

Walt Whitman

**I HEAR AMERICA SINGING**

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and  
strong,

The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off  
work,

The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deck-hand  
singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as  
he stands,

The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning,  
or at noon intermission or at sundown,

The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work,  
or of the girl sewing or washing,

Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows,  
robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

1860, 1867

Jungsten Hughes

I, Too

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare

Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen,"  
Then.

Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

1925, 1959

Erna Bond

A Pact

I make a pact with you, Walt Whitman—  
I have detested you long enough.  
I come to you as a grown child  
Who has had a pig-headed father;  
I am old enough now to make friends.  
It was you that broke the new wood,  
Now is a time for carving.  
We have one sap and one root—  
Let there be commerce between us.

1913, 1916