Chicago – Carl Sandburg

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 a Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation.

Fog – Carl Sandburg

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.
Grass – Carl Sandburg

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz\(^1\) and Waterloo\(^2\).
Shovel them under and let me work—
    I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg\(^3\)
And pile them high at Ypres\(^4\) and Verdun\(^5\).
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
    What place is this?
    Where are we now?

I am the grass.
Let me work.

\(^1\) Major battle of the Napoleonic wars, fought on December 2, 1805; nearly 25,000 casualties
\(^2\) Final battle of the Napoleonic wars, fought on June 18, 1815; nearly 60,000 casualties
\(^3\) Major battle of Civil War, fought from July 1-3, 1863; 46,000 to 51,000 casualties
\(^4\) Site of three major WWI battles (1914-1917) in Belgium; more than 850,000 casualties.
\(^5\) Site of major WWI battle from February-December 1916 in France; nearly 715,000 casualties