

BY AZURE HURON'S SHORE

by James P Lenfestey

(An update of Walt Whitman's By Blue Ontario's Shore, section 12)

INVOCATION, mostly by WALT WHITMAN:

Are you he who would assume a place to teach or be a poet here on this earth?

The place is august, the terms obdurate.

Who would assume to teach here may well prepare himself body and mind,

He may well survey, ponder, arm, fortify, harden, make lithe himself.

He shall surely be questioned beforehand by me with many and stern questions,

Who are you indeed who would talk and sing of the earth?

THE POET'S TEST

Do you know the depth of the waters, and the height of the sky, and their composition?

Have you befriended the trees where you live, know their roots, their crowns?

Have you studied the rocks beneath them, to the fifth epoch?

And the birds above, their songs and what they eat, and where they nest?

And the people who lived there before you, and your ancestors, to the second millennium?

And the rivers and lakes, their subtle watersheds and hidden springs?

And do you swim in the chill and warm waters of your seas and lakes indiscriminately? And with relish? And know the sources of pollutants threatening your waters? And fight against the dark rain with armies of petitions and voters' guides and drives and meetings?

Are the glaciers and the jungles your friends, the serpents and beasts and birds your guides, the pigs of the sty your helpmates, the microbes and fungi your intimates?

Do you shun or reform all religions that deny the primacy of the earth and its processes? That believe mankind unable to destroy everything good? Or save everything good?

Do you accept with joy the findings of science?

Are your taxes paid to the federal, state and city authorities without complaint, as the recognized price of civil living? Do you wish to pay more?

Do you believe in the Holy Trinity: the water, the grass, the air? And do you worship them every day with acts of kindness and political clout?

Are you sickened unto death that the biodiversity of the earth is plummeting? The Arctic sea ice melting? The oceans acidifying?

Have you read the 4th Assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change?

Or at least the Executive Summary?

And know that its finding of warming for the most part due to the burning fossil fuels has been everywhere affirmed, including by the National Academy of Sciences, the National Research Council, even the George W. Bush Administration?

And are you hot with anger at the lies about the cause of changing climate spouted by those with fingers black with oil, breath black from smoking mines?

And will you slay with dark thoughts the miscreants at Fox News and the Wall Street Journal editorial page and Rush Windbag and others who perpetuate those lies?

Will you fight back with evidence and heat and love for the atmosphere which is the life blanket of our planet?

Do you firmly believe there is no such thing as evil, but only abundant ignorance, stupidity, shortsightedness, self-dealing, self-loathing and fundamentalist self-righteousness?

Do you "fear a lie as others fear fire," as Chekhov said, and know that "inside you is an inexhaustible fountain of ideas," as Brenda Ueland said?

Do you believe in families and communities green and cheerful with good schools and happy parents and joy shouted from the schoolyards?

Have you studied Emerson's essays *The Poet* and *Nature*, foundation stones of the spiritual democracy of our nation and all nations, who saw the divine in every person and particular of nature, including these Great Lakes? He who begat Thoreau and Whitman and Dickinson and Bogan? James Bogan?

When you gaze at the person you love, and the multitudes you love, do tears of gratitude spring to your eyes? Do your hands fall open in gratitude to the waters, the grass, the air? And for people who fight for the waters, the grass, the air?

By this Azure Huron's Shore,

do you stand at the water's edge, tasting the delicious energies of the grass, inhaling the delicious energies of the air, and fearlessly plunge into the dark waters, for the sake of your soul, and the soul of the earth?

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to our craggy isle in all her spiritual forms.
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