

Subflower sutra



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Allen Ginsberg's poem entitled "Sunflower Sutra" is about the reckless and wasteful behavior against nature and how materialistic and manufactured mankind has become. Ginsberg's poem is explaining how industrialization has ruined America and how the landscape after being destroyed now seems so desolate. Ginsberg seems to end the poem with a glimmer of hope when he states: "We're not our skin of grime, we're not our dread bleak dusty imageless locomotive, we're all beautiful golden sunflowers inside..."

(Ginsberg Li 75, 76, 77). "Sunflower Sutra" was written by Ginsberg in 1955 during the beatnik generation and industrialization in America when people were searching and seeking out something new since the war ended. It was a time of questioning authority and rules since people were feeling new found freedom after the war. The sunflower in Ginsberg's poem represents a shattered or injured America that makes him sad.

He speaks about how you cannot see our natural world anymore. There is no nature, no trees, just metal and garbage. He says: "...surrounded by the gnarled steel roots of trees of machinery" (Ginsberg Li 7, 8) almost saying there are no real trees or any form of nature anymore. All we are surrounded by is this scrap from an old locomotive on a railroad track. Where did nature go? When Ginsberg and Kerouac see the sunflower it seems to be out of place. As Ginsberg continues to stare at the sunflower he sees beauty but also feels a sense of dread for instance when he says: "Unholy battered old thing you were, my sunflower...." (Ginsberg Li 35).

He almost makes you feel like he is comparing the sunflower to a human like him and how he felt. Ginsberg personifies the flower when he states: "...leaves stuck out like arms out of the stem" (Ginsberg, Li 32) and "... a dead

fly in its ear...” (Ginsberg Li 34). The sunflower is a representation of America and how there used to be so much promise of development. The locomotive also represents progress but in a different way. The locomotive represents the transportation for trade that had started the industrialization of America in the first place. Ginsberg says: “ Poor dead flower? When did you forget you were a flower? ” (Ginsberg Li 62) and “ You were never no locomotive, Sunflower, you were a sunflower! ” as if he is saying that America always had hope and that even though so many things were damaged there is still hope! Robert Frost’s poem “ Design” also speaks about nature but in a different manner. The underlying theme of “ Design” seems to be about death being a part of nature.

Frost in this poem poses the question of life already being written out for us like a design already in place or are we all just living freely with no specific design. Frost says: “ I found a dimpled spider, fat and white, On a white heal all, holding up a moth...” (Frost Li 1, 2) and white is usually a sign of purity and simplicity. Now if design means to create and white is a sign of purity then maybe Frost is saying that all things when they are created are pure and simple. Ginsberg and Frost seem to have had a great love for nature and keeping nature alive. The difference in these two poems is that Ginsberg is speaking about how we as a society have destroyed nature and Frost is speaking about how nature has its own natural design and that there is death of all living things at some point is a part of it.