

**CHAPTER - I**  
**INTRODUCTION**

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Carl Sandburg (1878-1967), the poet is a product of an era when America was briefly swept by the wave of socialism. In the wake of the twentieth century leading up to the Great Depression, there were writers and activists who promoted socialism and emphasized on proletarian writing. Sandburg is one such writer whose poetry played an interpretive role for his socialist philosophy. He had the radicalism of socialist writers and the dynamism of the modernists; yet he was a class apart from these conventions. As Bernard Duffey stated, he was “something, at least, of an institution” (qtd. in Marowski 358). Conversely, he was a literary pariah with a modest stock of the working class vernacular, life and culture. And he subverted the subtlety of poetry to a direct lyrical contact with the concrete reality. In Sandburg, a dichotomy pertaining to socialist ideology and the expediency of common speech was viewed with apprehension and invited critical controversies from the literary circles. The very nature of poetry as a political practice undermines the lyrical value. But beyond this local critique, he was a poet with autonomy over his own form and style.

His socialism principally involved the class of laborers estranged from the elite activity. Therefore, he predicated upon the theme and subject of the 'workingman' who occupies a preceding importance in his poetry. And he procured his material at the backdrop of America's emergence from its traditional 19<sup>th</sup> century roots to the age of soaring capitalism. He was admittedly a socialist and made a staunch confession in the pamphlet *You and Your Job*:

One reason I'm a socialist is because the socialist were the first to abolish child labor, and today the socialist party, the only one that has dared to declare in its platform that it is unalterably opposed to child labor, and that it will do all in its power to remove all conditions that make it impossible for human beings anywhere to be underfed and overworked (Sandburg, *You* 12).

And in the very model of his polemical writings, his poetry is just as provocative with the overtones of his socialist sensibility. One of the most exemplifying among them is "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: (CP 3)

By underscoring the Chicago city as a social reality of economic frenzy, the reading public identified with Sandburg's sense of the industrial magnitude. His prosaic and radical overtone was considered un-poetical. Yet, his faithful representation of the private excesses of capitalist greed and the urban complexes

somehow coagulated into the public interest. It instantly brought Carl Sandburg to the limelight and the poem was recognized as a cultural expression of modern industrial America. In other words, it was propaganda attempting to dispel the material myth from the public mind.

At the outset, Sandburg was an avowed socialist. No doubt his political philosophy extrapolated from the fundamental postulates of socialism. Yet, his socialism was not a methodical inquiry of theories rather it was propelled by an ethical and humane consideration for the working class problems. Haas and Lovitz substantiate this view in the words of Reuben W. Borough:

Sandburg was not a “scientific socialist” then, Borough wrote, “but he made up for the lack with sudden flashes of humor and outburst of indignation and anger over the wrongs to the working class. . . . He was as militant and equalitarian as I was, and we were stubbornly committed to a proud identification with the poor and disinherited, and at war with capitalism” (qtd. in Haas and Lovitz 72-3).

Thus, Sandburg’s socialism is primarily based on sympathy for the working class, his workingman identity with them and his indignation for capitalism.

The socialist elements in Sandburg’s poetry stand on a single ideological premise i.e. the workingman. This is the ideology of man, the manufacturer which he famously declared in *Chicago Poems*: “I am the workingman, the inventor, the maker of the world’s food and / clothes” (CP 71). His socialist agenda in poetry involves social criticism, propaganda, protest and social

observations. These approaches enable him to shed light on the inadequacy of urban economies and to expose the unbalanced state of the working class and the marginalized poor. Therefore, the socialist elements are revealed through the characteristics of the working class, labor life, hierarchy of classes, critique of industrialism, sharp analyses of capitalism, economic conditions and disadvantages and their impact on the population.

Here, it becomes necessary to understand why and how Carl Sandburg is a socialist. Understanding the factors that made the poet a socialist and confirmed him a socialist poet will be the first of the several issues to be explored in this thesis. In relation to this, it is important to observe certain aspects of his life and career. A brief analysis of his poetry is also crucial to the study. In essence, an attempt is made to trace the development of his radical sentiments that propagated and charged his poetry.

Carl Sandburg was born on January 6, 1878 to Swedish immigrant parents August and Clara Sandburg in Galesburg, Illinois. Of the seven siblings, he was the second and eldest son. Discrimination was common in the small prairie town of Galesburg populated by ethnic Swedes and Americans. He used the name Charles at school to give his identity a more American appeal. In fact, his first work of poetry *In Reckless Ecstasy* (1904) and his pamphlet *You and Your Job* (1918) were published under the names Charles A. Sandburg and Charles Sandburg respectively. It isn't unlikely that he understood the full implication of the black riots of 1919 and even published a collection of his articles under the title *Chicago race Riots, July, 1919*. Racialism aside, it was a working class conflict against another working class. Such was Sandburg's in-depth knowledge of the politics of race and the economic injustices.

He was of typical Midwestern bred and he inherited his understanding of the true nature of American democracy in the region's early history. For instance, the Civil War "was a popular topic of conversation in the Illinois prairie town" (Haaz and Lovitz 30). Moreover, his growing period coincided with the Gilded Age of industrial expansion that led to the Midwest transformation from a predominantly agrarian to an industrialized region. The historical specificity and the existential context of modernization that weigh upon the life and culture of the people molded his way of thinking.

His empathy with the sufferings of the working class was not just a political orientation to Sandburg. His own life experiences imbued a socialist motivation for engaging with the common laborers. The poverty of his family had led young Carl to labor for daily wage. He had to leave school early at age thirteen after the 8<sup>th</sup> grade to supplement the family income. Afterwards in his socialist career, he would forcefully campaign for the abolition of child labor. On the question of how Sandburg grew up to be a socialist, Hallwas writes:

Sandburg's celebrative purpose in *Chicago Poems* is tempered by his equally forceful commitment to social criticism—a commitment that diminished substantially after the book was published. That aspect of his poetry resulted from his working-class background and socialist philosophy. His father, August Sandburg, worked ten hours a day, six days a week. . . . He never complained about his long, hard days; nor was he a socialist. But being part of a laboring man's family made Carl naturally sympathetic to the socialist cause. And as a young man he held a variety of humble jobs, so he developed a deep sense of comradeship with those who toil and struggle and hope (xv).

It is true that his political radicalism subsided after *Chicago Poems* but his assertion of socialist philosophy did not end with this book. The works that followed assumed a more mature socialist paradigm of the workingman history and the prescience of a social revolution.

By the time he reached his teens, Sandburg had already developed an understanding of the economics and the monetary legacies of the capitalist. His knowledge was enhanced by instances such as the economic recession episode known as the Panic of 1893 during which the Sandburg family had to survive on potatoes which “helped them ride out the crisis” (Callahan 6). At this level, he was influenced by the preaching of the Populist Party that condemned the ‘gold standard’ and voiced the hardships of the workingman and their predicament. It offered for Sandburg practical reforms of the day. Crowder records:

Its orators lashed out against wars of aggression, capitalistic monopolies, increasing industrialism, the influx of cheap labor from Europe, urban life, and culture resulting from an unearned leisure. Conversely, they advocated an increase in the currency, free coinage of silver, public ownership and operation of railroads, institution of a tax on income and a limitation on ownership of land. . . .

Some of these ideas, struck August’s son as sound—especially the anti-war plank, the restlessness with capitalism in its greediest manifestations, and the minimizing of white collar work (32).

The Populist Party for a while strongly impacted the farmers and the laborers but did not enjoy a long innings in the political game. As for Sandburg, he

incorporated the populist sentiment in his socialist politics. His 1936 work, *The People, Yes* purported to spell out populism behind a socialist ideology.

In his late teens, he ventured out to many parts of the United States. He lived as a hobo and worked at a variety of odd jobs throughout the course of his travels. A record of the impressions of the people he met and the conditions of the people he witnessed instilled deep sympathies in Sandburg out of which his poetry was to be generated someday. His experience was further enhanced by his brief military career in the Sixth Illinois Regiment of the State Militia during the Spanish-American War in 1898. Upon returning, he received free scholarship for a year in Lombard College. In an article he contributed to the *Lombard Review*, Sandburg writes:

Twenty years ago, a socialist was often defined as a bombthrower and an opponent of law. In this day, however, most people have a dim, hazy idea that a socialist is a meek sort of fellow who has under his hat a theory which in politics is as opaque as theosophy is in religion. The strongest and most bitter opponents of socialism are business men, men whose occupation is mainly buying and selling (qtd. in Callahan 33).

This was the kind of indictment he held against capitalism even long before his literary career flourished. The article also goes on to show that he belongs to the school of thought that sticks to the socialist notion that capitalist imposed restraints hinder the growth of the working class. While in Lombard College, Sandburg became a close ally of one economics professor, Philip Green Wright who imparted to him the science of socialism and its possibility. He espoused the socialist beliefs of his mentor throughout his socialist and poetic career.

After the Lombard sequel, Sandburg entered socialist politics during the Progressive era in the first decades. Crowder states:

In the winter of 1907-8 he met in Chicago the state organizer in Wisconsin for the Social-Democratic party, Winfield R. Gaylord, who talked to him about the methods and goals of his party and offered him a job (39).

From then on, Sandburg began to organize for the Social Democratic party in the Lake Shore and the Fox River district. Hazel Durnell adds:

The political and social philosophies of the Social Democrats of Milwaukee were much to Sandburg's liking and it was here that he began to take an active, propagandist interest in politics and became a part of the national and civic reform movement for decency in government and improvement in order laws (18).

In 1908, he campaigned for Eugene V. Debs in the presidential election. He was also on a propagandist mission, the "Red Special which demanded: "higher wages, abolition of child labor, laws to protect union organization, and free textbooks for public schools" (qtd. in Callahan 45). That same year, he married his wife Lilian Steichen, a fellow socialist. In his address to recruit new members in Wisconsin, Sandburg once stated:

Labor is beginning to realize its power. We no longer beg, we demand old-age pensions; we demand a minimum wage; we demand industrial accident insurance; we demand unemployment insurance; and

we demand the eight-hour day which must become the basic law of the land (qtd. in Golden 117).

Sandburg owes much of these radical ideas to this period. According to Allen:

These demands which seemed so radical in 1907-1909 would become “the basic law of the land,” not under a Socialist president but under the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt and be extended in subsequent Democratic and Republican administrations. Yet the pioneers for these laws were those Wisconsin Socialists La Follette and Gaylord, and party recruiters like Carl Sandburg (14).

His socialist activity included giving lectures and speeches as a member of the Socialist Party of America. In fact, he had written the pamphlet *You and your Job* for the Socialist Party. From 1910 to 1912, he was private secretary to Emil Seidel, the mayor of Milwaukee of the Social Democrats. Apart from socialist politics, Sandburg was a busy newspaperman. Allen states:

But newspaper work remained his chief vocation. In 1912 he joined the liberal Milwaukee Leader, then went to the *Chicago Daily World* and, several newspaper jobs later, to the *Chicago Daily News*, with which he remained until the success of his biography of Lincoln, *The Prairie Years*, made it possible for him to resign and buy a farm in Harbert, Michigan, where his wife raised goats and he could give his full time to poetry and biography, with intervals of lecturing (14).

As a journalist, he was mostly interested in labor issues. So, he wrote for magazines such as *Social-Democratic Herald*, the *Masses* and the *International Socialist Review*. His family responsibility and income issues halted his socialist career, however he would continue to campaign as a journalist and as a poet. William A. Sutton informs:

Sandburg had spent late 1918 and early 1919 on a journalistic assignment to Sweden and Norway, on the perimeter of the Russian Revolution, in which both Sandburgs, who probably still considered themselves Socialists in 1921, had an intense interest (7).

He was a radical socialist, seeking equity without equivocations. And his socialism was based on the American model of democratic socialism which aimed at a democratic program for reforms through radical measures. Allen informs:

However, he was never a Marxist, though he had read *Das Kapital* at Lombard with Professor Wright. He was more of a Populist and social reformer, perhaps influenced somewhat by “Teddy” Roosevelt in the early years of the twentieth century, and certainly by the muckracking journalists: Ida Tarbell, who wrote about the greed of John D. Rockefeller; Lincoln Steffens, who uncovered political corruption in the cities; and Upton Sinclair, the Socialist novelist, who shocked the nation into beginning pure-food legislation after *The Jungle* (1906) revealed the incredibly unsanitary conditions of the packing industry in Chicago. . . . Sandburg, like Sinclair, was more concerned with the actual conditions of the workingmen's lives than with ideology (15).

Yet, in his poetry, Sandburg often advocated the antagonistic principles of Marxist philosophy to attack capitalism. A poem such as “Dynamiter” from *Chicago Poems* strongly suggests his revolutionary sympathy.

Sandburg’s poetic career actually began with the publications of *In Reckless Ecstasy* (1904) and shortly followed by *The Plaint of a Rose* (1905) and *Incidentals* (1905). All three were privately published by Professor Wright’s Asgard press. But his first major break came with the publication of some of the *Chicago Poems* in Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry: A magazine of verse* in 1914. Two years after *Poetry* published some of his poems, his first official volume *Chicago Poems* was published in 1916 followed closely by *Cornhuskers* (1918), *Smoke and Steel* (1920), *Slabs of the Sunburnt West* (1922) *Good Morning, America* (1928) and *The People, Yes* (1936). Other poetical works include the lesser known children’s poetry *Early Moon* (1930), *Harvest Poems* (1910-1960), *Wind Song* (1960) *Honey and Salt* (1963) and *Breathing Tokens* (1978). His interest in folk music made him produce *The American Songbag* (1927), *Songs of America* (1927) and *The New American Songbag* (1950). His prose works include *Chicago race Riots, July, 1919*, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years* (1926), *Steichen the Photographer* (1929), *Mary Lincoln: Wife and Widow* (1932) with Paul M. Angle, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* (1939), *Storm over the Land* (1942) and collected essays, *Home Front Memo* (1943) etc. He also published stories for children which are *Rootabaga Stories* (1922), *Rootabaga Pigeons* (1923), *Abe Lincoln Grows Up* (1928) and *Potato Face* (1930). He also wrote a novel *Remembrance Rock* (1948) and his autobiography *Always the Young Strangers* (1953). He won three Pulitzer Prizes for *Cornhuskers* (1918) in 1919, for *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* (1939) in 1940 and for the *Complete Poems* (1950) in 1951. He was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of

Literature by Lombard College in 1928. After the publication of *Honey and Salt* (1963) at the age of eighty five, Sandburg retired to his estate in Flat Rock, North Carolina until his death in 1967.

Thus, the above biographical enumerations sum up the extent and influence of socialism in Sandburg's life and career. In the field of poetry, he is often compared with Whitman mostly because of his compassion for the Americans *en-masse*. And as Daniel Hoffman stated: "Surely he learned from Whitman the possibilities of long-prose-rhythmed strophe (qtd. in Gunton and Harris 469). However, the overwhelming strain of ideology in Sandburg hindered his poetical progress. His poetry is typified by the literary radicalism of the period that enabled writers to expose the weaknesses of the system in their writings. The political doctrine behind much of the radical literature was socialism. There were serious writers like Frank Norris, Hamlin Garland and professed socialists like Upton Sinclair and Jack London who made severe critiques of capitalism, exploitation and oppression in their works. Sandburg like many writers and muckraking journalists was disgusted with the growth of industrialism and capitalism. Therefore, he sought philosophical relief in the doctrines of socialism. It provided him an ideology constituting a political belief on the economic emancipation of the working class. The big corporations and the banks were the oppressors of the working man and the politicians profess only to differ after elections. His concern therefore was the lot of the average man and the victims of oppression. By socialist accuracy, his poetry shows the working class philosophy of life and understanding of economics.

Waiving the question of how he improvises the political in poetry, Sandburg adopted the free verse form as a closer link to common speech. This

enabled him to bridge the discernable elements of poetry with politics and society. In an article entitled “Carl Sandburg” of *The New Republic* Vol 178, No. 2. Jan 14 1978, Herbert Mitgang gave an astounding appraisal for his free verse form:

His verse helped to free poetry from the old strictures at the same time that artists and sculptors and novelists were breaking their lines. He opened up new regions of the country to literature; and he dignified the most ordinary people and subjects. He was aware of the poetry of many countries. Ezra Pound wanted to turn him into an Imagist, but he refused to be put into that or any other mold (qtd. in Gunton 468).

At the heights of literary radicalism and new poetical trends like Imagism in the early decades, the free verse form engulfed a new breed of radical writers. The prospect of free verse was much debated amongst the radical intellectuals. In 1913 on an assignment to report a hanging, Sandburg reportedly whispers to a friend: “Listen! What better authority do you want? Pure verse libre poetry and in the Bible!” (Parry 190) Sandburg found in free verse originality of poetic rhythm that could be easily grasped by the common folks.

However, his poetry is far from the apolitical. The socialist ideology is pronounced in too concrete terms in Sandburg that his poetry lack appraisal on nearly every estimation of his poetry. For instance, *The Boston Transcript* critiqued *Chicago Poems* to contain “ill-regulated speech that has neither verse nor prose rhythms” (qtd. in Callahan 81). Also in Brian Reed’s estimate, Sandburg is “an author of a handful of sincere but clumsy 1910s lyrics best

appreciated by readers uneducated in subtleties of form, technique and tone” (qtd. in Villareal 2). The ideological nature of his poetry dissipates his art. It affects his verse, meter, rhyme and poetic speech. Such relative inadequacies emerge from his obsessive adherence to the working class ideologue. Essentially for Sandburg, poetry is associated with the intensive assortment of working class idioms, street jargon and folk humor etc. He clearly demarcates the poetic forms in his theory of poetry given in his “Notes for a Preface” to the *Complete Poems* (1950). In one of the fragments of the Preface, he states: “There is a formal poetry perfect only in form, “all dressed up and nowhere to go” (CP xxvi). Then he shares his choice of language: “I still favor simple poems published long ago which continue to have an appeal for simple people” (CP xxxi) Allen supports him:

In the use of slang and undignified languages, Sandburg achieved in actuality the theory which Wordsworth set forth in his Preface to Lyrical Ballads: to present incidents and situations from common life . . . in a selection of language really used by men . . .” Sandburg’s poems are also more realistic than Wordsworth’s, or even naturalistic (in the Zola sense), as in “The Walking Man of Rodin,” with “The skull found always crumbling neighbor of the ankles” (19-20)

Not only in his experience and philosophy but also in his use of the vernacular he shared common ground with the working class. This matter is fundamental enough to establish his poetic link with his socialism. After Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry* magazine published some of his *Chicago Poems*, *The Dial* attacked *Poetry* for publishing them. It particularly rejected “Chicago” to pass as poetry:

The typographical arrangement for this jargon (“Chicago,” by Carl Sandburg) creates a suspicion that it is intended to be taken as some form of poetry, and the suspicion is confirmed by the fact that it stands in the forefront of the latest issue of a futile little periodical described as “a magazine of verse.” . . . (qtd. in Monroe, *Poet’s Life*12).

It was a question of whether the remarks “hog-butcher” or “Stormy, husky, brawling” on the Chicago city should qualify as poetical. Though symptomatic of unconventional poetic diction, it certainly met the criteria of a modernist revolt, original in speech and radical in form.

In *Good Morning, America*, Sandburg gave his 38 “Tentative (First Model) Definitions of Poetry.” According to Mark Van Doren:

Sandburg’s thirty-eight definitions of poetry—tentative, you remember—suggest that the art for him was an art of improvisation : the quick view, quickly taken. Not for him the slow, careful building up of effects by formal means. He scorned meter and rhyme, just as he ignored the principles of organization. Always he was interested in detail. . . . (4)

A significant point regarding the poet’s poetic stance is seen in definition 2: “Poetry is an art practised with the terribly plastic material of human language” (CP 317). He considers the traditional forms and meters as “plastic material.” Through this extended reference is also the indication that he does not compromise with the political for the main business of the creative processes.

The rest of the definitions are guided by the poet's instinctive philosophy of poetry. The following are randomly chosen:

3 Poetry is the report of a nuance between two moments, when people say, 'Listen!' and 'Did you see it?' 'Did you hear it? What was it?'

11 Poetry is a series of explanations of life, fading off into horizons too swift for explanations.

16 Poetry is any page from a sketchbook of outlines of a doorknob with thumb-prints of dust, blood, dreams.

22 Poetry is a mock of a cry at finding a million dollars and a mock of a laugh at losing it.

25 Poetry is the opening and closing of a door, leaving those who look through to guess about what is seen during a moment

38 Poetry is the capture of a picture, a song, or a flair, in a deliberate prism of words (CP 317-18).

These definitions suggest that his poetry is spontaneous and never abstract nor vague. For they report the immediate instinct of a moment, instances, encounter, conversation, observation etc. It scarcely needs pointing out that the subtle nuances and covertness of conventional poetry forbids the poet's ultimate aim of directness in poetry. With Sandburg there is no exclusive concern with form. The formal structure of art is compromised with the actual order of experiences. The structure and texture of his poetry is governed by its cognitive content. Thus, the poet's aesthetic formula depends on the illustration of a socialist concept in which the ordinary reality of labor is made to clash with the high ideals.

Amy Lowell in her review of *Smoke and Steel* announces a splitting concern over Sandburg's "Poetry and Propaganda." She states:

Since a poet must speak by means of suggestion and a propagandist succeeds by virtue of clear presentation, in so far as a propagandist is a poet, just in that ratio is he a failure where his propaganda is concerned (qtd. in Marowski 340).

The scrutiny is that either of the two overwhelms the other. Moreover, propaganda as an artistic improvisation for political art does not work with Sandburg as he subordinates the subtle principle of poetic tradition. In his "Notes for a Preface" to the *Complete Poems* (1950) Sandburg writes:

Poetry and politics, the relation of the poets to society, to democracy, to monarchy, to dictatorships—we have here a theme whose classic is yet to be written (CP xxvi).

The poet in transferring the political impressions to the realm of art recognizes the contextual relations of art, politics and society. Literature cannot be separated from the society that produces it. In the case of Sandburg, though politics and propaganda belittles the poetic art, to separate the poet from his politics would eschew a critical understanding of the poetic intent of purpose evident in his certitude of socialism. Moreover, what essentially makes the poet a socialist lies in the contemporary manifestation of the age. And what is vital to the spirit of the times was social protest.

Thus, he faces three charges on account of his poetry. He is considered to be too radical and thus criticized for his overtly political undertone. He is also accused of breaking the traditional poetic norms in its looseness of construct and use of free verse form. Then, he is criticized for his use of the colloquial. While these aspects of criticism are true, they are also conceived upon fixing a conventional clause for standard poetry that measures the poetical degree of a poet in an era of revolutionary modernist elements. For this reason, Harriet Monroe was extremely partial of Sandburg and continued to side with him ten years after *Chicago Poems* was published. She thus stated in his defense:

The years which have passed since this first tribute have brought much to emphasize its findings and nothing to contradict them. They have established the poet's fame, and for the most part silenced the cavillers who were so loud at first against his slangy diction and his disuse of rhyme and metrics; for the most part, though still one may hear a few rigid minds declaiming the inviolability of rules made by forgotten prosodists who, plotting out the trail of dead poets, decreed that poets living or unborn should follow no other route to Parnassus. These should be reminded of Debussy's aphorism : "No fixed rule should guide the creative artist—rules are made by works of art, not *for* works of art" (Monroe, *Poets & their Art* 31).

In his poetry, Sandburg either blames the system for the modern inflictions of the common man or manages to locate a critique obliquely directed against the political and economic establishments. Therefore, he cannot separate the poetic from the political. Herein stands the chief criticism of Sandburg. But as Kenneth Rexroth, observes in his *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century*, 1971:

What Sandburg had for the poor, frustrated, heroic and ordinary was *Einführung* [empathy; sympathetic understanding] (qtd. in Riley 463).

So much emphasis has been thrown on the protesting strain that some of the most humane aspects go unheeded. Moreover, poetry to him is inevitably a platform for affirming the social ideals within the confines of his immediate social, economic and cultural milieu. Ultimately, he aims at a realistic art that is human-centered. Hence, the poetic principle is ultimately not without an ethical foundation.

A critical exploration of the socialist elements would be thoroughly discussed in Chapters IV and V of the thesis taking into account his six volumes of poetry namely, *Chicago Poems* (1916), *Cornhuskers* (1918), *Smoke and Steel* (1920), *Slabs of the Sunburnt West* (1922), *Good Morning America* (1928) and *The People, Yes* (1936).

*Chicago Poems* accounts for the detailing of America's desperately poor working class sections. A poem such as "Child of the Romans" expresses this:

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, éclairs 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 (CP 12).

The politics of *Cornhuskers* involve a hesitant attitude towards America's expanding industrialism and growing urbanity particularly in the poem "Prairie":

a million white men came and put up skyscrapers, threw  
 out rails and wires, feelers to the salt sea: now the smokestacks  
 bit the skyline with stub teeth (CP 79-81).

*Smoke and Steel* is not all about modern industrialism. Yet, some poems are constructively based on the subject of the exploitation of the workingmen in the steel mills. "The Mayor of Gary, 1915" for instance reflects the conditions in factories:

And I saw workmen wearing leather shoes scuffed with fire  
 and cinders and pitted with little holes from running molten  
 steel,  
 And some lad bunches of specialized muscles around their  
 shoulder blades (CP 161).

*Slabs of the Sunburnt West* (1922), provides a panoramic view of the nation and the working class life. "The Windy City" may be said to be a poetical discourse on the dialectical struggle of the city taking into account the workingman's contribution:

It is wisdom to think no city stood here at all until the  
 working men, the laughing men, came.

It is wisdom to think tomorrow new working men, new  
laughing men, may come and put up a new city—” (CP 280)

*Good Morning, America* (1928) is Sandburg’s mature observations of America. The title piece “Good Morning, America” emphasizes on labor, economic and patriotic “facts” that conditions the American workingman:

Facts stay fastened; facts are phantom  
An old one-horse plow is a fact.  
A new farm tractor is a fact.  
Facts stay fastened; facts fly with birdwings.  
Blood and sweat are facts (CP 321).

*The People, Yes* (1936) offer a socialist paradigm of the historical roots of ‘class’ and the natural progression toward a social revolution. Section 101 reveals his revolutionary grounding:

We’ve got the instruments, the propaganda machinery,  
the money and the guns. Let them come.  
What was good for our fathers is good enough for  
us. We fight with the founding fathers” (CP 607).

The book was written as an inspiration for the people at the heights of the Great Depression. It proclaimed the power of the people and the changes possible through their collective efforts. Though, it is generally regarded as the poet’s democratic progression, the volume nevertheless abounds with socialist themes.

Sandburg’s socialism is a product of the environmental engineering of socialist beliefs generated by the social and economic disparities. He had the socialist foundation since his childhood and the influence of socialist supporters

in his adulthood. And what made Carl Sandburg the poet that he was is epitomized in the nation's economic and political turmoil in the first decades. He is a writer who conceived of poetry as a product of socio-economic forces and experimented with socialist philosophy in poetry. He inspects those particular aspects drawn by demarcating lines between the capitalist and the working class. He was truly America's conscience keeper who chronicled the working class hardships and delivered factual portrayals of their labor lives. He had no mastery of poetic skill nor was his verse perfectly executed yet, his brutal honest triumphed over the strictures of literary precedents.

A prominent figure in American literature Carl Sandburg had earned veneration and gained wide popularity for his multi-faceted task as poet, journalist, biographer, autobiographer, novelist, folklorist and children's author. Sherwood Anderson in *The Bookman*, New York, Vol. LIV, No. 4, published in December, 1921, wrote an article entitled "Carl Sandburg." He beautifully dissected the poet's personality and poetry. Anderson writes:

There is a growing tendency, as his fame goes up in the world, to speak article of Carl Sandburg as a He man, an eater of raw meat, a hairy one. In Chicago newspaper local rooms he is spoken of as John Guts. . . .

Buried deep within the He man . . . a Sandburg that hears the voice of the wind over the roofs of houses at night, a Sandburg that wanders often alone through grim city streets on winter nights, a Sandburg that knows and understands the voiceless cry in the heart of the farm girl. .

The poetry of John Guts doesn't excite me much. . . .

As for the other Sandburg, the naïve, hesitant, sensitive Sandburg—among all the poets of America he is my poet (qtd. in Marowski 342).

He was a much celebrated figure in his times having won three Pulitzer prizes. In his poetry, he never deviated from its main occupation of championing the workingmen of America. He was the best poet of reportage and documentary of his generation. His socialist ideological perspective echoes in his absolute belief in worker's rights. His views on socialism are also embodied in his pamphlets and newspaper articles. And significantly, his socialism stretched to an emphatic purpose of raising democratic ideals. His fierce sympathy for the impoverished, the oppressed and the exploited found expression in all his writings, which is the main reason for his writing at all. He was successful in doing so because he understood and recognized the real conditions of the social and economic life of the people.

This chapter is followed by the second chapter which is an attempt to articulate the contemporary social and literary milieu of the poet. The third chapter of the thesis solely focuses on the study of Socialist theory and Carl Sandburg's socialism. The fourth and fifth chapters form the major analysis of his poetry. In these chapters, an attempt is made to articulate and uncover the socialist elements in his poetry. The fourth chapter makes a study of *Chicago Poems* (1916), *Cornhuskers* (1918) and *Smoke and Steel* (1920). The fifth chapter follows suit with the analysis of *Slabs of the Sunburnt West* (1922), *Good Morning, America* (1928) and *The People, Yes* (1936). The concluding chapter of the thesis touches upon and briefly analyzes all the above chapters. It sums up the entirety of the socialist influence in Sandburg's poetry.

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