



Chicago

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

n/a

Source: *Poetry* (Poetry Foundation, 1914)

CONTACT US

NEWSLETTERS

PRESS

PRIVACY POLICY

POLICIES

TERMS OF USE

POETRY MOBILE APP

61 West Superior Street,
Chicago, IL 60654

Hours:
Monday-Friday 11am - 4pm

© 2022 Poetry Foundation

