

Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society - Sunday, April 17, 1983

"MANY CONNECTIONS: OAK LEAVES, PUSSYWILLOWS AND YOU. . ." - TWO TEXTS

AH! SUN-FLOWER

Ah, Sun-flower! weary of time,  
Who countest the steps of the Sun,  
Seeking after that sweet golden clime  
Where the traveller's journey is done:

Where the Youth pined away with desire,  
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow .  
Arise from their graves, and aspire  
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

William Blake

Songs of Innocence and Experience (1788-1794)

NATURE

...In every landscape the point of astonishment is the meeting of the sky and the earth, and that is seen from the first hillock as well as the top of the Alleghanies. The stars at night stoop down over the brownest, homeliest common with all the spiritual magnificence which they shed on the Campagna, or the marble deserts of Egypt. The uprolled clouds and the colors of morning and evening will transfigure maples and alders. The difference between landscape and landscape is small, but there is great difference in the beholders. There is nothing so wonderful in any particular landscape as the necessity of being beautiful under which every landscape lies. Nature cannot be surprised in undress. Beauty breaks in everywhere....

...Nature is loved by what is best in us. It is loved as the city of God, although or rather because there is no citizen. The sunset is unlike anything that is underneath it: it wants men. And the beauty of nature must always seem unreal and mocking, until the landscape has human figures that are as good as itself. If there were good men, there would never be this rapture in nature....The critics who complain of the sickly separation of the beauty of nature from the thing to be done, must consider that our hunting of the picturesque is inseparable from our protest against false society....By fault of our dullness and selfishness we are looking up to nature, but when we are convalescent, nature will look up to us. We see the foaming brook with compunction: if our own life flowed with the right energy, we should shame the brook....

Ralph Waldo Emerson  
in his essay "Nature"  
Essays, Second Series (1841)