

1808

ODE TO CONNECTICUT RIVER

William Cullen Bryant

Bryant, William Cullen (1794-1878) - American poet and editor of the New York Evening Post who practiced law before devoting his life to writing. A master of blank verse, Bryant's earliest works are considered his best. Ode to Connecticut River (1808) - Opening lines: Why should I blush to sing the rural lay, / Where fair Connecta winds its gentle way?...

ODE TO CONNECTICUT RIVER

[WRITTEN IN 1808]

Why should I blush, to sing the rural lay,
 Where fair CONNECTA winds its gentle way?
 While smiling Spring, on southern breezes borne,
 With snowy pinions scents the breath of morn;
 And throws her dewy wreaths, with laughing glee,
 O'er the green mead and germinating tree!

Could I thy charms, celebrious stream, rehearse,
 In glowing numbers and exalted verse;
 Me, did the Muse of poesy inspire,
 With Maro's strains, or Pope's celestial fire;
 Like the rough Tiber, or the gentler Thame,
 Should classic honours flourish round thy name.

On thy green banks, let flowers perennial bloom,
 And forests shade thee with a grateful gloom;
 Bright towns ascending, flourish on thy shore,
 And cultur'd gardens spread their balmy store!
 When all is hush'd, and buoyant breezes sleep,
 I view the mirror of thy level deep;
 The sun reflected from thy bosom shine,
 With piercing beams, and splendours all divine;
 There glittering clouds, and glowing skies are seen,
 The towering forest, and the humble green.

Oft, when soft breezes agitate thy tide,
 I mark thy waves in quick succession ride;
 While the small fry, disporting rise to sight,
 Their nimble fins with crimson edges bright;
 And from her perch the frightened heron springs,
 Soaring aloft with azure tinted wings!

Here, foaming o'er the rugged rocks, he roars,
 Through dreary chasms, along unfertile shores;
 There, where yon gay parterre adorns his side,
 He rolls a gentle and majestic tide!

Spread widely round, what beauties crowd the scene,
 High waving woods, and meadows broad and green;
 Tall spire-crown'd churches glitter to the day,

And clust'ring domes their humbler heads display;
In blue perspective, distant mountains rise,
And Tempe's charms renew'd, attract th' admiring eyes!

Long may thy sons in useful arts renown'd,
With waving cornfields hide the furrow'd ground;
Hung thick with fruitage bid the orchard bend,
And from the vine the clustering grape depend;
Plant the young wood, the flowery garden spread,
And give the dome to lift its ample head.

Long may thy Merchants borne on canvass wing,
From various climates, wealth, and wisdom bring;
Exotic wealth, that earth or ocean yields,
The icy north, or India's purple fields!

Oh, ne'er may war, with gloomy front appear,
Nor hostile armies prowl for plunder here!
May heaven-born peace, amid the sylvan dell,
Erect her throne, and long delight to dwell;
Led by her hand, may smiling plenty pour,
The copious bounties of her flower-crown'd store!

THE END