a crooked forefinger.

Carl Sandburg

White Shoulders

Your white shoulders
I remember
And your shrug of laughter.

Low laughter
Shaken slow
From your white shoulders.

Carl Sandburg

Whitelight

Your whitelight flashes the frost to-night
Moon of the purple and silent west.
Remember me one of your lovers of dreams.

Carl Sandburg

Who Am I?

My head knocks against the stars.
My feet are on the hilltops.
My finger-tips are in the valleys and shores of
universal life.
Down in the sounding foam of primal things I
reach my hands and play with pebbles of
destiny.
I have been to hell and back many times.
I know all about heaven, for I have talked with God.
I dabble in the blood and guts of the terrible.
I know the passionate seizure of beauty
And the marvelous rebellion of man at all signs
reading "Keep Off."
My name is Truth and I am the most elusive captive
in the universe.

Carl Sandburg

Wilderness

THERE is a wolf in me ... fangs pointed for tearing gashes ... a red tongue for raw meat ... and the hot lapping of blood-I keep this wolf because the wilderness gave it to me and the wilderness will not let it go.

There is a fox in me ... a silver-gray fox ... I sniff and guess ... I pick things out of the wind and air ... I nose in the dark night and take sleepers and eat them and hide the feathers ... I circle and loop and double-cross.

There is a hog in me ... a snout and a belly ... a machinery for eating and grunting ... a machinery for sleeping satisfied in the sun-I got this too from the wilderness and the wilderness will not let it go.

There is a fish in me ... I know I came from saltblue water-gates ... I scurried with shoals of herring ... I blew waterspouts with porpoises ... before land was ... before the water went down ... before Noah ... before the first chapter of Genesis.

There is a baboon in me ... clambering-clawed ... dog-faced ... yawping a galoot's hunger ... hairy under the armpits ... here are the hawk-eyed hankering men ... here are the blond and blue-eyed women ... here they hide curled asleep waiting ... ready to snarl and kill ... ready to sing and give milk ... waiting-I keep the baboon because the wilderness says so.

There is an eagle in me and a mockingbird ... and the eagle flies among the Rocky Mountains of my dreams and fights among the Sierra crags of what I want ... and the mockingbird warbles in the early forenoon before the dew is gone, warbles in the underbrush of my Chattanooga of hope, gushes over the blue Ozark foothills of my wishes-And I got the eagle and the mockingbird from the wilderness.

O, I got a zoo, I got a menagerie, inside my ribs, under my bony head, under my red-valve heart-and I got something else: it is a man-child heart, a woman-child heart: it is a father and mother and lover: it came from God-Knows-Where: it is going to God-Knows-Where-For I am the keeper of the zoo: I say yes and no: I sing and kill and work: I am a pal of the world: I came from the wilderness.

Carl Sandburg

Wind Song

LONG ago I learned how to sleep,
In an old apple orchard where the wind swept by counting its money and
throwing it away,
In a wind-gaunt orchard where the limbs forked out and listened or never
listened at all,
In a passel of trees where the branches trapped the wind into whistling, 'Who,
who are you?'
I slept with my head in an elbow on a summer afternoon and there I took a sleep
lesson.
There I went away saying: I know why they sleep, I know how they trap the
tricky winds.
Long ago I learned how to listen to the singing wind and how to forget and how
to hear the deep whine,
Slapping and lapsing under the day blue and the night stars:
Who, who are you?

Who can ever forget
listening to the wind go by
counting its money
and throwing it away?

Carl Sandburg

Windflower Leaf

This flower is repeated
out of old winds, out of
old times.

The wind repeats these, it
must have these, over and
over again.

Oh, windflowers so fresh,
Oh, beautiful leaves, here
now again.

The domes over
fall to pieces.
The stones under
fall to pieces.
Rain and ice
wreck the works.
The wind keeps, the windflowers
keep, the leaves last,
The wind young and strong lets
these last longer than stones.

Carl Sandburg

Window

Night from a railroad car window
Is a great, dark, soft thing
Broken across with slashes of light.

Carl Sandburg

Winter Milk

THE MILK drops on your chin, Helga,
Must not interfere with the cranberry red of your cheeks
Nor the sky winter blue of your eyes.
Let your mammy keep hands off the chin.
This is a high holy spatter of white on the reds and blues.

Before the bottle was taken away,
Before you so proudly began today
Drinking your milk from the rim of a cup
They did not splash this high holy white on your chin.

There are dreams in your eyes, Helga.
Tall reaches of wind sweep the clear blue.
The winter is young yet, so young.
Only a little cupful of winter has touched your lips.
Drink on ... milk with your lips ... dreams with your eyes.

Carl Sandburg

Wistful

WISHES left on your lips
The mark of their wings.
Regrets fly kites in your eyes.

Carl Sandburg

Woman With A Past

There was a woman tore off a red velvet gown
And slashed the white skin of her right shoulder
And a crimson zigzag wrote a finger nail hurry.

There was a woman spoke six short words
And quit a life that was old to her
For a life that was new.

There was a woman swore an oath
And gave hoarse whisper to a prayer
And it was all over.

She was a thief and a whore and a kept woman,
She was a thing to be used and played with.
She wore an ancient scarlet sash.

The story is thin and wavering,
White as a face in the first apple blossoms,
White as a birch in the snow of a winter moon.

The story is never told.
There are white lips whisper alone.
There are red lips whisper alone.

In the cool of the old walls,
In the white of the old walls,
The red song is over.

Carl Sandburg

Women Washing Their Hair

They have painted and sung
the women washing their hair,
and the plaits and strands in the sun,
and the golden combs
and the combs of elephant tusks
and the combs of buffalo horn and hoof.

The sun has been good to women,
drying their heads of hair
as they stooped and shook their shoulders
and framed their faces with copper
and framed their eyes with dusk or chestnut.

The rain has been good to women.
If the rain should forget,
if the rain left off for a year—
the heads of women would wither,
the copper, the dusk and chestnuts, go.

They have painted and sung
the women washing their hair—
reckon the sun and rain in, too.

Carl Sandburg

Work Gangs

Box cars run by a mile long.

And I wonder what they say to each other

When they stop a mile long on a sidetrack.

Maybe their chatter goes:

I came from Fargo with a load of wheat up to the danger line.

I came from Omaha with a load of shorthorns and they splintered my boards.

I came from Detroit heavy with a load of fivers.

I carried apples from the Hood river last year and this year bunches of bananas from Florida; they look for me with watermelons from Mississippi next year.

Hammers and shovels of work gangs sleep in shop corners

when the dark stars come on the sky and the night watchmen walk and look.

Then the hammer heads talk to the handles,

then the scoops of the shovels talk,

how the day's work nicked and trimmed them,

how they swung and lifted all day,

how the hands of the work gangs smelled of hope.

In the night of the dark stars

when the curve of the sky is a work gang handle,

in the night on the mile long sidetracks,

in the night where the hammers and shovels sleep in corners,

the night watchmen stuff their pipes with dreams—

and sometimes they doze and don't care for nothin',

and sometimes they search their heads for meanings, stories, stars.

The stuff of it runs like this:

A long way we come; a long way to go; long rests and long deep sniffs for our lungs on the way.

Sleep is a belonging of all; even if all songs are old songs and the singing heart is snuffed out like a switchman's lantern with the oil gone, even if we forget our names and houses in the finish, the secret of sleep is left us, sleep belongs to all, sleep is the first and last and best of all.

People singing; people with song mouths connecting with song hearts; people who must sing or die; people whose song hearts break if there is no song mouth; these are my people.

Carl Sandburg

Working Girls

The working girls in the morning are going to work--
long lines of them afoot amid the downtown stores
and factories, thousands with little brick-shaped
lunches wrapped in newspapers under their arms.

Each morning as I move through this river of young-
woman life I feel a wonder about where it is all
going, so many with a peach bloom of young years
on them and laughter of red lips and memories in
their eyes of dances the night before and plays and
walks.

Green and gray streams run side by side in a river and
so here are always the others, those who have been
over the way, the women who know each one the
end of life's gamble for her, the meaning and the
clew, the how and the why of the dances and the
arms that passed around their waists and the fingers
that played in their hair.

Faces go by written over: "I know it all, I know where
the bloom and the laughter go and I have memories,"
and the feet of these move slower and they
have wisdom where the others have beauty.

So the green and the gray move in the early morning
on the downtown streets.

Carl Sandburg

Yes , The Dead Speak To Us

Yes, the Dead speak to us.

This town belongs to the Dead, to the Dead and to the Wilderness.

Back of the clamps on a fireproof door they hold the papers of the Dead in a house here

And when two living men fall out, when one says the Dead spoke a Yes, and the other says the Dead spoke a No, they go then together to this house.

They loosen the clamps and haul at the hasps and try their keys and curse at the locks and the combination numbers.

For the teeth of the rats are barred and the tongues of the moths are outlawed and the sun and the air of wind is not wanted.

They open a box where a sheet of paper shivers, in a dusty corner shivers with the dry inkdrops of the Dead, the signed names.

Here the ink testifies, here we find the say-so, here we learn the layout, now we know where the cities and farms belong.

Dead white men and dead red men tested each other with shot and knives: they twisted each others' necks: land was yours if you took and kept it.

How are the heads the rain seeps in, the rain-washed knuckles in sod and gumbo?

Where the sheets of paper shiver,
Back of the hasps and handles,
Back of the fireproof clamps,

They read what the fingers scribbled, who the land belongs to now—it is herein provided, it is hereby stipulated—the land and all appurtenances thereto and all deposits of oil and gold and coal and silver, and all pockets and repositories of gravel and diamonds, dung and permanganese, and all clover and bumblebees, all bluegrass, johnny-jump-ups, grassroots, springs of running water or rivers or lakes or high spreading trees or hazel bushes or sumach or thorn-apple branches or high in the air the bird nest with spotted blue eggs shaken in the roaming wind of the treetops—

So it is scrawled here,
"I direct and devise
So and so and such and such,"

And this is the last word.
There is nothing more to it.

In a shanty out in the Wilderness, ghosts of to-morrow sit, waiting to come and go, to do their job.

They will go into the house of the Dead and take the shivering sheets of paper and make a bonfire and dance a deadman's dance over the hissing crisp.

In a slang their own the dancers out of the Wilderness will write a paper for the living to read and sign:

The dead need peace, the dead need sleep, let the dead have peace and sleep, let the papers of the Dead who fix the lives of the Living, let them be a hissing crisp and ashes, let the young men and the young women forever understand we are through and no longer take the say-so of the Dead;

Let the dead have honor from us with our thoughts of them and our thoughts of land and all appurtenances thereto and all deposits of oil and gold and coal and silver, and all pockets and repositories of gravel and diamonds, dung and permanganese, and all clover and bumblebees, all bluegrass, johnny-jump-ups, grassroots, springs of running water or rivers or lakes or high spreading trees or hazel bushes or sumach or thornapple branches or high in the air the bird nest with spotted blue eggs shaken in the roaming wind of the treetops.

And so, it is a shack of ghosts, a lean-to they have in the Wilderness, and they are waiting and they have learned strange songs how easy it is to wait and how anything comes to those who wait long enough and how most of all it is easy to wait for death, and waiting, dream of new cities.

Carl Sandburg

Young Bullfrogs

Jimmy Wimbleton listened a first week in June.
Ditches along prairie roads of Northern Illinois
Filled the arch of night with young bullfrog songs.
Infinite mathematical metronomic croaks rose and spoke,
Rose and sang, rose in a choir of puzzles.
They made his head ache with riddles of music.
They rested his head with beaten cadence.
Jimmy Wimbleton listened.

Carl Sandburg

Young Sea

The sea is never still.
It pounds on the shore
Restless as a young heart,
Hunting.

The sea speaks
And only the stormy hearts
Know what it says:
It is the face
of a rough mother speaking.

The sea is young.
One storm cleans all the hoar
And loosens the age of it.
I hear it laughing, reckless.

They love the sea,
Men who ride on it
And know they will die
Under the salt of it

Let only the young come,
Says the sea.

Let them kiss my face
And hear me.
I am the last word
And I tell
Where storms and stars come from.

Carl Sandburg