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Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" as a Modern Version of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land"

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ALLEN GINSBERG'S "HOWL" AS A MODERN VERSION
OF T. S. ELIOT'S "THE WASTE LAND"

Jennifer A. Campbell

1998

State University College
at Buffalo
Department of English

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of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land"

Dates of Approval

A thesis in
English

by

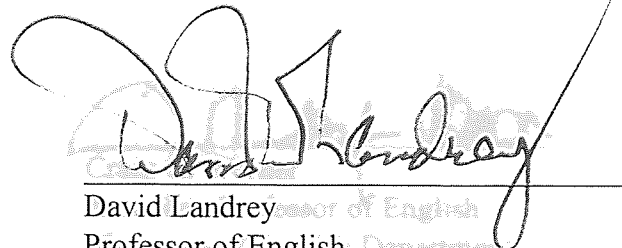
Jennifer A. Campbell

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for the Degree of

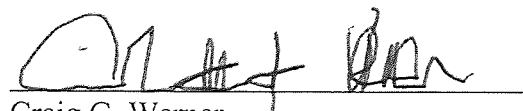
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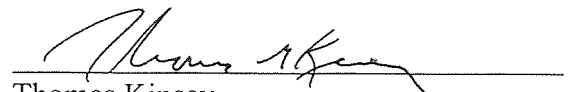
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land"

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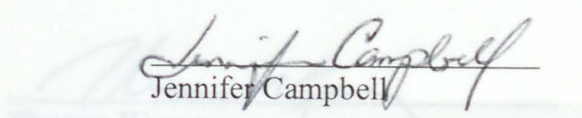
Master of Arts

Although T. S. Eliot and Allen Ginsberg lived their lives differently and experienced society in different ways, some threads of similarity run throughout their work. This paper is a three-part study of the relations between Eliot and Ginsberg. It begins with an examination of how each poet views the literary tradition and the role of the poet within it, then explores the similarities in form and content between "The Waste Land" and "Howl," and ends with a discussion of how each man would attempt to reverse the cycle of modern deterioration. The main argument of the paper is that Allen Ginsberg intended to create a new version of "The Waste Land" which would take into account the state of society in the 1950s.

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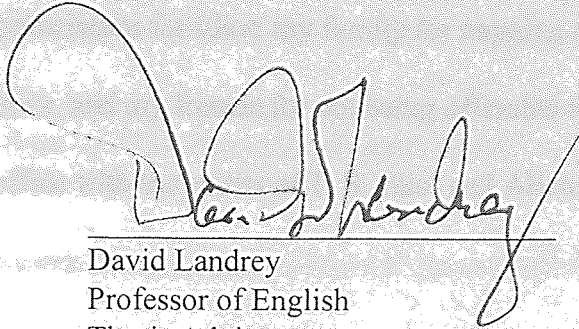
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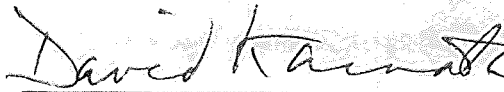
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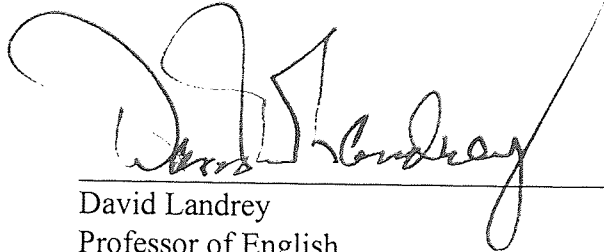
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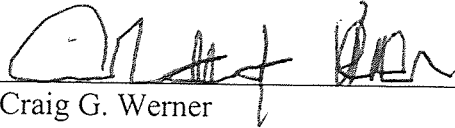
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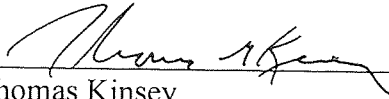
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter 1	
<i>The Use of the Literary Tradition</i>	4
Chapter 2	
<i>Comparing the Texts of "The Waste Land" and "Howl"</i>	22
Chapter 3	
<i>The Decay of Modern Civilization</i>	44
Conclusion	67
Bibliography	69

on the increasing unconditionality and self-justification of the text, which was adopted and shaped by many readers, critics, and scholars. Eliot's claim that the poem was intended to be a social statement, Charles Smith observes that "The Waste Land" soon had not only poetic influence, but also historical importance:

In the margins of readers, who pored over it, analyzed and criticized it, traced its plagiarisms, interpreted and (sometimes creatively) misinterpreted it, this poem became no longer poetry only but a historical event, a fact as the 1970s segment of a long time scale, apt like other social facts to be evaluated as a cultural statement, though they or many of them knew it also as poems and usual poetic magical phrases from it (1).

The undeniable status of "The Waste Land" as a twentieth-century poetry ensures that it has been widely read. It is difficult to categorize Eliot's work because it is both innovative and traditional, yet certainly many different types of artists branched from this poem. The Real Conversation of writers are generally considered to be post-modern, but they too had studied Eliot. William S. Burroughs, the oldest original

Introduction

Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.

-Ezra Pound

T. S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land" may have originated as a personal observation of the modern world, yet it gradually achieved universal importance. What began as Eliot's realization of how to cope with post-WWI society soon became a symbol of the downfall of modern civilization. "The Waste Land" impressed critics and audiences alike, and it had a twofold effect on the literary world. Its complex and unusual form served to liberate many subsequent artists from convention, and its attack on the increasing mindlessness and soullessness of the 20th century was a theme which was adopted and shaped by many modern writers. Despite Eliot's denial that the poem was intended to be a social statement, Grover Smith observes that "The Waste Land" soon had not only poetic influence, but also historical importance:

In the memories of readers, who pored over it, analysed and criticised it, traced its plagiarisms, interpreted and (sometimes creatively) misinterpreted it, this poem became no longer poetry only but a historical event, a fact in the 1920s segment of a long time scale, apt like other social facts to be evaluated as a cultural monument; though they or many of them knew it also as poetry and loved some magical phrases from it. (1)

The undeniable status of "The Waste Land" as a benchmark of 20th century poetry ensures that it has been widely read. It is difficult to categorize Eliot's work because it is both innovative and traditional, yet certainly many different types of artists benefited from this poem. The Beat Generation of writers are generally considered to be post-modern, but they too had studied Eliot. William S. Burroughs, the oldest original

member of the Beat writers, encouraged the other Beats to read outside of their Columbia University curriculum (Foster 5). Allen Ginsberg took the suggestion to study Eliot and seems to have been influenced by Eliot's work in a number of ways. Ginsberg and Eliot share theories about the role of the poet, the function of a literary tradition, and the development of rhythm in poetry. In addition, Ginsberg directly addresses the theme of societal decay in "Howl." Both "Howl" and "The Waste Land" are catalogs of woe in that they lament the corruption of civilization. Ginsberg seems to have taken Eliot's general formula of showing drowning citizens in a new world of decreased morality, and adapted it to the 1950s and the Beat generation. Ginsberg adds the realities of chemical addiction, prostitution, and the conflict between Communism and Capitalism to Eliot's theme of a decayed civilization, and incorporates his Beat writing techniques into the endeavor. Ginsberg uses a breath-focused, thought-stopped line to convey the urgent predicament of modernity, while using a candor characteristic of the Beats to reveal man's tenuous position in a dangerous era. Ginsberg was not afraid to take on an icon of American poetry, and show its limitations for his modern world. He seems consciously to have used Eliot's poem as a springboard for his own writing experiment, which depicts the "wasteland" that he observed in the 1950s.

At first glance, Eliot seems to be a much more traditional writer than Ginsberg, and a link between the two may seem unlikely. Eliot was well-versed in the classics and uses many allusions to history, literature, and mythology in his poetry. Ginsberg is usually perceived as a social revolutionary for his attacks on decorum and as being controversial for his use of coarse language. Yet in their own ways, both writers set tradition on end. Eliot's "Waste Land" disturbed literary critics and readers with its

forbidding references, its unbeautiful images, and its seemingly unintelligible structure.

Similarly, Ginsberg's "Howl" astounded readers with its violent imagery and unusual form. The reception of both "The Waste Land" and "Howl" was hesitant; in fact Eliot's poem only gradually achieved its universal status:

When first published, *The Waste Land* was popularly seen as a hoax or a meaningless confusion, or as having a social meaning that made it detestable; for many, its ugly images and foreign languages combined into a double offensiveness. Possibly some of its severe critics had never *read* a poem before. It was not primarily social but it was disturbingly topical; one proof was the emotional stir it aroused. In time, the poem gained adherents who in some way assimilated its point of view. (Smith 2)

Ginsberg was prompted to insist that "Howl" is not an entirely negative work; thus it appears that "Howl" was also initially perceived to be unpropitious. Ginsberg believed that "Howl" was a positive experience for him as a poet and that it was an optimistic work for the world. He says:

The title notwithstanding, the poem itself is an act of sympathy, not rejection. In it I am leaping *out* of a preconceived notion of social 'values,' ... *allowing* myself to follow my own heart's instincts, overturning any notion of propriety, moral 'value,' superficial 'maturity,' Trilling-esque sense of 'civilization,' and exposing my true feelings—of sympathy and identification with the rejected, mystical, individual even 'mad.' (*Howl* 152)

"Howl" now receives attention both for its style and its personal statement, and its importance is heightened by its representation of an era.

Both "The Waste Land" and "Howl" capture the societal conditions of its era, and this earns each poet a permanent place in the literary tradition. To uncover the complement between the poems, it is first necessary to explore the writers' understanding of what comprises the literary tradition, and what the role of the poet should be.

Chapter 1

The Use of the Literary Tradition

With two poems each of which is so obviously concentrated on a particular era, it is crucial to examine each poet's place in the literary tradition. Where they fall within the tradition is also intrinsically related to what they believe encompasses the tradition. The notion of a literary tradition is found in essays by Eliot and Ginsberg. Their explanation of what this tradition encompasses is startlingly similar. They describe the tradition as a sort of canon composed of all the works of literature throughout history. Tradition is the wide historical understanding which allows a writer to recognize his/her contemporaneity while gaining "a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal" (Eliot, Selected 38). Eliot upholds the idea that the entire existing order of literature "must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted" with the addition of each new work of art (Selected 38). Years later, in 1967, a decidedly post-modern Ginsberg states that "anything you write now will refer back to the beginnings and alter all that went before—like turning a Venetian blind" (Composed 12). In both cases, the writers seem to admit that no one poet or poem can be judged in isolation. The men recognize that they are necessarily influenced in some way by all that came before them. It is too tidy to say, therefore, Allen Ginsberg's work was influenced by T.S. Eliot. Rather, it may be that both men admittedly belonged to the past, the present and the future. Both artists explored the shaping influences of their past and understood their individual relation to their present and future, and it will be most useful to explore *to what extent* Ginsberg used the example of T.S. Eliot.

The way that Eliot and Ginsberg use tradition is somewhat different, and reveals a difference in the way each writer perceives the function of poetry. Both writers use Tradition as a source of inspiration, yet they branch off from that inspiration in different ways. Eliot's many reverent allusions to the classics in "The Waste Land" display his respect for them. Eliot's theory behind the frequent allusions is that "the poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning" (Selected 65). Eliot is adapting his wide knowledge of classical studies into a denunciation of modern life. He repeatedly pins classical references to modern situations in order to show how sadly the modern world pales in comparison. His meaning seems to be that the past is an ideal which should be returned to in order to save civilization. The conditions under which "The Waste Land" was written serve to illuminate this ideal. While writing the poem, every day Eliot was faced with the destruction of post-war Europe, with his own failing health and a taxing job at the bank which he could not get out of, and with "a hardly exorable apprehension that two thousand years of European continuity had for the first time run dry" (Kenner 145). Clearly Eliot was beaten down by modern society and longed to return to a "civilized" time.

One aspect of "The Waste Land" that always seems to have held the interest of critics is its *myth*. The commingling of classical allusions and modern images lends a unique sense of memory and newness to the poem. Eliot manages to combine an almost clinical presentation of characters with a tragic eye on lost tradition. Perhaps these two very different undertakings relate in the notion of distance. Eliot sensed that society was becoming distanced from classical knowledge and myth, and he also conveyed his

personages with a clinical detachment. What Eliot admired about the use of a myth, or a “continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity” (as he perceived in James Joyce’s Ulysses), is that it was a “way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (Selected 177). Thus Eliot seems to have wanted a mythical method for “The Waste Land” which would both frame and reinforce his presentation of modern corruption.

Grover Smith’s perception of the mythical method of the poem is also quite interesting. He says:

It may correctly be termed an oblique narrative, being Tiresias’ review of his time and of the times gathered into his time. Instead of chronicling, it evokes dramatic moments of consciousness and self-consciousness; and instead of projecting these cinematographically in detachment from Tiresias, it re-enacts them in his mind. (57)

The myth, then, is that Tiresias collects all of the examples of modern degeneration, and at the same time, is being projected forward onto these situations. Eliot has taken a classical character and thrown him into an uncivilized age, letting him fare only as well as the modern age would permit. Thus Eliot is incorporating a respect for the past into a concern for the future.

Ginsberg as well seems to have been inspired by the past, but in a different way. The past acts almost as a launching pad for what we have achieved in modern society; it deserves respect simply because it is our origins. This does not mean that we have achieved an entirely successful evolution; indeed Ginsberg was willing to portray the many ways in which man can revert to beastly tendencies. Nevertheless, Ginsberg oddly seems to emit a more potent hope for the future than does Eliot. It is peculiar that while

Ginsberg lived in a world even more racked with devastations, weapons, drugs and problems, he manages to preserve more hope than his predecessor. This does not seem to be a discrepancy simply in their humor or personality, because they both appear to present an *honest* vision of their worlds. Perhaps the difference lies in Allen Ginsberg's perspective about poetry. Ginsberg didn't just intend to shift the "existing order" of the poetic tradition, he intended to alter individual and world consciousness. Poetry was not simply an academic exercise for Ginsberg; he sought to reach the human soul with his words. Eliot seems to have been concerned with the academics of poetry; his poetic precision may have superseded a concern for connecting with a universal consciousness. Ginsberg made his poetry accessible to all types of people, believing in a universal consciousness. His scope was not limited to the tradition of literature; he explored the possibility of a Transcendental vision / god / consciousness. Ginsberg's added interest in the Transcendental comes partly as a result of his modernity, and his immersion in the Beat Generation. Ginsberg was influenced by Emerson and the Transcendentalists, whereas Eliot seeks a religious transcendentalism. Eliot may have wanted to evoke a link between individuals and Christianity, while Ginsberg wanted to make a multi-layered connection between the poet, the reader, the language, and universal emotions. Ginsberg's faith in this universal consciousness may be what maintains his optimism.

It is thus worthwhile to examine Ginsberg's place in the Beat Generation, and how it affected his writing. The Beat movement originated with observations of corruption and criminality in America. The increasingly industrialistic society favored what John Tytell calls the "American 'virtues' of progress and power" at any cost, and discounted individual importance. A distrust of this conformity compelled a group of

artists to break off from mainstream society (4). Edward Halsey Foster summarizes the intention of the Beat writers as follows: “The ideal for all the beat writers was to remove or transfigure the individual beyond the control of an oppressive, conformist society—which any society has the potential to be” (196). Thus it seems that *freedom* was an important consideration for the Beats, and that they would not be likely to endorse any political system that might lead to conformity. T.S. Eliot, on the other hand, had little freedom in his life, and actually found control comforting. Eliot favored self-control, and believed that individuals should lead a structured lifestyle. He chose a conformist society over a free one, and did not think man responsible enough to be able to live well with freedom. Eliot thought that individuals needed a religious and a societal order to keep their natural temptations in check. He was distrustful of the individualism that capitalism requires, and he observed that individuals living in a capitalistic society could be easily corrupted by money, power, and sex. Thus Eliot would not have supported the total freedom that the Beats promoted.

The Beats insisted that every man should have the freedom to be different, and a departure from convention can also be seen in their prose and poetry. The Beats adapted their societal concerns into art, and formed a literary community which allowed each of them an individual voice that was shaped only by his/her personal choices and style. The Beat writers shared their works and visions and often collaborated when developing a style. Allen Ginsberg may have had the “self-appointed Ezra Pound role, which resulted in so many of the Beats’ getting published” (Miles 144). It was this supportive atmosphere that allowed for the first remarkable reading of “Howl” at the Six Gallery on October 13, 1955. Ginsberg gave a very moving poetry reading:

He read with a small, intense voice, but the alcohol and the emotional intensity of the poem quickly took over, and he was soon swaying to its powerful rhythm, chanting like a Jewish cantor, sustaining his long breath length, savoring the outrageous language. Kerouac began cheering him on, yelling 'Go!' at the end of each line, and soon the audience joined in. Allen was completely transported. At each line he took a deep breath, glanced at the manuscript, then delivered it, arms outstretched, eyes gleaming, swaying from one foot to the other with the rhythm of the words. Rexroth sat with tears in his eyes and ignored Ruth Witt-Diamant's gestures to him to tone it down. Allen continued to the last sob, the audience cheering with him wildly at every line. (Miles 196)

Clearly the Beats shared a remarkable intimacy through poetry, but it did take Ginsberg some time before he employed the Beat values himself.

Ginsberg is known for his novelty and contemporaneity, yet his involvement with the Beat crowd escalated after he had spent about ten years working *inside* of the accepted tradition. His obvious interest in 20th century society and politics, his brutally straightforward language, and his breath-focused lines all serve to mark him "post-modernist"; however, Ginsberg began his career as a very traditional writer, emulating Thomas Wyatt and Andrew Marvell. Ginsberg was for the most part content to employ traditional English form and style, yet even then, his interest in the more complex and visionary writers within that tradition showed his leanings toward a new literary style. For a decade he searched for ways to transform real emotion so that it could remain on the surface of the work (Foster 89). Ginsberg seems to have been seeking a compromise between the use of standard form and the presentation of true emotion. Unsatisfied with the attempt, he adopted a new approach with which he would pursue poetic emotion. It was partly due to the influence of Jack Kerouac and William Carlos Williams that Ginsberg made this major shift in his poetry. Kerouac often encouraged Ginsberg to work impulsively, to plan less, and to trust his instincts. Kerouac suggested the creative

technique of “sketching,” which was offered to him by architect Ed White. White said: “why don’t you just sketch the streets like a painter, but with words?” Convinced, Ginsberg went through all his old journals to collect the best word pictures, and he arranged these lines onto the page as lines in the style of Williams (Miles 145). Williams was extremely pleased with the results of this venture, and began a working relationship with Ginsberg which would last for the rest of Williams’ life (Miles 146). In the years just prior to writing “Howl,” Ginsberg adopted some important suggestions from Williams. Ginsberg “made radical changes in his writing style, adopting the open form, with syllable count and variable breath-stop length for verse measurement, that enabled him to write ‘Howl’” (Miles 139). In addition to experimenting with form, Ginsberg attempted to enhance his creative vision, and he would try to encourage the onset of poetic visions with mind-altering drugs. Having experimented with peyote at this time, Ginsberg “decided that probably only William Carlos Williams and himself in a radius of fifty miles could see the world in such terrible detail and were so conscious of the open sky and the solidity of the transparent air” (Miles 142).

Ginsberg’s style seems to have evolved as an amalgam of his personal taste, his participation in the Beat movement, and his interaction with his predecessors. His association with Ezra Pound is one of the most significant connections he made, and this association may be the most substantial link between Ginsberg and Eliot. Eliot and Ginsberg wrote in different times and with different styles, yet both of them were strongly influenced by Ezra Pound. Pound may be a sort of bridge between the classicists and the post-modern writers. Pound was in charge of editing “The Waste Land” and Pound’s teachings later had a marked influence on the post-modern movement. Both

Eliot's and Ginsberg's work show signs of adhering to the guidelines found in Pound's literary essays.

Eliot insisted that Pound was the individual most responsible for the revolution in 20th century poetry (Pound xi). This statement is a remarkable clue that Pound, working with the early 20th century body of literature, precipitated the changes which post-modern writers would adopt. For instance, Pound favored the concept "make it new," and even admitted that he preferred Eliot's use of the contemporary in his poetry, rather than the employment of the "medieval romantic trappings" (420). Pound liked that Eliot was capable of working with universals; Pound says that "his men in shirt-sleeves, and his society ladies, are not a local manifestation; they are the stuff of our modern world, and true of more countries than one" (420). Pound's interest in the contemporary and universal is also shown through his suggestions to post-modern writers. Pound, like Whitman, frowned on excessive description in poetry, and preferred that poets simply "present." Pound wanted to move away from the use of flowery language and abstractions, and instead developed a form based on concretes. His belief that "the natural object is always the adequate symbol" (5) seems to have been quite influential upon the post-modernists. Pound's credo "make it new" involved going back to the origins of words and sounds. He explains that a poet should act like a scientist and begin by learning "what has been discovered already" (6). Eliot thought that Pound's critical goal was always "the refreshment, revitalisation, and 'making new' of literature in our own time" (Pound xiii), and the way in which Pound achieved this was by connecting with many other writers, and almost coercing them to write well. Eliot also says that

Pound had a strong loyalty to his art, and that it was realized in his interactions with a new generation of writers (Pound xii).

Charles Olson, another influential post-modern writer, also became involved with the teachings of Ezra Pound. In an introduction to the Charles Olson & Ezra Pound essays, Catherine Seelye argues that "if Olson, as has been argued by many, is an important figure in modern poetry, if indeed he is a pivotal figure, the clarion of the changing of the guard, this, then, is a significant meeting and a necessary part of the record" (Olson xxvi). The two writers developed a connection that, while it was not as intense as the "master-disciple" Pound-Eliot relationship, was strong and did affect Olson's writing (Olson xv). The men were a unique pair: Pound was at the zenith of his career while Olson was just beginning, and Pound was an "alleged Fascist-sympathizer, the other a New Deal Democrat" (xxvi). Olson had real difficulty dealing with Pound's questionable political affiliations; nevertheless, Olson believed that Pound's work was great enough to deserve close examination (16). Olson did incorporate some of Pound's ideas into his work, and was quite interested in Pound's insistence upon verse that was based on speech and breath. Olson sadly comments that Pound's incarceration for treason and fascism takes away from his poetic talent: "poor, poor Pound, the great gift, the true intellectual, rotting away, being confined and maltreated by the Administration. SHIT. And he's taken in by it! Here he's a punk like the rest of them" (49).

Olson's respect for Pound's intellect was shared by many of the Beats, especially Allen Ginsberg. Ginsberg's parents knew Joe Gould, who was then a protégé of Pound (Miles 15), and when Allen completed "Howl" he sent a copy to Pound. Ginsberg sent the poem to many leading figures but was determined to receive a response from Pound

in particular, and also sent him a second letter and then his book: Howl and Other Poems (Miles 210). Later in life Ginsberg would have his own meetings with Pound; there Ginsberg would ask questions about Pound's style and expose him to the music of Bob Dylan and The Beatles. As Pound was quite old and somewhat ill at the time of these visits, he did not say too much about being exposed to a new kind of music. Nevertheless, Pound's caregiver (Olga Rudge) later assured Ginsberg that Ezra would not have sat through the music if he wasn't amused (Ginsberg, Composed 17). The relationship between the two men seems fairly intimate, as indicated by Ginsberg's journal notes; Ginsberg forgave Pound for practicing anti-Semitic behavior for much of his life, and at times they embraced as though old friends (Composed 11). In various lectures, Ginsberg admitted that Pound was quite influential for the younger generation of writers (including Charles Olson and Robert Creeley), and that he himself had been influenced by Pound. He says that Williams' notion of "no ideas but in things," (which Ginsberg respected), is the same as Pound's belief that "the natural object" is the best symbol (Composed 122), and thus reveals that he was affected by the theories of both men. Ginsberg also utilized Pound's technique of creating similes without using the words "like" or "as." Ginsberg used words placed side-by-side without qualification in "Howl," and says: "if you can do it by just putting thing-facts together without a linking word, if they actually jump together in the mind, then you got it made" (Composed 127). With Pound's assistance, this technique may have also been present in its early stages in "The Waste Land"; Pound removed some obvious transitions and linkages from the poem. Part of the complexity of "The Waste Land" comes from the overlapped facts and adjacent ideas; they make the reader perform the actual links in his/her mind.

Another area where Ginsberg saw the handiwork of Pound was in the speech-based line. Ginsberg concedes that the idea of “the breath as control and measure of the line” may have come from Olson, or may be found even earlier in Pound (Composed 40). Williams once told Ginsberg that Pound had a “mystical ear,” and Ginsberg himself had respect for Pound’s “ear so fine, so subtle, that he could hear gradations of vowel lengths that other people wouldn’t notice and so could balance vowels from line to line” (Composed 129). Ginsberg attributed the first ventures into copying the poet’s own speech patterns to Pound and Williams; they began a process which the younger generation could take to the next level: chanting (Composed 59). What Ginsberg seems to have admired most about Pound was his pervasive involvement in the literary field. Ginsberg relates Pound’s influence on the post-modern writers to Whitman’s concept of comradeship:

So there’s been a comradeship, a Whitmanic adhesiveness from generation to generation, from the older generation to ourselves and from ourselves to a younger group of geniuses who are reflecting our own explorations back on us and teaching us how to go further. (Composed 93)

Eliot admired Pound for the *kind* of literary criticism which he practiced. Unlike most critics of literature, Pound was not afraid to address the actual process of writing poetry. Eliot wrote the introduction for *Selected Essays of Ezra Pound*, and in doing so he praises Pound’s ability to respond specifically to the “needs” of his time. In addition, Eliot admires Pound for covering “whole areas of poetry, which no future criticism can afford to ignore” (Pound x). The very practices which Pound encouraged in essays such as *A Retrospect* are seen in both Eliot’s and Ginsberg’s work. For instance, Eliot and Ginsberg seem to adhere to the three main principles of *vers libre* which Pound decided

upon (with H.D. and Richard Aldington) in 1912: first, to treat the matter of the poem directly, second, to not use any words which do not contribute to the meaning of the work, and third, to use the musical phrase as the foundation for composition (Pound 3). The second suggestion is one that Eliot and Ginsberg seemed to take to heart; even though their most famous poems are rather long, the ideas within are instrumental to the effect. "The Waste Land" and "Howl" would not achieve the same level of impact if they did not catalog at length the ways in which the modern world was changing and failing. Eliot had allowed Pound to do some additional editing of "The Waste Land," and Ginsberg followed Basil Bunting's suggestion "to look at Pound because *I* had too many words, and showed Pound as model for economy in *presentation* of sensory phenomena, via words" (Composed 7). All three of Pound's guidelines upon a verse form which is by nature "free" reveal that there must be an interaction between inspired ideas and manipulated form. Eliot and Ginsberg both take on the issue of inspiration combined with manipulation, and come to the conclusion that both processes are necessary in order to write good poetry.

It appears that the post-modernists were working in response to the innovations of their predecessors, yet the Beat writers were also working on a new goal: uniting the self and the universe through literature. Linking the self with a universal vision may have roots in the Romantic tradition, but the Beats made this goal their signature by removing all guise from their writing and letting the naked truth, however difficult it may be, connect with primitive emotions. The Beats achieved this (or at least aimed for this) via the most personal and private expressions. They seemed to believe that their personal writings could unite with others on some *spiritual* level, rather than using outward speech

which only allows for superficial “transactions” (Foster 15). This distinction was demonstrated by Ginsberg during a 1957 public reading of “Howl.” After being heckled by a drunken audience member, Ginsberg began to disrobe, explaining that what he was trying to prove was *nakedness*. He insisted that a poet had to be extremely brave, willing to use “candor” and “spiritual nakedness” (Miles 215). This incident is a good example of the Beats’ agenda; their goal was to reach others on a fundamental level via intimate exposure. Ginsberg believed that the best works of art are those which link personal emotion with universal sentiment, and he followed this guideline in “Howl.” Many of the personae are sketches of real people with whom Ginsberg had a personal connection. His 1946 apartment-mates who experimented with writing and drugs were immortalized in the passage: “who scribbled all night rocking and rolling over lofty incantations which in the yellow morning were stanzas of gibberish” (Miles 79). Further, Ginsberg used Herbert Huncke’s real-life experience of wandering, homeless, when released from prison to make the line “who walked all night with their shoes full of blood on the snowbank docks waiting for a door in the East River to open to a room full of steamheat and opium” (Miles 107). Ginsberg meshed real situations with created images to produce a work which could reveal aspects of his life *and* create a connection with anyone else’s experiences.

T. S. Eliot also addresses this question of “personality” in his essay entitled “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” There Eliot insists that “poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, it is an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality” (Selected 43). Eliot plainly did not want to reveal his innermost self to an audience, yet some aspects of “The Waste Land” are undeniably

autobiographical. Some situations and individuals from Eliot's life seem to turn up in the poem. Eliot grew up surrounded by four sisters and an old nurse, and then went on to have a troubled relationship with Vivien Haigh-Wood. Eliot originally was interested in Vivien's sexuality, but Vivien's emotional instability, coupled with Eliot's low physical stamina, led to problems in their sexual relationship. Some critics even identify the "neurotic woman" in part II of "The Waste Land" with Vivien, and Eliot's general discomfort with female sexuality is evident within the poem. In addition, the two women in the pub scene speak nonchalantly about abortion and view sex as a mere tool of marriage. All instances of sexuality in the poem are quite unfavorable; in fact, Eliot may be treating the sexual act "in impersonal and characteristically violent terms; it is implicated in an awareness of sterility and leaves only guilt or resentment in its wake" (Ackroyd 66). Another part of Eliot's life which appears in the poem is urban decay. His St. Louis childhood environment was grimy, shabby and slum-like (Ackroyd 23). Perhaps St. Louis was where Eliot first began to record the modern decay in America, which became a key aspect of waste-land imagery. Eliot's personal interest in the Eastern world also enters into the poem. He was intrigued with the Buddhist temperament and was considering a conversion at this time (Ackroyd 37). Eliot was somewhat disaffected with the Western world and seemed to find solace in Eastern religion and tradition.

How can the discrepancy between Eliot's need for privacy and his inclusion of autobiography be relieved? The answer may lie in Eliot's understanding of personality, and in the process which a poet uses. A poet must clear his mind of the feelings which he/she associates with certain ideas in order to honestly portray an emotion. Eliot explains this distinction by saying: "the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a

particular medium...in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" (Selected 42). This medium does appear to contain emotion; the emotion is simply more objective and symbolic than personal. If personality for Eliot signifies the creative impulse (rather than an individual collection of characteristics which determine behavior), Eliot's claim can be reconciled with his poetry. When the creative mind is able to strip itself of irrelevancies, it will be able to escape "into a permanent transformation or objectified point of view in its art" (Smith 22). Ezra Pound even refutes the idea that Eliot did not use emotion in his work, and instead qualifies the type of emotion which Eliot did use. Pound says that "emotion may be anterior or concurrent," but either way "there is no intelligence without emotion" (420). Pound was saying that emotion arises out of intelligence, and since intelligence implies craft, it appears that Eliot did not let his emotions direct a poem. Instead he worked his emotions concurrently into the poem. Eliot insists that: "No *vers is libre* for the man who wants to do a good job" (Pound 421), proving that his inspiration was tempered by his intellectual critique of the work. Eliot's intellectual leanings here are a reaction against Romanticism; he was determined to avoid an overflow or excess of emotion in his work.

Another issue regarding "personality" that should be considered is to what extent the *reader's* situation affects the reading of a work. If a poet truly is calling upon universal sentiments, then it is not surprising that poetry would encourage an emotional reaction from the reader. It is helpful to consider Grover Smith's observation that "The Waste Land" is by nature a public document, but since it is not *real*, it is "an ideal world and therefore a private one. There are no shared experiences, for the actual world becomes private in the experiencing" (Smith 5). Smith seems to be saying that since each

reader brings a different background to a work, the way each reader experiences a work will necessarily be different. Thus it seems that personality can never be completely divorced from poetry; it is a tricky area which should be considered in its various contexts.

Aside from simply speculating about similarities in Ginsberg's and Eliot's treatment of the literary tradition, it is crucial to explore Ginsberg's opinions about his predecessor. In passing references, Ginsberg has noted what he believes to be limitations in Eliot. At times Ginsberg has addressed the work of Eliot directly, and each time there seems to be present a mix of distaste and admiration. Ginsberg even admitted that he has had anxious dreams about Eliot. An interviewer reminds Ginsberg: "You have recurrent anxiety dreams about being outside the academy, outside a career path. There's a dream in which T. S. Eliot is reading your poetry. You're in tears; T. S. Eliot's reading your poetry!" Ginsberg became amused by the memory and adds: "That was a very funny dream, particularly the idea of Eliot putting me to bed in his digs in Chelsea, getting me an English hot toddy..." (Blume 1). Ginsberg seems to have been concerned that he was not liked by Eliot, a leading writer and critic of the time. Upon completing "Howl," Ginsberg sent the poem (and a long letter asking for the reader's response) to leading figures in the literary world. Among these figures were Lionel Trilling, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot (Miles 203). Eliot was also one of the receivers of the book entitled Howl and Other Poems (Miles 210). Plainly Ginsberg wanted to know what the leading American writers thought of his work, and to fear Eliot's disapproval is to admit that he saw a difference in his approach from that of Eliot. Thus Ginsberg seemed to work with a consciousness of the past, and tried to reconcile that with what he offered to modernity.

Apparently, Ginsberg managed to recover from anxiety about Eliot, because in 1949 Ginsberg and Carl Solomon co-wrote a humorous and sarcastic letter to Eliot. This letter is a telling piece of evidence about how Ginsberg regarded the “Most distinguished Number 1 poet of 1949.” The note, which is under a thin guise of adulation, proceeded to accuse Eliot’s religious conversion of being “fraudulent,” to point out that Eliot had a “big nose,” to call his family “mongoloid,” and to express the possibility of Eliot also turning into “a feebleminded mongolian idiot.” This outrageous letter served to attack any pretension in Eliot. What throughout had seemed playful, ends with an ominous prediction; the voice ends by referring to himself as a “young poet who through passing through a position of temporary and purely transitional sterility, as far as productivity presently counts, will soon be bigger than you” (Howl 143-4). Thankfully, the letter went unsend. However, what may have begun as a farce ended up being quite prophetic. This letter suggests that Ginsberg consciously considered surpassing Eliot in terms of productivity, and even thought about *replacing* Eliot as “dictator.” What served on one hand to be a pretty blatant attack on Eliot, was also a way of honoring him. The fact that these two conspirators found it *worthwhile* to go after Eliot reveals that they found him to be a figure deserving of attention. Furthermore, that this letter was approved by Ginsberg to appear in the “Annotations: Part III” section of Howl: Original Draft Facsimile, Transcript & Variant Versions implies that Ginsberg perceived some kind of connection between “Howl” and T. S. Eliot. Since Eliot’s predominant poetic contribution was “The Waste Land,” perhaps at the time of the letter Ginsberg had on his mind a way to outdo the poem. It may also be significant that the co-author of the letter would come to be featured in “Howl” as a major symbol of victimization in the modern world. Allen

Ginsberg never said that Eliot was not useful, and even if Ginsberg believed him to be weak in vision, he would probably concede that Eliot contributed to the study of form.

Ginsberg would most likely subscribe to Eliot's argument that "someone said: 'The dead writers are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did.' Precisely, and they are that which we know" (Selected 40).

Comparing the Texts of "The Waste Land" and "Howl"

In addition to comparing Eliot's and Ginsberg's treatment of the literary tradition, it is essential to compare their poetic styles. The language, tone, and structure of "Howl" must be evaluated in light of the same in "The Waste Land" in order to determine how much Ginsberg was influenced by Eliot. The language of each poem is a logical place to begin a comparison since the words themselves determine the effect of the work. Eliot's language in the poem is not very shocking anymore, but in the 1920s it was still fairly controversial to use ignoble words like "cigarette ends" and "sandwich papers" in poetry. The convention had been that poetry contained beautiful images conveyed with musical words, and Eliot questioned this convention by including some decidedly unattractive sounds and images in "The Waste Land." Ginsberg seems to have taken this irreverent use of words to the extreme; he is willing to use *any* word to convey an idea, so long as it is the best word for the situation. He is as content to talk of "borscht and tortillas" as he is to say "pubic beards" or "wild cooking pederasty and intoxication." This abundance of mean language is partly due to Ginsberg's belief that poetry should employ common words taken from spoken language. It should also be noted that Eliot's and Ginsberg's language had to be designed to reflect the tone of the piece, and since each poem addresses the downfall of modern civilization, what better words to use than coarse, unpleasant words which are empty of traditional symbolism?

Eliot would probably not question Ginsberg's use of crude language or slang because Eliot did not hold any value for a word in isolation. Eliot thought that a word

achieves harmony or significance *in relation to* others. He refers to this phenomenon as the “point of intersection,” and explains that a word would gain context from the other words preceding and following it. Ginsberg also seems to be more interested in how words fit together than in their individual meanings. In part I of “Howl,” he jams together unlike terms that, without the overall context of the line and the section, might not have had any singular meaning. For example, Ginsberg speaks of “Tangerian bone-grindings” in line 21, and “secret gas station solipsisms of johns” in line 43.

This sort of juxtaposition is a technique which lends strength and power to both “The Waste Land” and “Howl.” In the last lines of *The Fire Sermon* section of “The Waste Land,” Eliot splices Eastern and Western religion. Lines 307-309 link Christianity and Buddhism with the words: “To Carthage then I came / Burning burning burning / O Lord Thou pluckest me out.” In his own “Notes” on the poem, Eliot insists that “the collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident” (Waste Land 148). This intentional connection is not simply for shock value; it encourages actual consideration about the ties between two very different cultures. Because Eliot condemns modern Western society in the poem, it appears that he sees potential in the Eastern tradition. The location of the linkage is also significant; it comes near the end of the poem where Eliot’s solutions for the modern decay soon become evident. Thus this unique combination becomes a key clue to Eliot’s purpose in the poem, which is in part to offer Eastern ritual as a replacement for current Western deterioration.

Eliot uses other combinations and echoes which give the poem its subtle irony. For instance, he flips the common connotations of the seasons in *The Burial of the Dead*.

April, which generally connotes rebirth and hope, is “the cruellest month,” while winter provides a numbing cover / comfort. Eliot begins the poem with this juxtaposition in nature, and then maintains a juxtaposition of human nature throughout the poem. The pairing of the lower class people with the learned allusions is an important use of the technique; he ironically places his commoners amidst classical situations of which they have no experience. In addition, Eliot uses an echoic technique with the words “unreal city” in order to keep returning the reader to the image of faltering society, which is being driven home by the poem. The unreal city image is woven throughout sections I, III, and V. This provides “The Waste Land” with a shifting balance “between what is remembered and what is introduced” and this produces the eerie “echoic quality” (Ackroyd 120).

Ginsberg also employs juxtaposition in “Howl,” yet he uses it specifically with a group of unlike words (rather than on a wide collection of ideas). He presents opposite images within a phrase and makes the reader’s mind span the ellipsis to discover the relations between things. The contrasts that Ginsberg offers often provide “political force” by offering relations that “are not open to strict analysis or explanation. These contrasts reveal feelings and mysteries beyond logic and thereby call into question a civilization which claims to value rational, pragmatic procedures” (Foster 105). Ginsberg may have been calling upon primitive responses in his readers, responses which are free from standards and conformity. In any case, like Eliot, he achieves a unique power by placing seemingly unlike things in close proximity.

If Ginsberg was consciously trying to recreate a wasteland in “Howl,” he did so with a tone different from that of the original “Waste Land.” “Howl” is a first-person

revelation that builds up in urgency and intensity. The intensity is conveyed in part by the frequent use of exclamation points and shows the poem to be a personal plea on behalf of the misunderstood victims of modern society. "The Waste Land" does not have a fixed speaker; it has a shifting consciousness and uses a great deal of dialogue by interchangeable personages. It contains matter-of-fact glimpses at the emptiness of the modern world. "Howl" emits feelings of anger, fear, love, hate, and hope. Madness is the foundation on which hope lies. "The Waste Land" is devoid of conspicuous emotion and lacks any evidence of human connection. It offers a less optimistic vision of how people responded to the crumbling of civilization. The mood of the two poems is decidedly different; however, each poem in its own way succeeds in conveying the emptiness of modern life. The main difference in tone is simply that Ginsberg was more overtly passionate, and this may have stemmed from his belief in the Beat generation's focus on candor and nakedness. Eliot may have belonged to a more reserved age; regardless, Eliot was quite introverted and valued privacy.

At first glance, the structure of the poems seems quite different. Eliot divides "The Waste Land" into five sections, and within each section is a collection of excerpts in varying line length. Ginsberg breaks down "Howl" into three parts, with a regular pattern in each. "The Waste Land" seems to have a less defined structure, partly because Ezra Pound did some final elimination from the text. "Howl" contains many chaotic images and wandering ideas, yet it has a clear structure which connects the parts of the poem. It is interesting that a poet such as Eliot who demanded order from all aspects of his life allowed his poem to be rather free-flowing and loosely structured, and that a poet such as

Ginsberg who opposed all means of conformity would give a defined regularity to his poem. Part of the reason for these curious choices has to do with the music of the poems.

Despite their use of different styles, Eliot and Ginsberg both seem to incorporate a primitive music within their poems. Both works employ an almost chanting repetition. The patterns of word and sound are a driving force in each poem, linking structure with meaning. Eliot insists that “the music of poetry is not something which exists apart from the meaning,” and thus pays careful attention to the developing rhythms within his poems (Selected 110). The repetition in both “The Waste Land” and “Howl” tends to impart a sense of emphasis and intensity, yet ironically it also provides the poems with a circumvolution that is suggestive of an endless cycle. Since modern emptiness is being berated in each poem, that is precisely the cycle which cannot be broken out of.

In “The Waste Land,” the pub scene in *A Game of Chess* cleverly mixes rhythm and repetition with the vernacular. The lines of the common woman contain coarse and improper speech. The phrase “I said” seems to punctuate nearly every one of her lines, and while it may allow the reader to speed through each line as if no word or idea is any more important than another, it also suggests a lack of refinement on her part. This character is not at all daunted by the regular refrain of the bartender, whose “HURRY UP PLEASE IT’S TIME” serves as a sort of mocking chorus to the woman’s crude “song.” The double use of his refrain in lines 168-169 implies that the song is about to end, and finally the woman recognizes her cue and finishes with a musical, yet tainted, version of Shakespeare’s words.

The first two sections in *What the Thunder Said* are beautifully crafted and harmonious, and are left practically untouched from the original draft (Waste Land 71-

81). The first three lines of part V suggest a summation of sorts, a calling up of the passion and intensity which will lead into a soothing and nearly hypnotizing chant in the next stanza. The triple use of “after the” brings together all the different agonies, and at the same time slows down the reader as a reminder that everything which has come before is shifting into a new mode. The pace picks up in the next stanza, where Eliot plays with the ideas of “water,” “rock,” “sand,” “dry,” and “water.” The lines are quite circuitous, reflecting the “winding road” which the speaker is traveling on, and reinforce the meandering path of the poem itself. The constant alteration of the state of each noun implies the insignificance of qualification. It does not matter *what if* there “were rock / And also water” or “a pool among the rock” because the water does not exist. The only statement that manages to preserve its value is the last; the word “but” in line 358 stops the musical cycle with the crucial reminder that “there is no water.” This halting of the music also reinforces the theme of paralysis in the poem.

The end of the poem, beginning with line 395, employs a few different types of music. A hard “g” sound is intermingled with a hard “d” in lines 395-403. The words “ganga,” “gathered,” and “given” give way to the pressures of “da,” “datta,” and “daring.” Here it seems that a new, yet primitive, sound is emerging. “Da” is the simple, yet strong, introduction to each new solution given by Eliot. Lines 402-9 shift from the “d” sound into a looser, rambling discussion of what “datta” entails. The reader is then shocked back into the chant with lines 410-11, and then must follow another segue into the meaning of “dayadhvam.” The same effect happens at line 417, and this variation on a theme ends with the ever important idea of “controlling hands” (line 422). The second last line of the poem unites the three ideas and lends a synthesis to the entire poem. The

culmination of this unity is thrice repeated in a sort of oath: “shantih shantih shantih” (line 433). The last line is an Eastern blessing which serves to interrupt the cycle of Western deterioration.

Eliot also includes a line from the “London Bridge” nursery rhyme in line 426. The sing-song quality of the phrase gives it a unique function in the poem. It is a deceptively childish notion, yet in this poem it is an excellent realization of the impending destruction of the modern world.

Some critics believe that Pound had an instrumental role in discerning the underlying music of “The Waste Land” (Ackroyd 119), yet obviously, on at least an intuitive level, Eliot must have developed this very rhythm. Grover Smith reveals that in Eliot’s review of *Le Sacre du printemps*, Eliot spoke of a musical process that he was developing in “The Waste Land.” As was Stravinsky, Eliot was attempting to unearth a primitive, unconscious rhythm within himself which would serve “the sense of the present.” Eliot seemed to admire the way in which Stravinsky could

transform the rhythm of the steppes into the scream of the motor horn, the rattle of machinery, the grind of wheels, the beating of iron and steel, the roar of the underground railway, and the other barbaric cries of modern life; and to transform these despairing noises into music. (Smith 10)

Ginsberg also manages to steal the “barbaric cries of modern life,” and to adapt these into a powerful rhythm in “Howl.” In part I, Ginsberg overwhelms the reader with synchronicity. He uses a pattern of packed lines which are united by the word “who,” followed by a verb. The verbs attributed to this nameless pack of personae range from violent action words to passive states of being. Because the lines are carried on until a necessary breath-stop, the “who”+ verb formula unites the section and produces a

repetitive chant. The word “who” necessarily begins each line because “the best minds of my generation” are the focus of Ginsberg’s interest. These very people who are being “destroyed by madness,” are also being saved by it. Their madness is what separates them from the unfeeling, deteriorating society. The madness is a way of rejecting the sometimes silent horrors of industrialization and conformity. The second most important notions are the verbs that follow, the words that express the extent of the madness. The word “who” returns the reader to the destroyed minds, and the very next word that assaults is the courageous action of these minds. They “plunged,” “howled,” “barreled,” “crashed,” and “dreamt”; in almost all cases, these great minds fought against the stifling conformity of the time.

Part II of “Howl” is centered on the force of “Moloch,” a representative of modern contamination. Moloch is a traditional religious figure, a god of fire to whom parents show their worship by sacrificing and burning their children. In the Old Testament of the Bible, the Canaanites and the Phoenicians would offer sacrifices to Moloch, and while child sacrifice was common, it “was condemned by the prophets...as a pagan holdover or foreign import” (“Moloch” 335). In the book of Leviticus the Lord says to Moses: “you shall not give any of your children to devote them by fire to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord” (Noth 133). It is unusual that this prohibition is located in chapter 18 of Leviticus, which is devoted to limits placed on sexual relations; nonetheless, the passing reference shows that praising Moloch does serious dishonor to the Lord. The subject of Moloch is addressed more fully in chapter 20; here the Lord tells Moses of the punishments that will accompany any praise to Moloch:

Any man of the people of Israel...who gives any of his children to Molech shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. I myself will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, defiling my sanctuary and profaning my holy name. (Noth 144)

Therefore, while Moloch is portrayed as a deity, he is also shown to be a false god who misleads his followers. The ambiguity of this figure is also seen in the origin of his title: “the consonants ‘mlk’ stood for ‘king,’ a title for Yahweh, so the sacrifice was to him...in Hebrew oral tradition, the consonants were pronounced with the vowels for the word ‘shame’ and the resulting combination, Moloch, or Molech, was treated as if it were the name of a foreign god imported by an apostate king such as Solomon” (“Moloch” 335). The contradictory nature of Moloch is also seen in the book of Judges, in which child sacrifice is perceived as a terrible tragedy, and yet does not seem to be “contrary to the spirit of Yahweh’s religion” (Burney 320).

Ginsberg seems to offer the figure of Moloch in the same way that Eliot drives “The Waste Land” with several passive, emotionless people. Eliot’s characters relinquish their humanity without a second thought, and they do not sense that they are any worse off for not having real connections with other people. Ginsberg holds Moloch responsible for being the “incomprehensible prison” (Howl 6), yet the history of this god indicates that his power comes from human sacrifice. Human beings must betray their own connections to give power to this monster, and in that respect, Ginsberg’s personae in Part II are morally questionable. They not only relinquish their humanity, they consciously *give it away*. It is important to distinguish between the “best minds” of Part I and the implied Moloch-worshippers of Part II. The type of people who would pay homage to Moloch are the authority figures of Ginsberg’s world, the people who

arbitrarily decide which human beings are worthy of salvation. The great minds which are “destroyed by madness” are the people who fight against the figure of Moloch. Ginsberg describes Moloch as being “the vision of the mechanical feelingless inhuman world we live in and accept- and the key line finally is ‘Moloch whom I abandon’” (Howl 152). Ginsberg is the example for others because he denies the power of Moloch, and therefore embraces the cause of humanity. The urgent exclamations and repetition of the word “Moloch” give an intensity to the section, which reflects the speaker’s anger and morality. The symbol of Moloch contains individuals devoid of true emotion and connection, and Ginsberg’s anger at Moloch lends “Howl” a strong moral flavor. Eliot’s poem is less explicitly charged with morals, and the empty characters simply exist without question. Both Eliot and Ginsberg intended to show the misguided nature of much of modern society, but Ginsberg includes more blatant morality than does Eliot. Eliot had given Pound permission to edit “The Waste Land,” and Pound did a thorough job of removing any conspicuous moral judgments or didacticism from the text. It has even been suggested that the pervasive sense of burning throughout “The Waste Land” may refer to the human sacrifices given to Moloch (Kenner 172), so perhaps Ginsberg had already sensed the importance of the symbol and believed that it deserved further attention in a modern context.

The style of Part II is also reflected by the “Footnote to Howl.” In the “Footnote,” the pattern is quite similar; the word “Holy” is simply substituted for “Moloch.” It seems that an emotional howl ending in a real connection with another troubled soul is enough to give everything the quality of holiness. “Everybody’s holy! everywhere is holy! everyday is in eternity! Everyman’s an angel!”, suggesting that stripping down to one’s

bare soul can form a tangible connection to life which makes any suffering worthwhile. Although every thing in this section is on equal terms, the last line seems to imply a sort of conclusion. Because of its location, “the supernatural extra brilliant intelligent kindness of the soul” is set out as though it, in particular, brought on this state of holiness. If the greatness of the soul is actually what brought about the happiness, then the link with another special soul is key to the achievement.

In part III of “Howl,” the assertion that “I’m with you in Rockland” is repeated, alternating with a line that begins with the word “where” and is followed by a description of a situation shared with Carl Solomon. The constancy of the repeated phrase brings the reader back to a fresh association. If Ginsberg had only used the line “I’m with you in Rockland” once, and then proceeded with all the “where...” lines, the reader would not achieve the same sense of a binding and universal connection between the two souls. The repetition is reaffirmation which reinforces the poet’s meaning. Ginsberg felt a kinship with Solomon because they both were aware of the constrictions placed on individuals in society who exhibited any signs of difference.

The form of “Howl” seems to have emerged naturally, yet it does achieve a certain symmetry. The poet says that part III “grew out of a desire to build up rhythm using a fixed base to respond to and elongating the response still however containing it within the elastic of one breath or one big streak of thought” (Howl 152). Part I contains the fixed base “who,” part II contains repetition and variations on the fixed base “Moloch,” and part III has a fixed base reply (Howl 153).

The music of poetry is an issue to which Pound devoted a great deal of time and writing. The main guidelines which Pound offers regarding rhythm appear to have been

adhered to by Eliot and Ginsberg. Pound believed that the music of a work deserved patient attention, because while music should contribute to the effect of a poem, it should not ruin the natural shape, sound, or meaning of words (6). Similarly, the musical foundations which Eliot and Ginsberg devised for their poems would not deflect the meaning of the lines. For Pound, the ultimate accomplishment of music in a poem is when “there is... a sort of residue of sound which remains in the ear of the hearer and acts more or less as an organ-base” (7). Both Eliot and Ginsberg succeeded in developing an echoic technique. Furthermore, Pound thought that a rhythm should correspond to “the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed” (9). Once again, Eliot and Ginsberg intended the music in their poems to reflect their particular meanings.

Eliot and Ginsberg also appear to have shared an understanding of how rhythm should arise in poetry. Ginsberg insists that “given a mental release which is not mentally blocked, the breath of verbal intercourse will come with excellent rhythm, a rhythm which is perhaps unimprovable” (*Howl* 153). This comment partly addresses Eliot’s contention that poetry relies both on the manipulative and the spontaneous. Eliot says that “the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour; the labour of sifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing: this frightful toil is as much critical as creative” (*Selected* 73). Yet shortly after, in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, Eliot concedes:

To me it seems that at these moments, which are characterized by the sudden lifting of the burden of anxiety and fear which presses upon our daily life so steadily that we are unaware of it, what happens is something *negative*: that is to say, not ‘inspiration’ as we commonly think of it, but the breaking down of strong habitual barriers- which tend to re-form very quickly. Some obstruction is momentarily whisked away. The accompanying feeling is less like what we know as positive pleasure, than a sudden relief from an intolerable burden. (*Selected* 89)

Further, although Eliot admits that “organization is necessary as well as ‘inspiration’” (Selected 90), in one of Eliot’s later essays he makes the modern observation that sometimes the meaning of a poem can encompass more than just the writer’s conscious intentions, and that it can expand in quite a different direction from its origin. He further offers the idea that a “poet is occupied with frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, though meanings still exist” (Selected 111). Eliot seems to have been on the edge of quite a revolutionary observation here, regarding the poet’s possible interaction with a higher level of consciousness. This sort of Transcendental view was adapted by the Beats into a method of attaining universal emotions. Ginsberg, as well, valued the idea that in a sense, poets do not *work at* a poem; instead poets are just the medium for the expression. Barry Miles gives a nice description of what Ginsberg’s writing process was like: “he sat at the typewriter...with the intention of writing whatever came up. He had taken Rexroth’s criticism to heart and decided that his poetry was too formal and too tight, so instead of sitting down to write a poem, he tried for something looser, more like prose, which would give him more freedom” (187). Ginsberg continues:

I thought I wouldn’t write a *poem* but just write what I wanted to without fear, let my imagination go, open secrecy, and scribble magic lines from my real mind—sum up my life—something I wouldn’t be able to show anybody, writ for my own soul’s ear and a few other golden ears. (Miles 187)

It was out of this very attempt that he began the most famous lines of his career: “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness...”

The idea that the meaning of a poem can be reinforced by its music seems also to have been shared by the writers. Eliot even says that a rhythm may develop *before* it is realized in verbal expression, and also that “this rhythm may bring to birth the idea and

the image” (Selected 114). Inspiration can come from a number of sources, and Eliot’s claims provide more evidence that he believed that the unconscious and the spontaneous have a significant role in the inspired creation of poetry. Similarly, Ginsberg admits that he was influenced by Jack Kerouac’s formula: “first thought best thought.” Ginsberg explains “the first thought you had on your mind, the first thought you thought before you thought, yes, you’d have a better thought, before you thought you should have a more formal thought- first thought, best thought. If you stick with first-flashes, then you’re all right. But the problem is how do you *get* to that first thought” (Composed 117). Thus it seems that Ginsberg favored creative inspiration, but at the same time, he accepted the importance of certain guidelines which would make that inspiration possible. These guidelines include the breath-stop rhythm and the speech-based line.

One of the important techniques of the original Beat writers was to reproduce spoken language in their poems, and this spoken rhythm and diction required a new approach to line length and punctuation. Ginsberg favored a thought-stopped line, in which the need for a breath of air would indicate where to punctuate. He admits that his “basic measure is a unit of thought” (Composed 21), and that “the mind-breaks that you go through in composing are the natural speech pauses too...after all, natural speech pauses indicate mind-breaks” (Composed 19). The ideas that “poetry has as much to learn from prose as from other poetry” and that “an interaction between prose and verse, like the interaction between language and language, is a condition of vitality in literature” (Selected 94) sound a great deal like the above theory, yet they were actually uttered by Eliot years earlier. Eliot, too, perceived the influence of prose upon poetry, and this may

partly account for his departure from the flowery and poetic lines of many of his predecessors. He is not alone in this; many poets have tried to preserve a

Eliot allows that the rhythms within each language (and each poet) vary, yet he insists that one law be upheld in poetry: “that poetry must not stray too far from ordinary everyday language which we use and hear” (Selected 110). Ginsberg clearly observes this rule in “Howl.” Ginsberg “wrote using the rhythms of speech from the American street—black speech, phrasings overheard on street corners and in bars—and the rhythms of bebop and jazz, of sports commentators and the cool DJs on the all-night programs” (Miles 188). Eliot also obeys everyday speech rhythms in “The Waste Land.” The dialogue is common and believable, and many of the words he chooses are unpoetic. Eliot insists that having music within poetry does not necessarily require that poetry be melodious. Since the music of a poem should be designed to reflect the meaning, and meanings vary from poem to poem, it follows that the music in each poem should be different. Eliot states that “dissonance, even cacophony, has its place...in a poem of any length, there must be transitions between passages of greater and less intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole” (Selected 112). While handling the issue of melody, this statement also indirectly addresses Edgar Allan Poe’s claim that no work of art should be lengthy. Poe believed it impossible to preserve a singular intensity of emotion in a long work, and thought that if two different sittings were necessary to complete the reading of a work, “the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed” (196). In the *Philosophy of Composition*, Poe imposes a mathematical system for determining length in poetry; he states that “the brevity must be in direct ratio to the intensity of the intended effect”

(197). Thus Poe implied that any given "effect" has a certain proportional length in which it is to be accomplished. It does seem fair to say that one should try to preserve a particular effect in a poem in order to give the poem unity and structure, but it is rather arbitrary of Poe to insist that the only worthwhile poetry is that which can be read in one sitting. This essay received a great deal of attention, and it is important to note that some critics doubt the sincerity of Poe's claims. Poe said that he thought up an effect and designed a length, form, and refrain that would support the idea, and lastly filled in the actual words of the poem. Poe supposedly set out to explain his process of composition for "The Raven," yet critics doubt whether the poem was actually written in this backwards fashion. Perhaps the most valid idea to take from the essay is that it is crucial to sustain an effect throughout a work. Eliot may not have obeyed Poe's suggestion of brevity, yet he was careful to maintain the tone in "The Waste Land" with the use of echo and rhythm.

The overall effect of "The Waste Land" has received a great deal of scrutiny, and much emphasis has always been put on Ezra Pound's revisions of "The Waste Land." Any conspicuous pattern is attributed to Pound, because he had the final ruling hand over the work. What many critics seem to have overlooked (and this may be due in part to the recentness of available drafts) is that Eliot himself did a great deal of revising and editing *throughout* the development of the poem. At times, Eliot was his own best critic, dumping ideas that did not seem to him to fit with the inherent drift of the work. For instance, Eliot designed 83 extra lines with which to begin part IV. He initially described them as being "Bad" (Waste Land 55), and after attempts at revision, eventually omitted them of his own volition. He also excluded some details that were too blatantly crude.

For example, Eliot cut down the original “Fire Sermon,” which clearly attacked women. The lines “odours, confectioned by the artful French, / Disguise the good old hearty female stench” (Waste Land 23) are decidedly inelegant, and seem almost to betray the seriousness of the poem. Furthermore, originally the “young man carbuncular” “at the corner where the stable is, / Delays only to urinate, and spit” (Waste Land 35). Thankfully, Eliot removed those lines, which would almost have put the man on the side of active evil. Rather than acting disrespectfully, he remains just an unaware man—like every other in the wasteland of modern society. His passivity and indifference are necessary to reiterate Eliot’s theme; an evil deed would be inappropriate here. Eliot also eliminated a 10-line section dealing with “Highbury,” and while they were good lines, their meaning was already inherent in lines 293-4: “Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew / Undid me.” These two simple lines in the final edition can be understood without such detail, simply by considering the context of the whole poem. Eliot truly seemed to know the value of good verse when he saw it, as *What the Thunder Said* remains virtually intact from the first draft. Eliot changed some individual words; he may just have been seeking a very precise set of images here. Ezra Pound barely even touched this section in the drafts; perhaps they both sensed the immediate impressiveness of the lines.

Eliot had planned to write complete scholarly books, yet he never did. His undergraduate thesis turned out to be the longest item he wrote, and Ackroyd explains that “his talent was for concentration and elimination, rather than for expression and divagation” (99). If this is true, perhaps Eliot had a larger role in the editing of “The Waste Land” than he is often given credit for. Many critics attribute the finished product

to Ezra Pound, yet they may be ignoring the considerable mental selection and unification processes which Eliot exercised in order to create the work.

Ezra Pound's "revisions" were mainly a matter of elimination. Pound rejected some sections which would have added other personages to the poem, yet Eliot had already done a considerable amount of elimination. The very first draft of *The Burial of the Dead*, (which was stricken by Eliot), would have introduced several new characters, all of whom are given common "American" names, who are preoccupied with meaningless pursuits, and who speak choppily and coarsely. The abundant dialogue in this draft is common and mean, and filled with comments like "you're new on this beat, aint you? / Then let it alone" (Waste Land 5). It seems fair to say that adding further flat characters would have reinforced the emptiness of society and given the poem a more pervasive sense of didacticism. That is, by presenting several examples of how *not* to live, Eliot essentially would have been suggesting ways to address society's problems. The strength of the poem comes from its subtle moral message.

Since Pound had rejected any superfluous characters, it thus seems possible that he was refusing a moral preoccupation in the poem (Smith 41). Pound had anticipated that the 1920s would show a new poetry that was "harder and saner." He preferred poetry that was "austere, direct, free from emotional slither" (Pound 12), and may have shaped "The Waste Land" to suit his tastes. Pound did refuse the obvious preaching which Eliot had included in section III of his early drafts. Pound would not allow Eliot conspicuously to spout morality as in Eliot's accusation: "London, the swarming life you kill and breed... Vibrates unconscious to its formal destiny" (Waste Land 31).

Pound seems to have been the force denying a conspicuous structure to Eliot's readers. Eliot originally wanted to use a reference to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as an epigraph which would serve to unite the episodes of the poem (Waste Land 2). Eliot believed that Kurtz' horror upon gaining an ultimate knowledge of the world successfully illustrated the focus of the poem: that people should try to achieve a certain understanding of the world; however, the implications of that understanding are utterly frightening. Pound rejected this explanation, and as a result, he forced more analysis from the reader (a choice which unfortunately left the poem open to many misinterpretations). Nevertheless, Eliot himself had doubts about the coherence of "The Waste Land," and seriously considered publishing it in parts (Ackroyd 126). It may not be so unusual that Eliot gave in to nearly all of Pound's revisions, since Eliot wanted little to do with the work after it was completed. Furthermore, Pound exhibited the same kind of economical and precise preferences that Eliot favored (Ackroyd 121). Eliot did, however, believe that some of the omitted text was valuable, because some excerpts were adapted into "The Hollow Men." (Kenner 148). "The Hollow Men" also features the emptiness of modern man; it just does so in a more conspicuous fashion. Perhaps then Eliot was allowed to use more of the morally-charged text which was eliminated from "The Waste Land" by Pound.

The area that Pound seems to have been most successful in, is in the tightening of the lines. That is, turning a bumbling phrase into a single powerful word. For instance, Pound changed the phrase "discharge out of the army" into the wonderfully illustrative "demobbed" in line 139 (Waste Land 13). Pound stripped the poem of any of Eliot's doubts, and provided it with a marked sense of confidence. When Eliot dared to use the

word “perhaps,” Pound wrote “Perhaps be damned” on the manuscript (45). Also, when Eliot wrote “one half-formed thought *may* pass,” Pound scolded him, saying “make up / yr. mind / you Tiresias / if you know / know damn well / or / else you / dont” (47).

Pound was useful in cutting down particular lines to reveal a decisive strength, conveyed with important words only.

In addition to Pound’s input, Eliot incorporated some of his wife’s ideas into the final draft. Vivien Eliot made some truly invaluable suggestions on *A Game of Chess*. Vivien had an excellent grasp of the female voices in the Pub scene, and suggested changing the line “‘No, you needn’t look old-fashioned at me,’ I said” into “If you dont like it you can get on with it.” She also offered the wonderful line “what you get married for if you don’t want to have children” in place of “‘You want to keep him at home, I suppose.’” (Waste Land 19). Eliot adopted both of these revisions almost without change. Vivien truly seemed to understand the sense of the section, and the lines that she provided for the women fit perfectly within the existing dialogue.

Eliot’s own “Notes” on the poem deserve some examination as well. It seems likely that Eliot intended these additions to be a serious contribution to the poem, and yet one cannot help being amused that, at the time, books were printed in multiples of 32 pages, and since “The Waste Land” took up more than 32 and less than 64 pages, Eliot needed some filler (Kenner 150). Years of scholarship show the “Notes” to have been both useful and misleading to readers. For example, Eliot’s suggestion that readers look at the Grail legend and *The Golden Bough* has helped illuminate two important ideas in the poem, but it has also led many *away from* the very words within the poem. Thus

Eliot's warning that these sources should be consulted only by those "who think such elucidation of the poem worth the trouble," is a fair warning (Waste Land 147).

One of the most useful notes that Eliot gave is in reference to line 218. In the personage of Tiresias, Eliot seems to have offered the best clue as to the irony of the poem. In this rather short passage, Eliot explains his treatment of the characters and adds substance to the theme of paralysis. As in the Tradition, Eliot's Tiresias is an amalgam of both sexes. Man and woman commingle in Tiresias, and thus Tiresias is the symbol which provides unity to the characters of the poem. That Tiresias is a *seer* suggests that he will be able to perceive some of the corruption amidst which the other characters float. Nevertheless, Eliot states that while Tiresias is "the most important personage" in the work, he cannot participate and is a "mere spectator." Thus Tiresias is yet another victim of the paralysis which pervades "The Waste Land," and when Eliot insists that "what Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem," he gives the reader a major push toward the notion of limitation (Waste Land 147). That is, even a traditional prophet is rendered basically useless in modern society.

Another crucial area which Eliot deemed worthy of annotation is the section from the *Upanishad*. Eliot did not often feel the need to translate for his readers, and in fact held readers responsible for being as learned as he was, yet in this particular situation he had to reveal "the fable of the meaning of the Thunder" (Waste Land 148) because lines 401-422 are key to gaining an understanding of the poem. Fables are tales designed to teach a moral lesson to their hearers, and Eliot's fable provides the lesson to be learned from the poem. Rain, symbolizing relief from mental dryness and inactivity, comes when one connects with others and at the same time takes responsibility for himself/herself.

Here in lines 401-422, whatever clear morality had been omitted by Pound, is given back to the reader.

The meaning of the last line of the poem, “Shantih shantih shantih,” is quite surprising when it is studied in relation to the rest of the poem, but it does seem successful in several respects. Eliot calls “The Peace which passeth understanding” a “feeble translation” of the line (Waste Land 149), but in any case, it is clearly a positive ending. If the reader is not careful, he/she may breeze over the last line and then wonder what it all meant. It may be difficult for readers to *forget* all the hopeless images that have assaulted them throughout. Thus Grover Smith insists that the last line is ironic, and that it should not be considered hopeful because nothing else in the poem is indicative of hope (55). Apparently, Smith does not attribute any importance to Eliot’s trinity of solutions, yet many things in Eliot’s personal and public life suggest that he really believed in the three values that he offered. Eliot does not seem to be saying that “I gave you this horrible world, and there is nothing that you can do about it”; rather Eliot chooses to give his readers some advice about how to counteract the destruction of the modern world. The last line is a wonderful ending—it allows for all the paralysis and mindlessness which came before, yet it also signifies a passage into new understanding. “Shantih” is clearly an Eastern utterance, yet it brings together Eastern tradition with the possibility of Western salvation. The repetition of “shantih” is almost like a purifying ritual which is the first step to saving a decaying civilization.

The Decay of Modern Civilization

Both “The Waste Land” and “Howl” illustrate in particular detail the decay of modern civilization. Eliot and Ginsberg call into question the moral character of human beings within this civilization, and in turn begin to offer their own solutions for the deterioration. Eliot bases his attack on the ways in which modern society loses in a comparison with the past. He was working from the belief that “in the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered” (Selected 64). Eliot thought that people had begun to divorce their actions from their intellect. This rather frightening idea became a keynote in his work, and the separation of feeling and thought is a theme which runs throughout Eliot’s body of work. This “dissociation of sensibility” was on his mind during the creation of “The Waste Land,” and it coincided with a developing “concern for morality” (Smith 39). The reconciling of these two ideas is apparent in “The Waste Land.” In an allusion to Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress,” Eliot illustrates both the emptiness of human affairs and the absence of morality or meaning. What had been a famous metaphysical “carpe diem” sentiment is in Eliot’s poem a sad look at the superficiality of modern life. Instead of hearing the call of “Time’s winged chariot,” Eliot hears “the sound of horns and motors” which only results in a meaningless visit to “Mrs. Porter” (Waste Land 140). In Marvell’s poem passing time is a force that urges us to live for the moment, to appreciate life that very minute. Eliot seems to be using time as just an expression of modern technology, which is empty of true meaning. Once again, a tradition that was full of life

and intensity finds itself steeped in emptiness. Eliot's use of the character of "Madame Sosostris" also reveals this tenuous position of both spirituality and morality in modern society. Madame Sosostris' particular contradictory nature is exhibited by her being a bit vulnerable ("had a bad cold"), and that she is "known to be the wisest woman in Europe." She also reveals the quality of life in her reflection that "one must be so careful these days" (Waste Land 136). She is mainly portrayed in a positive light, but there seems to be a hint of trouble in that she is the only replacement given for spirituality in the modern world. In Eliot's mind tarot cards would be a poor substitute for religion. In his "Notes," Eliot admits that one of the guiding themes in part V is "the present decay of eastern Europe" (Waste Land 148). It seems that the shortcomings of individuals are perpetuated by a society which has little structure and provides little direction to its members.

Ginsberg's presentation of societal decay is also focused on individuals and their small position in society, yet it seems to be society's forced control which hurts people in "Howl." Ginsberg seems to believe that a major problem encouraged by society (and reinforced by authority) is "the compartmentalization of mind and heart, the cutting off of the head from the rest of the body" (Composed 70). This increasing "robotization" is what makes society corrupt and releases individuals from accountability. Ginsberg's personae in Part I appear to be incited by their environment while almost all of Eliot's characters seem entirely desensitized by their environment. Ginsberg's personae are driven crazy while Eliot's characters are unmoved. This makes the biters and screamers in "Howl" almost more sympathetic than the passive commoners of "The Waste Land."

Grover Smith insists that in "The Waste Land" "human beings are not individually targeted for condemnation so much as posed in relation to society and

history” (17). It is true that Eliot’s characters are intended to expose a deteriorated society which lacks traditional values, yet it certainly seems that the individuals in “The Waste Land” are contemptible. Clearly these characters do not currently possess any qualities suggestive of salvation; they lack an understanding of culture which Eliot would have considered imperative to preserving a civilization. The characters’ ignorance continues throughout the poem until the “quester” in part V becomes inquisitive and asks about the meaning of what he sees in lines 359-376. He asks “who is the third who walks always beside you?” in line 359 and then “what is that sound high in the air” in line 366. As soon as he inquires about his surroundings, they are defined and acquire a meaning, and “Then a damp gust / Bringing rain” (lines 391-1). It took mere *curiosity* to remedy the dryness which has pervaded the entire poem. Hugh Kenner adds the very useful comment that “the past exists in fragments precisely because nobody cares what it meant; it will unite itself and come alive in the mind of anyone who succeeds in caring” (171). This statement seems to be an accurate reading of the events, since Eliot’s solutions also follow the rain and the escape from mental dryness. The moment that one of the characters cares enough to make an inquiry about modern life, the past is revived and hope for the future emerges. In addition to the sweeping emptiness of most of the characters in Eliot’s poem, these personages are distanced from the narrator and from Eliot. It is clear that these people are not poets, and thus do not have an interest in, or talent for, perception, and the only other one who comes close to real knowledge is Tiresias. The character of “Tiresias” may be a sort of projection of the poet; he is a seer, he must possess both male and female characteristics, and he has “foresuffered all / enacted on this same divan or bed” (line 243-4).

That the characters in “The Waste Land” are tainted serves to reinforce the subtle lessons in the poem. Some critics complain that the characters are too flat and superficial, yet these qualities are precisely what define Eliot’s perception of the decaying modern world. Grover Smith attacks the lack of aesthetic quality in these characters, saying “the ridiculous and the sordid are exalted into art” (36). Yes, these “people” are not traditional heroes and beauties, and their presence in a supposedly “cultured” art form is surprising. However, the very irony of the poem is that these empty individuals are the ones who must convey (not by their actions, but by their *inaction*) the breakdown of civilization. The unemotional, lobotomized people who pepper “The Waste Land” are Eliot’s realizations of the emptiness of his time period. Eliot studied F. H. Bradley, and he incorporates this man’s concept of seclusion into the poem in order to further comment on this emptiness. In his note on line 411, Eliot mentions Bradley’s theory that individuals are separated into a personal circle which cannot be penetrated. The reference coincides with the idea of “each in his prison,” yet Eliot did not reinforce Bradley’s theory. Eliot was implying that individuals should break out of their circles and maintain a real human connection with others. Eliot’s vision is most likely one that would be approved of by Ginsberg, who reveals that a deep link with another human being can allow one to transcend earthly difficulties. Ginsberg achieves this type of relationship with Carl Solomon in part III of “Howl.”

Some characters in “The Waste Land” do manage to interact, yet never in a truly fulfilling way. For instance, the most viable connection in the poem is the sexual relationship between the woman and the “young man carbuncular” in *The Fire Sermon* section. The woman endures the man, yet she receives no pleasure as a result of their

union (perhaps only relief, at best): The couple connects physically, but certainly not mentally, as she is only allowed a “half-formed thought to pass.” She makes no resistance to the sexual advances, and does not even seem to notice that she is imprisoned by her society. The only action that she is permitted to perform is to smooth her hair and to turn on music; she could not be any more frustratingly *passive*. The reader recalls the reference behind “when lovely woman stoops to folly” and almost wishes this woman was traditional enough to be moved to madness or suicide by her indiscretion. This section expertly reinforces the inertia that defines Eliot’s modern society, while offering a sad look at the impossibility of a genuine spiritual connection between human beings living in this time period.

Despite its concentration on the theme of madness, “Howl” seems to offer more of an opportunity for true human connection. It is the experience of true emotion that allows people to connect, and while expressions of emotion are nonexistent in “The Waste Land,” they run rampant throughout “Howl.” Thus Ginsberg strongly defends the optimism of “Howl,” and in a 1956 letter to Richard Eberhart, he wonderfully summarizes the nature of his poem:

Howl is an ‘affirmation’ of individual experience of God, sex, drugs, absurdity etc. Part I deals sympathetically with individual cases. Part II describes and rejects the Moloch of society which confounds and suppresses individual experience and forces the individual to consider himself mad if he does not reject his own deepest senses. Part III is an expression of sympathy and identification with C.S. who is in the madhouse—saying that his madness basically is rebellion against Moloch and I am with him, and extending my hand in union. This is an affirmative act of mercy and compassion, which are the basic emotions of the poem. The criticism of society is that “Society” is merciless. The alternative is private, individual acts of mercy. The poem is one such. It is therefore clearly and consciously built on a *liberation* of basic human virtues. (Howl 154)

Many readers find it hard to see the optimism behind the violent images and frenzied form in "Howl," yet because it is so passionate, it emits genuine feeling and intimacy. "Howl" would not be nearly as optimistic if it were as sedate as "The Waste Land."

"Howl," like "The Waste Land," was a reaction against the mindlessness of its time. Ginsberg recognized the burgeoning "purely conceptual mind" which intentionally severed feeling from the mind (Foster 100), and he saw this sort of numb, robotic individual as the quintessence of modern decay. Therefore, any strong reaction to the paralysis would be positive to Ginsberg. Edward Halsey Foster's insistence that "madness in 'Howl' is a sign of salvation—a sign that one has escaped mechanical consciousness" (103) is extremely telling of the optimism in the poem. Part I is riddled with individuals driven mad in response to the modern situation; they respond correctly and their souls may be saved.

Ginsberg dedicates "Howl" to Carl Solomon, a perfect victim of society, as he was bound by inappropriate mental and physical constraints. The men met at the Columbia Presbyterian Psychiatric Institute, where Allen was "tenured" by Columbia University, Lionel Trilling, and his father as a result of an arrest. Because Allen had spent some time in an institution, he could truly appreciate Solomon's situation. Nevertheless, when Ginsberg dedicated "Howl" to Carl Solomon, he intended only to mention a friend; he was not anticipating that his poem would be so widely read. In fact, Ginsberg added Carl's name to the heading almost unwittingly, without considering the consequences of using Carl as his metaphor, and it was Jack Kerouac who recognized that Ginsberg had chosen "Howl for Carl Solomon" to be the authentic title of the poem. Barry Miles explains that this was "not a poem dedicated to Carl but an emphatic howl of

grief and rage for Carl's plight and the plight of all the others like him [Ginsberg] had known" (191). Miles seems to have believed that the reference to Carl is all-important, and that in this link lies the essence of the poem. It does appear that while Ginsberg initially just wanted to honor a friend, he proceeded to develop Carl's madness as the main form of structure for the poem. Ginsberg reveals that in a 1963 dream, he felt that he had disappointed Carl by using him for the poem, to represent "a name a madness a hospital a mass public image surrounding him confusing him furthermore" (Howl 119). In 1986, Ginsberg reflects that as "Howl" achieved more publicity, his connection to Solomon "solidified as an image notorious on a quasi-national scale. This had unexpected consequences: it put Mr. Solomon's actual person in the world with my stereotype—a poetic metaphor—as a large part of his social identity...I came to regret my naïve use of his name" (Howl 111).

Ginsberg includes a section in Howl Original Draft Facsimile, Transcript & Variant Versions which addresses Carl Solomon's incarceration. Ginsberg prints a "Statement by Carl Solomon," in which Solomon explains what landed him in the New York institution: "My protest against the verbal, the rational and the acceptable took the form of disruption of a critical discussion of Mallarme and other neo-dada clowning" (Howl 112). It seems that Solomon was condemned simply for thinking outside of the norm, yet the physical repercussions of the treatment there were shockingly severe. Ginsberg even dedicates a further section of his book to the experiences of a real-life shock-therapy patient. Ginsberg gives Carl Goy's story of the treatments:

in the case of insulin-shock therapy, one finds oneself presented with a complete symbolism of paranoia, beginning with the rude awakening and the enormous hypodermic-needle, continuing through the dietary restrictions imposed upon

patients receiving shock, and ending with the lapses of memory and the temporary physical disfigurement. (Howl 113)

This brutal and telling account makes understandable Carl Solomon's denunciation of psychiatry. Solomon was a man so destroyed by madness that he demanded a lobotomy from his doctors (Miles 119). He clearly did not share Ginsberg's belief that madness was the only strong way to react against the sweeping mindlessness of his age. For Ginsberg, madness was the one way to break free from the inertia, yet Carl Solomon preferred to ask for a "symbolic suicide" (Miles 119). Solomon even admits that he admires Artaud's *Van Gogh* because "he condemns all forms of psychiatry, and thereby all organized authority...In it, he claims that every lunatic, everyone marked and branded, and believe me all lunatics are really marked and branded, is a person of superior lucidity whose insights society thinks disturbing to it" (Howl 118).

It is not surprising that Ginsberg fixates on the idea of "madness" in "Howl" since he experienced the horrors of his mother's mental illness throughout much of his life. Naomi Ginsberg had a history of breakdowns and visits to sanatoriums and state hospitals, but abundant experience with her problems never seemed to prepare Allen for the next bout of paranoia and suffering. Allen had been extremely close to his mother, yet her paranoid accusations weighed heavily on their relationship. It was Allen who had to sign the papers in 1947 for a prefrontal lobotomy for Naomi (Miles 95). Allen buried his guilt in partying and writing, yet her mental illness was always a source of pain for him, and it led him to write "Kaddish" for her in 1958. Madness had been both a personal and a societal theme for Ginsberg; thus it would be the best tool with which to convey the notion of the troubled individual in a universal manner.

Obviously, Eliot and Ginsberg perceived people's reactions to modernity in different lights. Eliot saw people becoming dehumanized and departing from tradition, whereas Ginsberg saw people viciously resisting the modern deterioration of values. It is important, however, to make the distinction that the people who are so passive in "The Waste Land" are mainly commoners, and that the brave souls in "Howl" are actually a group of artists, poets, and thinkers. All social classes in Eliot's poem are limited, yet it is the lower classes who seem to allow the wrong decisions to be made for them. The upper classes merely exist without direction, whereas the lower classes float along in the *wrong* direction. The personas in "Howl" are not necessarily upper class figures, yet they are mentally and spiritually advanced. Thus Ginsberg's group would be more prone to handle the situation in the most enlightened manner. Ginsberg's visionaries are rescued by their individualism, while Eliot's individuals need an authority to guide their behavior. The differences between the actions of the two sets of characters may also be a reflection of each poet's era. By the 1950s and 60s, people were exposed to more harmful forces than they had been after the first World War. Perhaps a discomfort had been building since the War, only to be realized in an outcry in the middle of the 20th century. Eliot lived in a time of utter distress over the annihilation of Europe, and thus his characters logically can be expected to be more passive and stunned. Ginsberg's characters would be more used to war, disease, and weapons, and would be permitted to act more irreverently and vociferously. The difference between the sets of characters may also suggest that Eliot generally perceived people in a different way than Ginsberg. Perhaps Eliot only expected certain types of individuals to be saved.

Eliot's elitist nature is revealed in "Christianity and Culture." In this essay, Eliot expresses a desire to preserve the class system within society, and categorizes the conditions necessary for culture to exist. He says that a culture requires an organic, growing structure with social classes, it should break down into local cultures, and there should be a balance between "universality of doctrine" and "particularity of cult and devotion" in religion (Christianity 87). Eliot then insists that he is not trying to set up guidelines to improve civilization and claims that "you are unlikely to have a high civilisation where these conditions are absent" (Christianity 88). Eliot's agenda in this essay is to rescue the notion of culture from misuse; he says that he was making objective observations about culture rather than espousing his political beliefs (89). Nonetheless, the idea of preserving a class structure relates to politics and democracy. Eliot concedes that it is unfair to base class status on inheritance and thinks that a better "mechanism of selection" could come about, but he is adamant that different social classes must exist (97). Even though some scholars perceived that there could be some advantages to a classless society, Eliot seemed to believe that "qualitative differences" between individuals should be recognized, and that the elite should form groups and be leaders (108). He does temper this argument by allowing for the flexibility of social barriers, and implies that mixing among social classes can be advantageous (123). Eliot envisions a sort of "trickle-down" theory in which each higher class would help to nourish the class below it. Thus it was the responsibility of the dominant class/elite to transmit their inherited culture and to "preserve and communicate standards of *manners*" (115). Part of the reason that Eliot encourages separate classes is because he thinks that friction is desirable between different parts of society. He thinks that minor conflicts help advance

society, and that "one needs the enemy...the universality of irritation is the best assurance of peace" (133).

Eliot's theory about culture is quite telling of his treatment of the common characters in "The Waste Land." Eliot believes that the most dangerous problem which society could encounter is the "disintegration of culture," and what that entails is a dramatic separation between two strata or classes which results in their becoming distinct cultures. The disintegration can also specifically mean that the uppermost group in society breaks off into factions, and each one comes to represent a separate cultural activity (Christianity 98). He says that an uppermost division has already occurred in western society, and relates that: "the artistic sensibility is impoverished by its divorce from the religious sensibility, the religious by its separation from the artistic; and the vestige of *manners* may be left to a few survivors of a vanishing class who...will have no context in their lives to give value to their behavior" (Christianity 99). Obviously, Eliot attributes a great deal of importance to the function of religion in society; he defines it as a whole way of life. He further explains that "religion...on its own level, gives an apparent meaning to life, provides the framework for a culture, and protects the mass of humanity from boredom and despair" (106). The commoners in "The Waste Land" have no religious example with which to guide their lives or form their morality; thus manners are a dying tradition. Even the upper class personas are lacking direction, and are unable to provide the commoners with guidance or structure.

Eliot believed that the culture of a whole society influences the culture of a group or class, and that group in turn influences the culture of an individual (Christianity 93). A flourishing national culture would contain satellite cultures which, by benefiting each

other, benefit the whole (Christianity 132). Despite the appeal of a workable national culture, Eliot disapproved of a “world culture.” He did not see the purpose of eliminating the differences in government among nations because he believed in the balance of “attraction and repulsion”; that is, cultures having an interest in others’ differences while maintaining their own cultural independence (Christianity 135). Since culture is a combination of many factors operating on a person at one time, it seems that repairing a disintegrated culture would be a complicated process which reverses this string of influence. The repair would have to start with individuals and work backward to the whole society. Individuals would have to control their own behavior while submitting to an authority before society as a whole could be mended. Eliot’s formula shows how easy it is for a break to occur, and how difficult it is to mend this division. Eliot admits that education can have a role in preserving a culture; he says that as long as education encompasses all the aspects that create a good individual in a good society, education can cure cultural deterioration (Christianity 183). Nevertheless, Eliot did not accept the theory that the purpose of education is to enable people to earn a living and function in a democracy; Eliot says that the true goal of education should be to achieve wisdom, to pursue knowledge for its own sake, and simply to gain a respect for learning (Christianity 175).

Perhaps Eliot absorbed some of his cultural elitism from Pound, who, despite being an excellent and influential writer, turned off many people with his destructive fascist ideas about purifying the “American stock” (Olson xx). Wherever it came from, it is important to recognize that Eliot showed himself to be most interested in saving the upper *portion* of humanity. The salvation of the upper classes was his priority because

they were the group whose manners would be distilled for the lower classes. In Eliot's world there was no room for heroin addicts or homosexuals; even though Eliot envisioned a doomed world, it would never be this explicit. However, aren't the very people in "Howl" who "purgatoried their torsos night after night with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and cock and endless balls" (Howl 3) simply an extension of the characters in "The Waste Land," diluting any sexual guilt with music, and groping through the hall, "finding the stairs unlit" (Line 248)? Ginsberg was much less exclusive in his poetry and personal life. In "Howl," he suggests that any person can be saved as long as they fight against the limiting forces within society. Ginsberg appears to be more democratic than Eliot because he allows every kind of person an equal chance at salvation. It is, however, noteworthy that Ginsberg makes no mention of typical, middle class Americans in "Howl." The people who go about their 9-to-5 lifestyle without questioning anything receive no attention from Ginsberg in the poem. Perhaps these people would become useful individuals were they to challenge the system which they tacitly support. Therefore, even Ginsberg places a stipulation on his inclusiveness. It is his all-inclusive "Footnote to Howl" that gives every thing and every person value. Inanimate objects are as worthy of attention as the qualities of "foregiveness" and "charity." Ginsberg insists that "the bum's as holy as the seraphim! the madman is holy as you my soul are holy!" (Howl 8). Again, these rebels are honored for their individuality.

Ginsberg followed this sort of credo everyday, adopting a Bohemian lifestyle and experimenting with drugs, sexuality, and associating with many unique people. For instance, in the 1940s Ginsberg lived with a group of people who were addicted to

morphine and Benzedrine. Other friends were involved in forgery, robbery, and trafficking stolen goods (Miles 78). Ginsberg's involvement in these compromising situations and various friendships/love affairs indicate that he may have absorbed some of Walt Whitman's ideas about acceptance.

Walt Whitman's ideas about equality have been quite influential upon many writers, and these theories seem to apply to Ginsberg's inclusiveness. The theme of acceptance is key to Whitman; he believes that he contains all things, good and bad. Whitman refers to himself as a "kosmos," and thinks that within himself the universe is a harmoniously ordered system. This idea is seen in Whitman's prose and poetry. In the *Preface to 1855 Edition of "Leaves of Grass"* he states that "the genius of the United States is...always most in the common people" (411). Whitman values every type of individual regardless of class, and believes that it is his duty to reflect everyone and everything in his work. He explains: "a bard is to be commensurate with a people...his spirit responds to his country's spirit...he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes" (412). Whitman's poems also reflect this idea of total inclusion. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," Whitman *assumes* all the people and things that he sees on the trip, and says "I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence, / Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt" (116). Whitman makes himself a part of everything, and makes no distinction regarding the quality of the peoples he represents. Ginsberg does the same thing in part III of "Howl;" he echoes Whitman's lines by repeating "I'm with you in Rockland." Ginsberg adopts all of Solomon's traits and experiences wholesale. This same phenomenon is seen in "Song of Myself," where Whitman celebrates being everything: "I am of old and young, of the

foolish as much as the wise, / Regardless of others, ever regardful of others, / Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man, / Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse and stuff'd with the stuff that is fine..." (36). In this poem Whitman not only observes every different type of experience, he also *participates* in each situation. For instance, he says "I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do not stop there, / I go with the team also" (32). This overriding sympathy and interest in all people is also demonstrated in Ginsberg's work. In "Howl," Ginsberg associates himself with Carl Solomon, the quintessential sufferer, and sympathizes with the personae in Part I who are victims of modernity. Ginsberg does not pass judgment on the individuals who are acting in a seemingly destructive way; instead, like Whitman, he accepts the good and the bad at face value. The only people whose judgment Ginsberg calls into question are those that follow Moloch. Ginsberg also seems to have emulated the directness and simplicity of Whitman's poetry. Ginsberg makes his work accessible to all, unlike Eliot, who incorporates so many allusions into "The Waste Land" that it requires extensive footnotes. Eliot did not (or could not) connect with the common people and even worked outside his own country. Thus Eliot does not fit into Whitman's equation that "the proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it" (427).

Walt Whitman clearly had an influence on the Beat writers, and while Eliot would not likely have embraced Whitman's liberality, there are some points of intersection between Whitman and Eliot. For instance, in *A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads*, Whitman upholds the importance of a literary tradition. Whitman insists that every writer is necessarily affected by his/her predecessors. He says "if I had not stood before those poems with uncover'd head, fully aware of their colossal grandeur and beauty of form

and spirit, I could not have written 'Leaves of Grass'" (448). Similarly, Eliot displays his respect for tradition in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," and it seems that for Eliot, poets are like small ripples in a giant ocean—they are a tiny part of a great tradition. Ginsberg as well clearly attributes much of his own success to the pioneering writers of the 20th century.

Another area in which Whitman may have influenced the two writers involves democracy. Whitman predicts that "there will soon be no more priests," and determines that it is each man's responsibility to save himself. Whitman asserts that "every man shall be his own priest" (425), and implies that the ultimate authority lies *within* a person. Both Ginsberg and Eliot valued this idea of individual responsibility, yet Eliot was more hesitant to relinquish authority. This distinction may be a result of the state of the world in Eliot's day; his country was just barely dealing with the massive destruction of a world war, and he probably thought that giving up authority would result in utter chaos. Walt Whitman could not have anticipated World War I, yet in *Democratic Vistas* he had already identified the beginnings of a hollowness in the United States. Sensing that "general belief seems to have left us" (461), he attempts to create therapeutic poetry. Whitman says that literature "has become the only general means of morally influencing the world" (459), and he thought it his responsibility to bring about redemption. Eliot, too, believed in morally influencing the lower classes; he thought that this transmission of culture would come through the example of art and manners by the upper classes. Pound refused Eliot a conspicuous moral statement in "The Waste Land" through his scrupulous elimination, yet the poem does emit a sense of the destructive hopelessness of modern society, in part due to its absence of upper class authority figures. Ginsberg also

considered morality when forming his poem. Ginsberg uses "Moloch" as a representation of evil, while defending the "twentyfive thousand mad comrades all together singing the final stanzas of the Internationale" (Howl 8). Clearly the characters in part I are qualitatively good, whereas Moloch and his followers are bad. "Howl" is clearly charged with values and standards, most of which are ignored by societal authority.

Regardless of the scope of morality in "The Waste Land" and "Howl," both poems are certainly didactic. Both Eliot and Ginsberg offer conspicuous suggestions as to how to counteract the deterioration of civilization. Ginsberg's answer for the breakdown of values in the 1950s and 60s is to bathe society's mentality in "emotion and comradeship and trust" (Composed 88). Ginsberg's solutions seem remarkably similar to Eliot's trinity in part five of "The Waste Land." In lines 401-422, Eliot explains the meaning of "Datta," "Dayadhvam," and "Damyata," which translate to mean give, sympathize, control. When Ginsberg's three ideas are matched up with those of Eliot, a key point of dissension arises. Comradeship can be paired with sympathy, trust with giving, but we are left with the ideas of "emotion" and "control." Emotion and control are opposite notions when judged by each writer's view. Ginsberg seems to suggest tapping into a universal emotion/s that unites human souls with positive energy. This positive energy is then transformed into tangible acts of world preservation. Eliot seems to be calling for a rigorous personal discipline which can be designed through ritual, religious or otherwise. With every individual adhering to a personal ritual, world order is then regained. Ginsberg believes in the universality of emotion, yet he is not aiming at conformity. People can be united through human connection, but every individual has

the free will to choose salvation. Eliot, on the other hand, is requesting a conformity that is imposed by an authority. Thus, control is a key issue which must be explored in various contexts in order to determine to what extent Ginsberg intentionally altered the solutions in his “wasteland.”

In “Christianity and Culture,” Eliot plainly states that we should not hope for a *new* civilization because we do not know what it will be like. There are too many factors operating at once to prevent our knowing what the future will hold. Perhaps that is why Eliot always stressed *control* in his life and in his works—if each individual utilizes some self-control, this could perhaps help solidify some universal control. Eliot explains that the very best we can hope for is to improve our current situation. This is accomplished by individuals improving themselves in “relatively minute particulars,” that is, giving up a bad habit or adopting a new good one (92). Similarly, people should try to improve the conditions of society “where excess or defect is evident” (92). Throughout his life, Eliot perceived that a tainted civilization was evolving and he felt the need to address its correction. Grover Smith holds that Eliot was driven by a “behaviouristic moral imperative,” and while “The Waste Land” addresses good and evil, it does not hold up an image of right and wrong. He further insists that the poem is not didactic, that it is clinical and objective (39). Yes, the poet appears to be distanced from his personages, yet part V clearly sets the poem in a new direction—a sort of Buddhist mantra for living. Smith also complains that the poem gives no alternatives to the way life is, yet Eliot states that he cannot predict the unknown, he can only help people try to correct their own behavior. Eliot gives three specific ways that individuals can improve their behavior; thus he is offering the only alternatives that he believes will help.

The Beats also had an “expectation of the total breakdown of Western culture” (Tytell 9), and were interested in improving the lives of individuals. John Tytell also claims that the Beats subscribed to the notion that a man is defined by his actions; thus the Beats would design their lives to counteract the breakdown. Again, the theories which the Beats practiced in their writing were also incorporated into their lives; they believed in honesty, independence, and achieving a true connection with others. These things were meant to improve the quality of life for individuals.

By his mid 20s, Eliot was already a believer in classicism and an attacker of humanitarianism (Ackroyd 76). Eliot saw a need to uphold traditional order to prevent man from giving in to his evil tendencies. Peter Ackroyd describes Eliot’s need for an “affirmation of absolute and objective values, and the recognition of the need for order and authority to discipline man’s fallen state” (76). Both Eliot and Ginsberg recognized a collapse of values in their societies, and the need for individuals to try and remedy the situation. Nonetheless, a significant distinction should be pointed out. Aside from personal efforts, Eliot would resort to authority to correct society. He thought that both Classicism and Catholicism relied on an “unquestioned spiritual authority outside the individual” (Selected 70). He rejects the idea of listening to an inner voice, and instead insists that a critic must obey an outside authority. This outside influence is simply an allegiance to a set of standards in literature which unites artists with “a common inheritance and a common cause” (Selected 68). Eliot was clearly on the side of an objective criticism based on facts while Ginsberg was apparently more subjective. Ginsberg did accept the possibility of a spiritual power, but his vision was more Transcendental and less religious than that of Eliot. Eliot adapted the concept of a

spiritual authority to include religion while Ginsberg would permit the concept to remain less defined. Ginsberg would more likely believe that political and religious authorities are what have hurt the condition of man and his society by placing limits on individuals.

Ezra Pound's take on authority may be telling of the political changes that separate Eliot and Ginsberg. Charles Olson observes that "behind [Pound's] art lies a respect for authority & behind that respect lies a disrespect for democracy as we are acquainted with it" (20). Eliot and Ginsberg would accept different parts of this philosophy; Eliot would side with Pound on the importance of authority while Ginsberg would sympathize with Pound's distrust of democracy. Ginsberg did believe in individualism, but he doubted the validity of capitalism. Again, this difference may result from Ginsberg having been exposed to more political duplicity and governmental intrusion. Ginsberg knew firsthand how his society would anxiously repress any non-conformist behavior. In fact "Howl" resulted in a censorship trial which got Ginsberg noticed; in the paranoid McCarthy era such a free expression of homosexuality and communism was quite dangerous.

Eliot's concentration on civilization and morality may be explained by Ackroyd's insistence that Eliot was "afflicted with the sense of emptiness in all human affairs" and that "severe religious discipline or gross sexual indulgence are, for the self-obsessed, ways of alleviating that meaninglessness" (53). Ackroyd's claim may be a bit harsh, and yet, religion did seem to give Eliot a sense of meaning, which he then adapted into his personal and poetic beliefs. Intense discipline was something he believed all individuals needed in order to survive in modern society, so he stressed control to alleviate the meaninglessness. Even after Eliot's conversion, the man was still extremely rational,

selecting the least radical beliefs and trying to *convince* himself to have faith. It seems that Eliot was even reluctant to relinquish all of his personal control to a higher power, so he focused on the *ritual* within the church. Eliot had observed a “void” in all human affairs, and he had found a “disorder, meaninglessness and futility” in society and even within his own life. Thus it was faith that could help him understand human “inexplicable” intellectual experience (Ackroyd 160). William Butler Yeats also indirectly addresses Eliot’s belief in control during a discussion of Ezra Pound’s work. This comment by Yeats was included in Charles Olson & Ezra Pound: An Encounter: “tradition is too organized with him, his uncertainty before chaos leads him to confuse authority with orthodoxy—to reassert the claims of authority in a world of whiggery. It is true what Pound said, we men of the mind do stand with the lovers of order” (Olson 27).

Eliot favored control not only as a guide for personal life, but also as an approach to writing poetry. Eliot occasionally gave up control for passing moments of inspiration, while Ginsberg wrote the majority of “Howl” *solely* under inspiration. Ginsberg insists that: “since art is merely and ultimately self-expressive, we conclude that the fullest art, the most individual, uninfluenced, unrepressed, uninhibited expression of art is true expression and the true art” (Miles 47). Barry Miles insists that the first section of “Howl” ends on a positive note: “by heralding the ‘madman bum and angel,’ as these were most likely to have visionary awareness, and listing practical methods of attaining the widened field of consciousness that he had experienced through the use of art” (190). Ginsberg used “Howl” to inspire his audience to break free from societal constraints. Ginsberg seemed to reject control in all aspects of his life, and was interested in shaking

the public out of their "inertia and spiritual deadness" (Foster 85). He tried many drugs himself with the specific intention of *relinquishing* control, he saw how the controlled environment of an institution was limiting and awful, and he felt how absolutely wonderful it was to release oneself into a poem. Ginsberg felt able to achieve both personal and cultural improvement with inspiration, yet again this tendency may be a factor of the age in which he lived.

It is also important to consider the conditions of society that existed at the time of "The Waste Land." Eliot did not feel as though he belonged anywhere. He was an expatriate, but at the same time while living in London, he criticized the "degeneration" in English life (Ackroyd 88). Eliot seemed to foresee the end of the world, and he offered some suggestions to counteract modern decay. The unbelievable devastation caused by World War I is captured in an overview of the period given by Peter Ackroyd: "the year in which 'The Waste Land' was written was one of intense political and economic discontent: the post-war 'boom' had collapsed," there were many unemployed, and the government's actions were indecisive (109). All aspects of civilization seemed to be crumbling, so Eliot made the suggestion that salvation is possible with internal and external correction. He believed that each individual should be responsible for amending their own carelessness, and for initiating a real connection with others. This individual salvation would slowly work backward upon society, and Eliot used literature in order to convey his plan. He seemed to give back to literature a sense of order and certainty which the country lacked following World War I; he returned structure to politics and society (Ackroyd 107).

It is thus clear that Eliot and Ginsberg disagreed about the importance of control. Ginsberg often refused control in his life, so it is not unusual that he would refuse control as one of the solutions for his "wasteland." Ginsberg preserves Eliot's theme of modern decay and updates the solutions to apply to his time period. Ginsberg maintains the important notions of human connection and sharing, and just alters the means of preserving a culture. Rather than accept the rigid control of authority, Ginsberg looks to Transcendental universals.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, T.S. Eliot and Allen Ginsberg cannot be placed in the same class as writers. Eliot was a modernist while Ginsberg was post-modern, and while they were both innovative, their poetic styles evolved as a result of their time periods. Thus, the differences between their treatments of poetry can often be accounted for by their existence in very different eras. For example, Ginsberg places less limitation on the scope of poetry than does Eliot. The accessibility of Ginsberg's work is not just a reflection of Ginsberg's liberality; Ginsberg believed that good poetry should be able to touch the soul of any receptive person. Poetry was a means of uniting humanity with a universal consciousness or vision. Eliot did notice elements of primitiveness and inspiration in poetry, yet he did not truly consider Transcendentalism. Ginsberg was exposed to the Transcendental Movement, and was able to incorporate some of its aspects into his writing. The means of correcting society is another key area where a difference in situation allows for Ginsberg's modifications. Eliot's strong interest in self-control and in the imposition of authority were a reaction to the chaos and uncertainty of society following the first World War. Ginsberg favored freedom and experimentation because he witnessed the government's suppression of any nonconformist behavior (such as Communism). Thus Ginsberg's alteration of Eliot's trinity of solutions was necessary in order to make "Howl" an accurate depiction of the 1950s.

Although there are certain differences between the work of Eliot and Ginsberg, several similarities do exist. For instance, the poets give nearly identical descriptions of the literary tradition, and they both view the writing process as being a combination of

manipulation and spontaneity. They also develop rhythm in the same way, and use language that is reflective of both music and meaning. In addition, both groundbreaking poems concentrate on the theme of the fall of modern civilization. Ginsberg was undoubtedly aware of the influence that "The Waste Land" had on modern poetry, and he even developed a working relationship with Ezra Pound, the final editor of Eliot's poem. Understanding the importance of "The Waste Land," Ginsberg reworked its theme and gave it a modern face. Using Eliot's concept of decaying modern life, Ginsberg used his own style to create a new vision of America which ironically, through its success, may achieve immortality.

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