"I Contain Multitudes": The Modern Making of Beat Poet Allen Ginsberg

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> … At last, I woke ashamed of myself.
> Is [Eliot] that good and kind? Am I that great?
> What's my motive dreaming his
> manna? What English Department
> would that impress? What failure
> to be perfect prophet's made up here?
> I dream of my kindness to T.S. Eliot
> wanting to be a historical poet
> and share in his finance of Imagery—
> overambitious dream of eccentric boy.
> God forbid my evil dreams come true.
> Last nite I dreamed of Allen Ginsberg.
> T.S. Eliot would've been ashamed of me.
>
> — Allen Ginsberg[1]

These are the words Ginsberg scribbled in his journal on February 29, 1958. Two-and-a-half years before, the famed Beat poet gave the first public recitation of what would become his most famous poem, "Howl," at Sixth Gallery during the birth of the literary movement later known as the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance.[2] The poem, which defied previous poetic tradition through its sexual explicitness and visceral, unflinching personal references, earned both praise and criticism. American poet and novelist James Dickey acknowledged that "Howl" was "a whipped-up state of excitement" yet ultimately decided that "it takes more than this to make poetry."[3] Conversely, poet Kenneth Rexroth, the master of ceremonies at the Sixth Gallery reading, told Ginsberg that "this poem will make [him] famous from bridge to bridge."[4] Even if publication of the poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti in 1956 failed to garner Ginsberg the fame needed to kickstart his career, an obscenity trial a year later did. San Francisco Municipal Judge Clayton W. Horn ruled in defense of "Howl" as a work of critical value and not one to be banned due to charges of obscenity, solidifying the poem as not only a touchstone of the Beat movement but also a pivotal step in protecting First Amendment rights in literature.[5]

In more ways than one, "Howl" defined Ginsberg's place in the literary canon as well as in the broader historical landscape of America. According to Michael Schumacher, author of *Dharma Lion: A Biography of Allen Ginsberg*, Ginsberg "brought together the influences of [Walt] Whitman and [William Carlos] Williams, the American idiom, elements of jazz, [and] the philosophy of the Beat Generation."[6] In "Howl," Ginsberg, a young homosexual writer who frequently saw himself as an outsider, passes the microphone to the social groups brushed aside in America—the homosexuals, political radicals, criminals—helping to turn the tide of what was considered normal during the Cold War era.

So why nearly three years after writing the poem that many consider to be the embodiment of counterculture, postmodern America, was that same poet both rejoicing and lamenting about being unable to impress T.S. Eliot, whose contributions to high modernism render him antithetical to Ginsberg? For that matter, how do associations between Ginsberg and modernism even exist? After all, such claims are rarely made.[7] Yet beneath this popular assumption lies a greater truth. After all, some of Ginsberg's greatest influences were modernists such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams.[8] Both writers maintained correspondence with Ginsberg, and they served as integral contributors to Imagism, a branch of modernism that helped bring to life some of the prosaic and phonetic qualities characteristic of Ginsberg's works. Additionally, Ginsberg's use of hypnotic, spiritual-like chants influenced by the Hebrew bible spirituality act as a manifestation of melopoeia—Pound's way of describing the sonic quality of poetry that enables words to transcend their original meaning.

1 Allen Ginsberg, "Feb. 29, 1958," in Journals Mid-Fifties 1954-1958, ed. Gordon Ball (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1995), 427-428.
2 Michael Schumacher, Dharma Lion: A Biography of Allen Ginsberg (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 214.
3 "Allen Ginsberg," Poetry Foundation, accessed March 30, 2023, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/allen-ginsberg.
4 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 216.
5 Patricia Cohen, "'Howl' in an Era That Fears Indecency," New York Times, October 4, 2007, accessed March 19, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/04/books/04howl.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3As%2C%7B%221%22%3A%22RI%3A5%22%7D.
6 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 207.
7 Brian Jackson, "Modernist Looking: Surreal Impressions in the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg," Texas Studies in Literature and Language 52, no. 3 (2010): 298, JSTOR.
8 Jackson, 299.

to transcend their original meaning.[1] Imagism aside, amongst the lineup of Beat writers, Ginsberg distinguished himself.

As a young writer, he was often bogged down by commercial interests, causing him to focus on the ability for poetry to appease the literary masses by means of technical prowess. For much of his career, this objective manifested itself in the form of raw vernacular poetry infused with everyday language, spontaneous prose, and unabashed references to counterculture trends. However, when he was a budding writer, Ginsberg's commercial interests, born out of a desire to both support himself financially but also imitate his literary idols, resulted in a struggle between conformity and nonconformity, and his work, although exhibiting technical achievement, was often far too esoteric to both the layman and his fellow Beats. Historically and temporally, Ginsberg lived on a threshold between two great literary movements, and much of his early writing resided in that liminal space. While scholarly work analyzing his association to modernism is rather limited, the pieces Ginsberg himself cites as having a profound influence on his journey to finding his style all bore a modernist touch: "Early years had brought on wave after wave of major poems," he lamented in his journal, citing "Death in Violence," "Denver Doldrums," "The Green Automobile," "Siesta in Xbalba," and "Howl" as examples.[2] Here, Ginsberg referred to "Denver Doldrums" and "Death in Violence," two epic poems whose exhibition of technical skill, a focus of New Critic modernists, ultimately diminished their thematic impacts. Similarly, poems such as "The Bricklayer's Lunch Hour" and "How Come He Got Canned at Got Canned at the Ribbon Factory," both of which Ginsberg described as pieces that incited his incorporation of prose and succinct imagery, echoed the minimal economy of language and visual stimulation characteristic of the modernist Imagism movement. Although Allen Ginsberg helped develop the postmodern characteristics of the Beat Generation, his early works exhibited an often overlooked modernist style that drew upon influences from the Imagist and New Criticism movements and played a critical role in his development as a poet.

Overview of Modernism

Despite the competing interpretations of the genre, most historians believe that a radical pivot in the United States and Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century resulted in an equally profound change in Western society, values, and arts.[3] At large, scholars like Daniel Joseph Singal and Ross Murfin and Supriya M. Ray, authors of *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, tend to define modernism as the cultural movement that resulted from this historical shift.[4] Consequently, scholar Scott Barbour defines literary modernism as the revolutionization of language as a reaction to the modernizing world during the first half of the Twentieth Century.[5]

At the time, the world was accelerating on all fronts. Technologically, the invention of the radio, automobile, and film paved the way for consumerism and mass entertainment.[6] Widespread urbanization across the United States drew attention to cosmopolitan settings and their inhabitants, as opposed to Victorian or Romantic literature's focus on agrarian landscapes.[7] The rise of multiple -isms in the art world—Imagism, Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Post-Impressionism—came to fruition, especially in European cities such as Paris and London. In the world of music, there was Igor Stravinsky, in architecture Frank Lloyd Wright, and visual arts had Matisse and Picasso.[8] To top it off, World War I left civilization in a state of disillusionment, generating thoughts of violence and doom among artists as well as conceptualizing the 1920s "Lost Generation."[9] With the war's end in 1918 came the crumbling European supremacy to be replaced with a rising American literary identity.[10] With society undergoing a change of such immense magnitude, it comes as no surprise that writer Virginia Woolf proclaimed that "on or about December 1910, human character changed," or that Ezra Pound rallied other modern writers under his mantra, "Make it new!," a cry beckoning for a new wave of art that rejected past tradition.[11] Perhaps the moment that writers truly became aware of the forthcoming era of novel poetry was when Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine arrived in Chicago in 1912.[12] While literary experimentation had occurred previously, many critics regard this event as a catalyst for the modernist poetic movement in America.[13] The magazine published early pieces by pomodernist poets Wallace Stevens, Carl Sandburg, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, and William Carlos Williams.[14]

1 Bartholomew Brinkman, "Making Modern Poetry: Format, Genre and the Invention of Imagism(e)," Journal of Modern Literature 32, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 36, ProQuest Research Library.
2 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 236.
3 Daniel Joseph Singal, "Towards a Definition of American Modernism," American Quarterly 39, no. 1 (1987): 7, JSTOR.
4 Scott Barbour, "A History and Overview of American Modernism," in American Modernism, Greenhaven Press Companion to Literary Movements and Genres Series (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 2000), 14.; Singal, "Towards a Definition," 7.
5 Barbour, "A History," 11.
6 "Jazz Age and the Roaring Twenties," in Gale U.S. History Online Collection (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2021).
7 Barbour, "A History," 15.
8 Academy of American Poets, "A Brief Guide to Modernism," Poetry.org, last modified May 20, 2004, accessed Mar 30, 2023, https://poets.org/text/brief-guide-modernism.
9 Maurice Beebe, "Introduction: What Modernism Was," Journal of Modern Literature 3, no. 5 (July 1974): 1608, JSTOR.
10 Academy of American Poets, "A Brief," Poetry.org.
11 Academy of American Poets.
12 Barbour, "A History," 18.
13 Barbour, 18.
14 "About Us," Poetry Foundation, accessed March 30, 2023, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/about-us.

Notable works like Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Pound's *The Cantos* came to be hallmarks of modernism.[1] Likewise, writers like W.S. Merwin and James Wright rebuffed Western civilization, encapsulating the contemporary ennui and melancholy generated by materialism, industrialization, noise pollution, mass media, and war in their works.[2]

Perhaps the most salient principle of modernism was literary radicalism, which was, as author Sir Malcolm Stanley Bradbury stated, "a considerable sense among artists of finding themselves in a context of aesthetic revolution." His claim makes sense: as a new era of artists with an increasingly disillusioned perception of their industrialized, war-torn society rose, their work would come to reflect the surrounding contemporary chaos and detach itself from past tradition, whether it be the rigid structures and scientific interests of Victorian poetry or what they saw as blind optimism from the Romantics. In his book *American Modernism*, Scott Barbour writes that modern American poetry began substituting strict rhyme schemes, meter, and classic forms for more colloquial and minimal language, musical qualities, and depictions of raw experience. Suspended expressions, images, and lines of poetry as well as non-sequential logic all evoked a waning confidence in humanity. Furthermore, cynicism, promoted by writers like Pound and Eliot, was unsurprisingly prevalent as a response to the increasingly commercialized, capitalistic, and mechanized American society. Building upon the aforementioned mindset, modernists learned to ask answerless questions, committing to a seemingly aimless, destination-free trek. American literary and social critic Irving Howe describes this embrace of nihilism as "a dynamism of asking and of learning not to reply" and an acceptance that certain questions cannot be answered.[3]

Like many other literary movements, modernism is often characterized by its rejection of previous literary tradition, though many modernists were aware of their historical impact and, consequently, their role in the preservation of some greater literary ancestry.[4] The emotionality characteristic of poetry during the Romantic, Georgian, and Victorian eras found itself substituted for work that was more, as Pound put it, "austere" and "direct."[5] This journey for authenticity manifested itself in the rejection of the Victorian glorification of consistency and honesty as the human race's ideal qualities.

Introduction to Imagism

One of the early stepping stones for the modernist movement, Imagism owes much of its origin to *Poetry* magazine and its publishing format, which could capture a poem as a physical object or image for the reader to perceive beyond the words themselves.[6] The magazine helped spread word of F.S. Flint's "Imagisme" and Pound's "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" and released works by quasi-Imagists.[7]

By the late 1800s, poetry began to stray from traditional forms as it flowed toward a convergence with prose and the visual arts like illustrations and photography, as seen with the rise of Symbolist poetry and the haiku structure, both of which aimed to create a hybrid between the English lexicon and visual imagery.[8] Similarly, by exercising a minimal economy of language and rarely relying on traditional phonetic devices in their works, Imagists focused on capturing the raw essence of the theme or subject at hand.[9] The product of such a philosophy represented a rebellion against Victorian and Romantic poetry.[10] One Imagist poem that best embodies the essence of the movement is Pound's "In a Station of the Metro":

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd :
> Petals on a wet, black bough .[11]

Pound, widely considered to be the founder of Imagism, first mentioned the concept after editing a poem by Hilda Doolittle he signed as "H.D. Imagiste" and later went on to detail the tenets of the movement in an issue of *Poetry* published in March 1913.[12] However, it is important to note that the poet had built on concepts of relying on concrete visuals previously established by T.E. Hulme, who writes that images are the basis of poetry in his essay "Romanticism and Classicism." Other notable adherents of the movement include William Carlos Williams, Hilda Doolittle, and Amy Lowell, who would later build her own interpretation of the movement in her 1915 anthology *Some Imagist Poets*.

For Ginsberg, figures such as Williams and Pound served as literary idols throughout much of his writing career. The former especially fascinated Ginsberg through his ability

1 Academy of American Poets, "A Brief," Poetry.org.
2 David Perkins, A History of Modern Poetry (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 553.
3 Irving Howe, "The Characteristics of Modernism," in American Modernism, ed. Scott Barbour, Greenhaven Press Companion to Literary Movements and Genres Series (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 2000), 32.
4 Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, Jr., "Modernism Expresses Both Historical Discontinuity and a Sense of Tradition," in American Modernism, ed. Scott Barbour, Greenhaven Press Companion to Literary Movements and Genres Series (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 2000), 53.
5 Beebe, "Introduction: What," 1705.
6 Brinkman, "Making Modern," 36.
7 Brinkman, 33.
8 Brinkman, 24.
9 Barbour, "A History," 19.
10 Academy of American Poets, "A Brief Guide to Imagism," Poetry.org, last modified September 4, 2017, accessed March 30, 2023, https://poets.org/text/brief-guide-imagism.
11 Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro," Poetry Foundation, accessed April 5, 2023, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/12675/in-a-station-of-the-metro.
12 Academy of American Poets, "A Brief," Poetry.org.

to capture clear images in his work while incorporating "actual talk rhythms he heard in the place that he was, rather than metronome or sing-song archaic literary rhythms he would hear in a place inside his head for having read other writings."[1] Yet this interest with more natural prosody was merely one of many ways the influence of Imagism touched the young Ginsberg.

Phanopoeia, Melopoeia, and Logopoeia

When asked to determine what constitutes good poetry, Ginsberg responded with the three terms Pound cited in his 1934 work *ABC of Reading* as embodying the main hallmarks of Imagism: "Phanopoeia, melopoeia, and logopoeia."[2]

Described by Ginsberg as "casting an image on the mind's eye," phanopoeia refers to the ability of a writer to encapsulate an image or object in an honest and straightforward manner free of abstractions.[3] Given that Imagist language is, as American poet Alice Corbin Henderson put it, "essentially a graphic art, and, like the finest etching, print or wood-cut," phanopoeia encapsulated the movement's pith.[4] For Ginsberg, capturing authentic and detailed life images in his work was a way of converting internal energy and projecting it to his surroundings.[5] In future lectures, Ginsberg would frequently mention "sketching," a technique adapted from Kerouac in which Ginsberg would construct a poem by first examining the tangible features of the subject and choosing a few that best embodied the subject's essence.[6]Additionally, like Pound, Ginsberg found inspiration in modern art. Specifically, the works of French Post-Impressionist painter Paul Cézanne occupied much of Ginsberg's creative references before the creation of "Howl."[7] The artist practiced "petite sensation," a technique that evoked rapid flares of light, a visual experience Ginsberg had witnessed in Harlem when noticing the harsh divides between the urban cityscape, his room, and the sky.[8] In Cézanne's *The Great Bathers*, Ginsberg noted how the nude bathers in the foreground bore little connection to the scenescape behind them, the colors of the painting further highlighting this dichotomy.[9] (See Fig. 1) Ginsberg hoped he could induce a similar sensation by focusing the reader's attention on multiple striking images without attempting to attach them rhetorically.[10] Furthermore, a proponent of drug use as a method of

Figure 1. Cézanne, Paul. *The Great Bathers*, 1898-1905. Oil on canvas, 2.08x2.52 m. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania.

heightening sensitivity to the outside world, Ginsberg relied on substances in order to induce mystic visions that can be seen as a means of achieving the visual awareness demanded by Imagism.[11]

In "Havana 1953," he employs direct imagery of a nighttime café scene in Havana, Cuba with minimal elaboration or attempts at blending the descriptions:

The night café — 4 A.M.
Cuba Libre 20c:
white tiled squares,
triangular neon lights,
long wooden bar on one side,
a great delicatessen booth
on the other facing the street.
In the center
among the great city midnight drinkers,
by Aldama Palace
on Gómez corner,
white men and women
with standing drums,
mariachis, voices, guitars—
drumming on tables,
knives on bottles,
banging on the floor
and on each other,
with wooden clacks,
whistling, howling,
fat women in strapless silk.[12]

1 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 124-125.
2 Joseph Karwin, "The Phenomenological Beat: Allen Ginsberg's Many Multitudes" (Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Tyler, 2018), 5, accessed March 19, 2023, http://hdl.handle.net/10950/1159.
3 Allen Ginsberg, "Summer Discourse 1978: Meditation and Poetics 7/17/1978," mp3 audio, 1:00:11, Naropa University Digital Archives, July 17, 1978, accessed March 19, 2023, https://cdm16621.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16621coll1/id/2195.
4 Brinkman, "Making Modern," 33.
5 Karwin, "The Phenomenological," 6.
6 Karwin, 6.
7 Karwin, 11.
8 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 197.
9 Schumacher, 197.
10 Karwin, "The Phenomenological," 29.
11 Karwin, 58.
12 Allen Ginsberg, "Havana 1953," 1953, in Collected Poems 1947-1980 (New York City, NY: Harper & Row, 1984), 92.

Written after Ginsberg had arrived in the politically unstable Cuba, the poem was published in his 1963 work *Reality Sandwiches* almost a decade later and blends Williams' use of the triadic breath-like structure with Kerouac's spontaneous sketching.[1] The layering of images without much effort to connect them rhetorically adds both vivacity and realism to the poem. Similarly, in his 1947 poem "The Bricklayer's Lunch Hour," the simplicity of the image of a bricklayer who "has yellow hair and wears / a smudged but still bright red cap / on his head" was Ginsberg's first attempt at the objective narrative without being tethered to traditional form, and, much to Ginsberg's delight, the work was one of the first to earn approval from William Carlos Williams.[2] The poem, which was later included in his 1961 *Empty Mirror: Early Poems* collection, marked the beginning of what Ginsberg considers to be his "good" poetry, with "Bricklayer" being "maybe the best, and the nearest to Williams in a way."[3] In fact, *Empty Mirror* contained multiple journal entries of prose Ginsberg later reconstructed as poems after acknowledging the value of objective narration.[4] "The Trembling of the Veil," written in 1948, consists entirely of visionary descriptions of a tree branch shaking in the wind. Schumacher observes that through the minute, objective details, Ginsberg was able to capture "the precise vibrant quality of aliveness of life" that existed all around him in even non-human beings.[5]

> Today out of the window
> the trees seemed like live
> organisms on the moon.
>
> Each bough extended upward
> covered at the north end
> with leaves, like a green
>
> hairy protuberance. I saw
> the scarlet-and-pink shoot-tips
> of budding leaves wave
>
> delicately in the sunlight,
> blown by the breeze,
> all the arms of the trees
> bending and straining downward
>
> at once when the wind
> pushed them.[6]

The use of sketching in both poems encouraged Ginsberg to rely on concrete visual details that were accessible to the audience yet contained a nuance that could not be emulated through more traditional strophic form.[7]

Another instance of Ginsberg capturing the illustrative quality of phanopoeia lies in a poem he had written in 1950 while working for the Paterson ribbon factory after leaving a reporter job.[8] After he was fired just a few weeks later for lagging behind on work, the pressure of being unable to attain a stable career began to dawn on Ginsberg.[9] He folds his personal anxiety within the lines of "How Come He Got Canned at the Ribbon Factory," a poem about an unidentified young worker unable to tie knots, despite its being written in the more detached third person:

> There was this character come in
> to pick up all the broken threads
> and tie them back into the loom.
>
> He thought that what he didn't know
> would do as well as well did, tying
> threads together with real small knots.
>
> So there he was shivering in his shoes,
> showing his wish to be a god of all the knots
> we tended after suffering to learn them up.[10]

The succinct imagery and triadic line structure leave little room for moral reflection or symbols; instead, the poem's use of plain detail acted as a self-deprecating yet earnest way for Ginsberg to mock his own incompetence without making the poem moralistic or brooding, a key weakness in earlier works.[11] More importantly, Ginsberg's infusion of prose, a result of the advice from a newspaper friend telling him to "write it like you're writing a story," would continue in his later works. In a reading at a conference in Vancouver in 1963, Ginsberg recited both "How Come He Got Canned at the Ribbon Factory" and "The Bricklayers' Lunch Hour" along with "Hymn," a poem written around the same time with dense lines like

> No hyacinthine imagination can express this clock of meat bleakly
> pining for its sweet immaterial paradise
> which I have celebrated in one gone dithyramb
> after another …[12]

Using the latter poem to illustrate the duality of his early writing, Ginsberg concluded that when

1 David S. Wills, World Citizen: Allen Ginsberg as Traveller (St. Andrews, UK: Beatdom Books, 2019), 58.
2 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 81.
3 Allen Ginsberg, "Mind, Mouth and Page," Lecture, July 25, 1975, The Allen Ginsberg Project, last modified April 30, 2012, accessed March 19, 2023, https://allenginsberg.org/2012/04/mind-mouth-and-page-8-ginsberg-williams/.
4 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 121.
5 Schumacher, 121.
6 Allen Ginsberg, "The Trembling of the Veil," 1948, in Collected Poems 1947-1980 (New York City, NY: Harper & Row, 1984), 14.
7 Jackson, "Modernist Looking," 301.
8 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 129.
9 Schumacher, 129.
10 Allen Ginsberg, "How Come He Got Canned at the Ribbon Factory," 1950, in Collected Poems 1947-1980 (New York City, NY: Harper & Row, 1984), 60.
11 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 129.
12 Ginsberg.

Ginsberg reasoned that when writing both "Bricklayer" and "Ribbon Factory" he switched his poetic approach and attempted "to combine what I thought of as a worldly wide cynical reality … with Williams' sense of … actual facts."[1]

Melopoeia refers to a poem's musical properties.[2] In "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," Pound describes the importance of using "no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something."[3] Such precise and usually colloquial language involved few rhymes, meters, or rhythms.[4] Inspired by Williams' deviation from more classic and traditional poetic verse, Ginsberg dedicated his attention to the breath and the act of preserving the idiosyncrasies of natural speech, akin to spoken word.[5] In order to induce a meditative, trance-like state in his poetry, Ginsberg synthesized chantings he had learned from the Hebrew bible with Whitman's verse and the human breath.[6] This technique is present in "Howl" with the repetition of the word "Moloch" creating a repeated cycle of trochees.[7] "The Bricklayer's Lunch Hour" also employs the repeated "-er" sound in the ending syllables of "cellar," "grown over," "Denver," and "bricklayer," evoking a sense of idleness and working class monotony. His use of melopoeia here renders the sensuality introduced in the middle of the piece both subtle yet jarring compared to the serenity of the scene.

Ginsberg also played with the arrangement of lines to fuse elements of phanopoeia and melopoeia together, such as in his brief lyric "Scribble." Written in 1956, he breaks the lines of the poem in places where the voice must naturally take another breath, and in an instance of rendering the poem as a visual object, once the readers have reached the end of the poem, their own line of sight has drifted toward the bottom right of the page much like a thought or vision slowly dissipating:

Rexroth's face reflecting human
tired bliss
White haired, wing browed
gas mustache,
flowers jet out of
his sad head,
listening to Edith Piaf street song
as she walks the universe
with all life gone
and cities disappeared
only the God of Love
left smiling.[8]

During his Blake vision—a hallucinatory vision Ginsberg experienced in 1948 when he suddenly began hearing a voice recite Blake's "Ah Sunflower" while lying on his bed in East Harlem—Ginsberg's awareness of the human voice's pattern of inhalations and exhalations opened up another plane of consciousness. He hoped to emulate this experience in his poetry so that the reader could understand the poet's emotions in their rawest form.[9] Later on in his career, he would even dedicate an entire volume titled *Mind Breaths*, a slow, breath-like poetic journey through various locations in America, to the concept of meditation.[10] Professor Joseph Karwin notes that during a time of extreme vice in the world with the Cold War and nuclear warfare, Ginsberg's use of melopoeia through the deliberate, intimate treatment of the breath and incorporation of spirituality and drugs in his works enabled him to escape a seemingly hellish society.[11]

Logopoeia was described by Pound as "the dance of intellect among words."[12] Considered to be the amalgamation of melopoeia and phanopoeia, logopoeia helped to create new connections between images and sounds.[13] In an analysis of Ginsberg's reflection on Williams' "The Red Wheelbarrow," Karwin notes how the poem's combination of iambic pattern and concrete imagery enabled Ginsberg to detect the presence of human experience in a way that transcended the ordinary world.[14] In "The Bricklayer's Lunch Hour," Ginsberg invokes the aspect of logopoeia that encourages writers to use words in a way that surpasses their literal meanings. Lines like

… He sits idly on top
of the wall on a ladder that is leaned
up between his spread thighs, his head
bent down, gazing uninterestedly at
the paper bag on the grass. He draws
his hand across his breast, and then
slowly rubs his knuckles across the
side of his chin …[15]

imbues a chaste setting with an intimacy and sensuality that would not exist had he not taken advantage of the connotations

1 Ginsberg.
2 Brinkman, "Making Modern," 36.
3 Ezra Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," Poetry Foundation, last modified October 30, 2005, accessed April 12, 2023, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/58900/a-few-donts-by-an-imagiste.ax
4 Pound, "A Few Don'ts," Poetry.
5 Karwin, "The Phenomenological," 7.
6 Karwin, 7.
7 Karwin, 7-8.
8 Allen Ginsberg, "Scribble," 1956, in Journals Mid-Fifties 1954-1958, ed. Gordon Ball (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1995), 152.
9 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 95.; Karwin, "The Phenomenological," 32.
10 George P. Castellitto, "Imagism and Allen Ginsberg's Manhattan Locations: The Movement from Spatial Reality to Written Image," Colby Quarterly 35, no. 6 (1999): 6, accessed March 19, 2023.
11 Karwin, "The Phenomenological," 41.
12 Ginsberg, "Summer Discourse," mp3 audio.
13 Karwin, "The Phenomenological," 8-9.
14 Karwin, 9.
15 Allen Ginsberg, "The Bricklayer's Lunch Hour," 1947, in Collected Poems 1947-1980 (New York City, NY: Harper & Row, 1984), 4.

would not exist had he not taken advantage of the connotations behind the words themselves, the subtle eroticism representing his repressed homosexuality.[1] In a future discussion with Williams, Ginsberg confessed that he did not actually intend on writing about his sexuality nor his relationship with Neal Cassady at the time.[2] Instead, by just describing the objects outside of him and playing with cultural connotations of simple words, a technique suggested by logopoeia, Ginsberg was able to capture those feelings regardless:

> You can feel the slightly erotic sense. And so, by means of the sense of the things I described outside myself, I was able to represent the feelings, as well as clamp the mind down on objects – (precisely) because I wasn't trying that. It was just that I was sick of myself, actually, "allergic to myself" … so I finally just looked outside of the window to see outside of my skull.[3]

Prior to employing phanopoeia, melopoeia, and logopoeia, much of Ginsberg's earlier work, although showcasing awareness of poetic technique, tended to be overly esoteric and self-absorbed. Schumacher describes an early series of poems titled "Denver Doldrums" as having countless vapid symbols and being generally too introspective and somber.[4] Prior to "Bricklayer," which Ginsberg described once as "probably the earliest text [he] published which makes real sense," much of his poetry tried too ardently to adhere to old standards of poetry, resulting in disorienting work.[5] All in all, Ginsberg's employment of modernist Imagism in his early works served as a crucial stepping stone for him to evolve from the obscure melancholy of his early poetry to the uncensored, honest style he is now known for.

While Imagism had a profound impact on Ginsberg, many are already aware of Ginsberg's interactions with writers like Williams. However, rarely did Ginsberg directly interact with pioneers of the 1920s high modernist revolution, specifically figures associated with New Criticism such as T.S. Eliot, Robert Penn Warren, I.A. Richards, and Yvor Winters.[6] Upon initial inspection, this lack of communication does not come as much of a surprise as the Beat Generation and postmodernism rose to prominence during a time where New Criticism was deemed desolate and lackluster.[7] Nevertheless, the ideological impact the restrictive genre had on Ginsberg manifested itself in the form of personal and career anxieties that played a significant role in the creation of the Beat poet. Specifically, research on his reverence for Eliot, whom Ginsberg described multiple times during the late 1940s and early 1950s as "the clearest expression of what I have in mind," is limited.[8] Dissecting his relationship with the high modernist unveils a deeper understanding of the difficult process Ginsberg underwent to transition into a true Beat.

Overview of New Criticism

Popular in the 1950s, New Criticism is often deemed the catalyst for high modernism. New Critics analyzed poetry through a closed manner by minimally taking into account the experiences and circumstances surrounding the poet, as doing so would taint the true, artistic value of the work.[9] The movement also adapted an opposition against ideals of capitalism, liberalism, communism, and modern American industrialization.[10] Furthermore, New Critics aligned with the anti-science beliefs of the Beat poets, and prioritized aesthetic language as a means of combating the technological and scientific atmosphere present in America during the Cold War era.[11] Nevertheless, the differences between New Critics and the budding postmodernists are evident, not only due to the New Critics' large disregard for emotionality and psychology, but also because of the elitism present in New Criticism.

American literary critic Irving Howe argues that modernism was a rejection of bourgeois culture, while referencing the decay of Western culture in the modernists' eye as a denial of cultural refinement and rationality.[12] In reality, modernism presents strong ties to bourgeois culture as the upper class was its primary audience, and eventually these connections, made stronger by New Criticism's insistence on the depersonalization of poetry, later contributed to the disintegration of the movement. In his book *Bohemian Versus Bourgeois*, sociologist César Graña argues that heavy competition in the literary market post-nineteenth century meant that writers were forced to develop a "cult of originality."[13] The phenomenon boils down to basic supply and demand: too many writers amongst too small of a reading public. What would the audience want? In the process of answering this question, many writers began to believe that they live in a society far too unworthy to understand their work, a trope coinciding with the "hero climbing above the mob" superiority complex that guided the bourgeoisie.[14] Marxist philosopher György Lukács laments that while modernist writers were quick to critique their society, they did little to

1 Ginsberg, "Mind, Mouth," lecture, The Allen Ginsberg Project.
2 Ginsberg.
3 Ginsberg.
4 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 81.
5 Schumacher, 81.; Wills, World Citizen, 52.
6 Perkins, A History, 7-8.
7 Perkins, 11.
8 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 100.
9 Robert Genter, "'I'm Not His Father': Lionel Trilling, Allen Ginsberg, and the Contours of Literary Modernism," College Literature 33, no. 2 (2004): 33, JSTOR.
10 Genter, 31.
11 Genter, 33.
12 Howe, "The Characteristics," 32.
13 Todd Gitlin, "Inaccessibility as Protest: Pound, Eliot, and the Situation of American Poetry," Theory and Society 10, no. 1 (January 1981): 67, JSTOR.
14 Gitlin, 69.

make a call to action.[1] According to Lukács, the valuing of human impotence rather than human action happens to coincide with yet another aspect of bourgeois culture in which a "self-made and self-contained individual confronts history, but history given a static, and as such fundamentally ahistorical, form."[2] In general, the loss of faith in the efficacy of human action eventually led to a disregard for personality, a concept based on the interactions between humans and their environment, replacing it with intense woe and self-induced suffering.[3]

T.S. Eliot, whose aversion to Romanticism became a focal point for American New Critics, was a prominent pioneer of the modernist movement.[4] In a series of essays written in the 1920s, Eliot pushed for poetry to be analyzed with a scientific objectivity alienated from information about the poet's own life, repudiating the Romantic perception of poetry as a celebration of the self.[5] This emphasis on poetry as what author and editor Paul Hoover described as "sonorous, well-made objects to be judged independently of the author's experiences" traces part of its roots back to Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent."[6] A touchstone text in New Criticism, his essay best articulates his perspective on the effect of past tradition and the poet's identity on their work. According to Eliot, critics must acknowledge what parts of a writer's work take from previous literary practice in order to properly analyze it while keeping in mind that previous tradition is malleable and fluid. Thus, while the past affects the present, the addition of new, contemporary work also fundamentally alters the entire previous literary canon. Continuing, Eliot also argues for the surrendering of oneself to literary tradition through the abandonment of personality in a poet's work, the idea being that a poet should treat their poetry with the same objectivism a scientist treats an experiment. This is not to say that there is no emotion in poetry, but rather, poetic emotion is distinct from the actual human emotion of the poet themself. In fact, the emotions of the poet can be "simple, or crude, or flat" but the "emotion in his poetry will be a very complex thing" as long as the poet uses their medium of poetry to express it as such.[7] The Eliot-promoted acceptance of works as internally and independently sufficient with no need for understanding their external influences was central to New Criticism.[8]

Ginsberg, Eliot, and the Journey to Becoming a Poet

Given Eliot's strong cries for personal detachment from poetry and his associations with classicism, it may come as a surprise that, when still trying to find his style, Ginsberg cited Eliot and Blake as writers he wanted to emulate.[9] Even so, the two had more in common than many give credit for. American literary critic Helen Vendler noted that "both possessed exceptionally high-strung sensibilities, which when exacerbated plunged them into states alarmingly close to madness; both had breakdowns; both sought some form of wisdom that could ameliorate, guide, or correct the excess of their reactions."[10] Furthermore, from upbringing alone, both were surrounded by New England influences, were raised by a parent who was a traditionalist poet, and felt pressured to conform in some way, Ginsberg in initially attempting to forgo his idiosyncratic image in Columbia University and Eliot with his distinguished bloodline.

Notes of Ginsberg's rigorous upbringing can be seen in the exercise of literary restraint during much of his early career. At Columbia, his professors supported his creative endeavors and defended him from expulsion but pushed back when Ginsberg suggested they study non-Victorian poets like Whitman, Shelley, Williams, or Pound.[11] More broadly, having been raised in a world that at times seemed to never accept him for his true self, the budding writer would let his anxieties restrict his growth not only as a writer but also as a person. His father, Louis Ginsberg, a traditionalist poet who, despite mild success, struggled to make a living and took a second job as an English teacher, warned Ginsberg of the harsh reality of the publishing world.[12] His father also made clear that he disapproved of Ginsberg's early attempt at writing a novel resembling Kerouac's *The Town and the City* due to its profanity.[13] In general, Louis Ginsberg's literary career would frequently serve as both a model and something to revolt against for Allen. Additionally, his father's struggle to support his family likely served as a reminder for Ginsberg of the challenges of pursuing a career as a poet, much like how modernists felt compelled to appeal to the upper echelons of society in order to survive in the literary world.[14] Furthermore, Allen's homosexuality would distance him from his father,

1 Robert McNamara, "'Prufrock' and the Problem of Literary Narcissism," Contemporary Literature 27, no. 3 (Autumn 1986): 356, JSTOR.
2 McNamara, "'Prufrock' and the Problem," 356.
3 McNamara, 357.; Barbour, "A History," 20.
4 Perkins, A History, 9.
5 Donald J. Childs, The Birth of New Criticism: Conflict and Conciliation in the Early Work of William Empson, I. A. Richards, Robert Graves, and Laura Riding (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 4, ProQuest Research Library.
6 Paul Hoover, "Introduction: The Battle of the Anthologies," in Postmodern American Poetry, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2013), xxxv.
7 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Poetry Foundation, last modified October 13, 2009, accessed December 8, 2022, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69400/tradition-and-the-individual-talent.
8 "Glossary of Poetic Terms: New Criticism," Poetry Foundation, accessed March 30, 2023, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/new-criticism.
9 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 100.
10 Joshua Earl Paulus, "The Eliot-Ginsberg Connection: Post-Apocalyptic, Post-War Poetry with an Original Creative Manuscript, 'The Weak Minds of My Generation'" (master's thesis, Emporia State University, 2013), 10, accessed July 12, 2022, https://esirc.emporia.edu/handle/123456789/3263.
11 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 24.
12 Schumacher, 4.
13 Perkins, A History, 546.
14 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 1.

who preached adherence to conventions. His later promise to forsake his gay lifestyle, initially a ploy to get the staff at a mental institution to release him early, eventually became a mission he actively tried to fulfill.[1] His relationship with his mother was no less complicated. The trauma associated with Naomi Ginsberg's psychotic episodes and her subsequent lobotomy, combined with his own experience at a psychiatric institution, fostered negative associations with science, matching the anti-science rhetoric of New Criticism, which Professor Robert Genter notes as a central pillar to the movement.[2]

Due to Ginsberg's intimate and frequent exposure to contemporary issues like mental illness, war, and sexuality, he embraced the aforementioned societal conditions Kerouac described as the foundation of the Beat Generation but in a way that initially was at odds with other Beats. Carl Solomon had no interest in Ginsberg's rhyme and technique-centered works and viewed him as "literary, erudite, and puckish."[3] Indeed, at the time, much of Ginsberg's work was structured and rhymed, his adherence to past literary norm harkening back to Eliot's words in "Tradition and Individual Talent." For instance, while *Empty Mirror* did include poems like "Bricklayer" and "The Trembling of the Veil" that exhibited prosaic qualities mentioned earlier, the collection also showcased much of Ginsberg's formal poetry which he had written simultaneously with his more Imagist works. Poems like "A Very Dove," written in 1948 and consisting of three ballad stanzas with ABAB rhyme schemes, best represent this trend:

A very Dove will have her love
ere the Dove has died;
the spirit, vanity approve,
will even love in pride …[4]

The alternation between iambic trimeter and iambic tetrameter throughout the poem creates a clichéd sing-song melody which, combined with the traditional subject matter of romance and nature, do little to stray from literary convention. "The Shrouded Stranger," written around 1950, also bears an inclination toward rhymed verse with its quatrains consisting of two couplets:

Bare skin is my wrinkled sack
When hot Apollo humps my back
When Jack Frost grabs me in these rags
I wrap my legs with burlap bags
My flesh is cinder my face is snow
I walk the railroad to and fro
When city streets are black and dead
The railroad embankment is my bed …[5]

Teaching literature at the Naropa Institute, Ginsberg referred to "The Shrouded Stranger" as a written imitation that played within existing forms.[6] Interestingly enough, when asked by a student whether his work underwent a significant change like Kerouac's at the time, Ginsberg responded with that while the subject matter of the poem was much more erotic and uncensored—the line "When hot Apollo humps my back / When Jack Frost grabs me in these rags / I wrap my legs with burlap bags" referring to intercourse with two masculine personifications of the sun and winter—any experimentation he did remained confined to classical meters.[7]

According to Schumacher, Ginsberg also felt a spiritual and psychological dichotomy between him and Kerouac. Ginsberg described his fellow Beat as having an adventurous, innocent, patriotic spirit reminiscent of Thomas Wolfe compared to Ginsberg's own listless and anxious "non-Wolfean" persona heavily influenced by European culture.[8] When both received Neal Cassady's famed "Joan Anderson letter," Ginsberg, while sharing Jack's high regard for the work and its spontaneous prose, suggested edits and focused more on the letter's marketability than Jack, who regarded the publishing world with more disdain than Ginsberg.[9] Part of Ginsberg's early unwillingness to fully embrace spontaneous prose can be attributed to another disagreement he had with Lucien Carr, who thought that art was meant to fulfill the artist whereas Ginsberg believed that art could and should communicate a message, a noticeable devaluing of unabashed self-expression on Ginsberg's part.[10] His hesitance with the aforementioned "New Vision" of art that disregarded all past norms was made apparent during his reaction to Kerouac's initial revisions of *On the Road*, which Kerouac later published as a different novel titled *Visions of Cody*. Ginsberg believed that the revised version of the novel, which incorporated a nonlinear timeline along with his sketchings, decreased in marketability and told Cassady, "[Jack] was not experimenting and exploring in new deep form, he was purposely just screwing around as if anything he did no matter what he did was O.K. no bones attached."[11] "Two Sonnets" from Ginsberg's *Empty Mirror* collection also illustrates differences in artistic philosophy between the two. Inspired by Kerouac's manuscript reading of *The Town and the City*, Ginsberg's poems portray the hellish deterioration of an

1 Schumacher, 110.
2 Genter, "'I'm Not His Father,'" 32.
3 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 116.
4 Allen Ginsberg, "A Very Dove," 1948, in Collected Poems 1947-1980 (New York City, NY: Harper & Row, 1984), 7.
5 Allen Ginsberg, "The Shrouded Stranger," 1949-1951, in Collected Poems 1947-1980 (New York City, NY: Harper & Row, 1984), 26.
6 Allen Ginsberg, "Basic Poetics I and II [Part 27 of 35]," mp3 audio, 1:19:50, Naropa University Digital Archives, May 1, 1980, accessed March 19, 2023, https://cdm16621.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16621coll1/id/375.
7 Ginsberg, "Basic Poetics," mp3 audio.
8 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 62.
9 Schumacher, 133.
10 Allen Ginsberg, "June 22, 1944," in The Book of Martyrdom and Artifice: First Journals and Poems: 1937-1952, ed. Juanita Lieberman-Plimpton and Bill Morgan (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006), 38.
11 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 147.

city in the form of a contained Shakespearean sonnet:

I dwelled in Hell on earth to write this rhyme,
I live in stillness now, in living flame;
I witness Heaven in unholy time,
I room in the renownèd city, am
Unknown. The fame I dwell in is not mine,
I would not have it. Angels in the air
Serenade my senses in delight.
Intelligence of poets, saints and fair
Characters converse with me all night.
But all the streets are burning everywhere.
The city is burning these multitudes that climb
Her buildings. Their inferno is the same
I scaled as a stupendous blazing stair.
They vanish as I look into the light …[1]

Much like the New Critics repelled by the postwar world, Ginsberg found himself deterred by the industrialization and aftermath of a war torn American society, but rather than deviate completely from literary tradition, as Ginsberg writes in the first line of the almost Spenserian poem, he "dwelled in Hell on earth to write this rhyme."[2] Similarly in "Death in Violence," written in 1947 and one of his most ambitious creative undertakings, the epic, while illustrating an early attempt to express his thoughts in his work, was also brimming with countless esoteric and erudite references.[3]

Ginsberg included notes crediting Auden, Rimbaud, Frederick Prokosh, Beethoven, Shakespeare, Blake, Yeats, and more within merely the first half of the poem and used many epigraphs, one referencing the line " … In the end is my beginning" from Eliot's "Four Quartets."[4] An homage to his greatest poetic idols, "Death in Violence" merged the disillusionment of modernism and postmodernism while still preserving Ginsberg's emphasis on technical skill and tradition.[5] Looking to find his own style while anxious to fully deviate from previously established poetic norms, Ginsberg initially wrote poetry that adhered to basic rhyme, meter, and line structures, formal techniques New Critics would have admired to understand self-contained texts.

Additionally, Kerouac accused Ginsberg of having a tendency to envelop himself in the masochistic, suffering artist archetype.[6] The latter's work "Denver Doldrums," a project Ginsberg described as having a similar magnitude to that of "Death in Violence," "Howl," and "The Green Automobile," best illustrates this flaw.[7] Inspired by a conversation with Neal while under the influence of benzedrine, the series of poems lament Ginsberg's lost love for Cassady but in a manner that felt overly melancholic and esoteric.[8] The poems oscillate between lamenting over the shrill cries of nightingales, confusing the details of the nightingales with that of Cassady's features, and discussing the holy relics of love with religious allusions to Eros and God.[9] Schumacher notes that other than being filled with symbols Ginsberg had already used in earlier works, the poems "were relentlessly depressing, bogged down by self-absorption and repressed images."[10] In a letter written to Kerouac in 1945 two years prior to "Denver Doldrums," Ginsberg reflects on the solipsism in his work by calling his art, "an emotional egocentricity … dedicated to myself."[11]

In a similar vein, many of Eliot's works were, as biographer Lyndall Gordon describes, "self-absorbed fantasies."[12] The titular speaker of his famous poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" showcases glimmers of this internal dilemma in a self-referential way. Throughout the poem, Prufrock suffers from self-paralysis caused by inaction, to the point where he feels anxious about performing a task as simple as eating a peach.[13] Critic Hugh Kenner described Prufrock's soliloquies as "self-contained, the speaker imprisoned by his own eloquence."[14] Prufrock's self-aggrandizing tendencies, his inability to withstand rejection or grapple with contemporary ennui, and his self-comparisons to Hamlet all paint him as a narcissist, one entrenched in his own dismay.[15] Nevertheless, through Prufrock, Eliot was able to embody the confusion and anxieties of a post-World-War generation, himself included, despite how much he preached about poetry as "an escape from personality."[16]

This paradox of portraying an intimate life, whether it be

1 Allen Ginsberg, "Two Sonnets," 1948, in Collected Poems 1947-1980 (New York City, NY: Harper & Row, 1984), 5.
2 Ginsberg, "Two Sonnets," in Collected Poems, 5.
3 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 64.
4 Allen Ginsberg, "Death in Violence," 1947-1948, in The Book of Martyrdom and Artifice: First Journals and Poems: 1937-1952, ed. Juanita Lieberman-Plimpton and Bill Morgan (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006), 433.
5 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 63.
6 Schumacher, 63.
7 Schumacher, 236.
8 Wills, World Citizen, 31.; Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 81.
9 Allen Ginsberg, "The Denver Doldrums," 1947, in The Book of Martyrdom and Artifice: First Journals and Poems: 1937-1952, ed. Juanita Lieberman-Plimpton and Bill Morgan (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006), 461.
10 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 81.
11 Allen Ginsberg to Jack Kerouac, September 6, 1945, in Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg: The Letters, ed. Bill Morgan and David Stanford (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2010), 26.
12 Lyndall Gordon, T.S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life (Manhattan, NY: W.W.Norton & Company, 1998), 94.
13 T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Poetry Foundation, accessed April 5, 2023, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69400/tradition-and-the-individual-talent.
14 Hugh Kenner, The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot (New York, NY: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959), quoted in McNamara, "'Prufrock' and the Problem," 372.
15 McNamara, 375-376.
16 Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual," Poetry Foundation.

Ginsberg's relationship with Cassady or the anxieties of Eliot and his shaken postwar peers, in a manner that is overly depressing and solipsistic to the point of detachment resonates with Eliot's "Tradition and Individual Talent":

> Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.[1]

Despite having called poetry an "emotional egocentricity" in a 1945 letter to Kerouac, Ginsberg echoes Eliot's argument above and laments his shortcomings as an artist rooted in his self-detachment:

> To categorize according to your own terms, though intermixed, [you and Lucien] are romantic visionaries … I am neither romantic nor visionary … I am a Jew … alien to your natural grace, to the spirit which you would know as a participator in America … You cry "oh to be in some far city and feel the smothering pain of the unrecognized ego!" (Do you remember? We were self ultimate once.) But I do not wish to escape to myself, I wish to escape from myself.[2]

Stuck in between denying and capturing oneself in his art, Ginsberg's dilemma resembled that of Eliot's, whom, despite arguing for the poet's detachment from his work, Lyndall Gordon described as being "most outspoken in his poetry, guarded by his celebrated theory of impersonality which, he once admitted, was a bluff. As more is known of Eliot's life, the clearer it becomes that the 'impersonal' facade of his poetry—the multiple faces and voices—masks an often quite literal reworking of personal experience."[3]

While there are fundamental differences, New Criticism and Eliot left a remarkable imprint on Ginsberg's early stages as a writer. Both writers grappled with ennui, their psyches responding to a postwar society in similar self-isolating yet simultaneously self-embracing ways. While eventually carving his own path, Ginsberg's early writing mimicked high modernists like Eliot, and his incorporation of modern prose with classic form represented a synthesis of his voice and the literary tradition promoted by New Criticism.[4]

If strands of modernism can be detected in Ginsberg's earlier works, do hints of these connections exist in his more recent writing? For Ginsberg, capturing images through prose-like poetry would carry on throughout his repertoire. His post-*Kaddish* work often exhibited phanopoeia to a great extent with some poems containing catalogs of descriptive images.[5] "Don't Grow Old," a series of poems written prior to the death of his father, reads much like a personal narrative as it does a poem:

> Now he lay naked in the bath, hot water draining
> beneath his shanks.
> Strong shouldered Peter, once ambulance attendant,
> raised him up
> in the tiled room. We toweled him dry, arms under his,
> bathrobe over his
> shoulder—
> he tottered thru the door to his carpeted bedroom …[6]

With regard to melopoeia, after "Howl," Ginsberg also continued his study of the breath and hypnotic chants in poems like "Wichita Vortex Sutra," "Plutonian Ode," and "Wales Visitation," and the Beat poet also continued to perform his work aloud.[7] Additionally, Ginsberg produced musical pieces, such as "Capitol Air," toward the latter half of his life.[8]

While the lasting impact of New Criticism and Eliot on Ginsberg's work is perhaps less detectable, given that he would later actively rebel against the genre, analyzing the connection between Ginsberg and this subset of modernism during the early stages of his writing is crucial to understanding his true identity as a poet. In his anthology *Eight American Poets,* Joel Conarroe describes Ginsberg as perhaps "the most uneven major poet who ever put pen to paper—the distance between his strongest work and his weakest is immense."[9] At times Ginsberg rebelled against all established tradition; other times, he saw T.S. Eliot in his dreams and hoped to one day be respected by literary figures like him, even if they were formalist writers.[10]

Karwin writes that in a published interview in 1989, when Ginsberg was asked how he knew what Whitman meant in his poem "Song of Myself" by the line "Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, / (I am large, I contain multitudes.)," Ginsberg replied with the following: "I know what he meant … Because I am large. I contain multitudes."[11] A reminder that literary revolutionaries are not formed overnight, Ginsberg and his journey to becoming a Beat is one riddled with hurdles, specifically his own self-doubt on whether he should stray from poetic norms or find his

1 Eliot, Poetry Foundation.
2 Allen Ginsberg to Jack Kerouac, July 1945, in Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg: The Letters, ed. Bill Morgan and David Stanford (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2010), 10.
3 Gordon, T.S. Eliot, 4.
4 Schumacher, Dharma Lion, 63.
5 Karwin, "The Phenomenological," 42.
6 Allen Ginsberg, "Don't Grow Old," 1978, in Collected Poems 1947-1980 (New York City, NY: Harper & Row, 1984), 710-711.
7 Karwin, "The Phenomenological," 47.
8 Allen Ginsberg, Collected Poems 1947-1980 (New York City, NY: Harper & Row, 1984), 744.
9 Joel Conarroe, ed., Eight American Poets: An Anthology (New York City, NY: Vintage Books, 1994), 221.
10 Ginsberg, "Feb. 29, 1958," in Journals Mid-Fifties, 427-428.
11 Karwin, "The Phenomenological," 3.; Allen Ginsberg, "The Puritan and the Profligate," interview by John Lofton, in Spontaneous Mind: Selected interviews, 1958-1996, ed. David Carter (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 484.

own voice. Even after he did do the latter, his writing consisted of an amalgamation of different styles, stitching together and re-inventing aspects of "Imagism, Surrealism, modernism, the avant-garde, Impressionism, Romanticism, jazz, confessional poetry, and stream of consciousness," personifying what Eliot had asserted about contemporary writers preserving and altering the legacies of artists before them. For that matter, perhaps the classification of Ginsberg entirely as a postmodernist is in and of itself limiting, as his work and identity delineated an individual acting as a bridge between modernism and postmodernism. Ginsberg's complexity and unabashed embrace of his nuances have enabled him to alter an entire nation's treatment of poetry into an art form that resonates from generation to generation.
the avant-garde, Impressionism, Romanticism, jazz, confessional poetry, and stream of consciousness," personifying what Eliot had asserted about contemporary writers preserving and altering the legacies of artists before them.[12] For that matter, perhaps the classification of Ginsberg entirely as a postmodernist is in and of itself limiting, as his work and identity delineated an individual acting as a bridge between modernism and postmodernism. Ginsberg's complexity and unabashed embrace of his nuances have enabled him to alter an entire nation's treatment of poetry into an art form that resonates from generation to generation.

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12 Karwin, "The Phenomenological," 53.

"Flattery Instead of Representation:" Sterling A. Brown's Frustrations with Black Drama

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In 1937 Sterling A. Brown published *Negro Poetry and Drama*, his important critical study of Black characters in the theatre. His book includes critiques of plays written, directed, and acted out by Black artists, as well as notes on Black audiences. Brown uses his knowledge as a theatre critic to analyze why Black drama has not been as successful as drama by white authors and actors, claiming there are many technical shortcomings in the industry. Brown boldly states that "none of the Negro folk playwrights show the structural skill of white dramatists," perhaps reflecting biases of the time (Brown 122). However, the book also covers the evolution of Black characters in drama from the audience's perspective. Brown acknowledges that Black presence in drama has been a slow-growing phenomenon because of internalized expectations from white audiences, which prevented the implementation of non-stereotypical Black representation: "The negro audience frequently wants flattery instead of representation, plaster saints instead of human beings, drawing rooms instead of the homes of the people. And the typical white audience wants stereotypes" (Brown 123). While he notes deficiencies in Black playwriting throughout his book and suggests that the industry should foster new and young theatrical leadership, Brown criticizes the technical deficiencies in Black playwriting and the limiting expectations of audiences. Rather, he argues that it was these audience expectations that caused the continuation of "the Negro's [...] rigidly circumscribed" role in drama (Brown 1).

Throughout his career, and before the publication of *Negro Poetry and Drama*, Brown thought about the Black character as seen by white audiences. In April of 1933, an article entitled "Negro Character As Seen by White Authors" in the *Journal of Negro Education* wherein he describes the types of Black characters displayed in theater written by white playwrights. The objective of the article, he states, is to highlight that "the majority of books about Negroes merely stereotype Negro character. It is the purpose of this paper to point out the prevalence and history of these stereotypes" (Brown 56). Here, the difference between Brown's analysis of Black characters in theater from 1933 and 1937 is the author and the audience. In analyzing the two side-by-side, two similarities become apparent: in playwriting by white authors and Black authors, "all of these stereotypes are marked either by exaggeration or omissions; that they all agree in stressing the Negro's divergence from an Anglo-Saxon norm to the flattery of the latter" (Brown 56). The temporal difference between Brown's book, *Poetry and Drama*, and his essay about portraying Black characters testifies to the long-standing norm of characterizing Black characters. Thus, even during the evolution of theater, Brown's writing, his influence and advocacy, and writing and playwriting faced seemingly immovable barriers when it came to producing profitable theater due to the lack of willingness to respectfully and accurately represent Black characters and folk-life.

While *Negro Poetry and Drama* demonstrates Brown's cumulative opinion that predominantly white, misinformed audiences are limiters of authentic Black writing, archival evidence suggests that Brown continued to think and write about this subject after the book's publication. In my recent sessions in the Sterling A. Brown archives at Williams College, I discovered an unpublished, typed, and annotated manuscript, "Drama," in which Brown discusses the shortcomings of Black representation in the dramatic arts, crediting it to the failure of Black artists to capitalize on "the mine of folk humor which is the Negro's birthright"; the manuscript signals a shift from a dual focus on audience and playwright to a greater emphasis on playwright shortcomings (Brown 10). I was intrigued by Brown's bold statements of criticism toward the quality of Black writing and thus was inspired to uncover more of his thinking on the subject. My search brought me to his book, *Negro Poetry and Drama*. The book seemed to contain expanded versions of the ideas I saw in his manuscript, which led me to believe that "Drama" was written first. However, upon further examination, I was surprised to notice that the manuscript's final section describes drama from 1917 to 1941, which he defines as the "Modern Era," indicating that Brown must have written "Drama" after his book's publication. I was particularly fascinated by the fact that this unpublished

manuscript condensed his thoughts on drama without recognizing the role of the audience. As in his book, "Drama" focuses on the intersection between drama and social justice. For example, Brown notes that "from the very beginning the American theatre relegated to him [Black characters] the role of clown, and the most recent cinema seeks to perpetuate that tradition", emphasizing the impact societal norms had on Black characters (Brown 1). However, he also highlights rising Black playwrights or actors, noting that Little Theatres "have contributed to a certain drama-consciousness among Negros" (Brown 12). Because this work takes the form of a fourteen-page typed manuscript, there is significantly less space to elaborate on the role of the audience. Instead of focusing on how white audiences greatly influenced the persistent misrepresentation and stereotyping of Black characters in theatre, as in *Negro Poetry and Drama*, Brown chose to focus on the inferior storytelling abilities of Black playwriting. Brown's condensed iteration, thinking, and choice of what to include suggest that this manuscript may have had a different goal than the book. These two documents share a similar objective: To encourage increases in Black representation in drama and accurately portray Black folk life; yet, they differ in delivery style and sense of urgency. My initial analysis of "Drama" indicated that it was an undeveloped predecessor to his book. However, my discovery that his manuscript came after his book's publication altered my assumptions, suggesting that Brown shifted his intentions rather than his ideas. While it may occur to one that the manuscript could have been compiled or composed in stages, it is evident from in-person examination and a staple in the pages that Brown likely typed his manuscript in closely-timed sittings. Examining his archival material plays a crucial role in deciphering his thoughts on what was necessary to inspire and elevate the Black artistic community. Thus, the comparison between his published and unpublished work gives insight into the social state of theatre and proves his continued dedication to advancing the field of Black drama.

In "Drama," Brown describes the history of Black people in theatrical productions to emphasize the enduring patterns of mistreatment toward Black people in drama. Before the manuscript begins its sectioned analysis, Brown notes the generally underdeveloped skill of Black writers and the failure to break from the frequent use of stereotypes and harmful imagery of Black people in drama. His generalization is further reinforced in his written chronology by selected periods, which Brown groups as the following: "Beginnings," "Middle Period," and "Modern Era," the first of which begins in 1776. Each section emphasizes a new evolution in Black stereotyping. Throughout "Drama," Brown gives specific examples where Black playwrights lack the skills to write compelling plots and character dynamics. He notes that in Black drama, although "the work is historically important; as drama, it is extremely weak" (Brown 5). For instance, he includes a critique of William Wells Brown's play, *The Escape, or a Leap for Freedom*, written in 1858, where he notes that the main melodramatic, love-affair-driven plot was "utterly impossible from the theatre angle" (Brown 5). Despite being a technically flawed play, its message emphasizes how "universally accepted [the Black comic] stereotype had become by 1858" (Brown 4). While the playwright's message is important, Brown claims it is undercut by poor skill and bad delivery. Yes, William Wells Brown was "an important anti-slavery writer and lecturer, the author of the first American Negro novel, [and] was also the race's first dramatist," Sterling Brown admits, but in 1858, he was catering to a primarily white audience who commonly degraded and oppressed Black people in the arts and life.

As in Negro Poetry and Drama, Brown traces the arc of Black theatre companies after 1865 in his unpublished manuscript. However, Brown continues to attribute the failure of theatrical companies to internal deficiencies in the technical abilities and narrative quality in Black playwriting rather than disclosing that audiences fundamentally rejected their work as he does in his book. During the "Middle Period" section of "Drama," Brown notes that while collegiate-level drama companies were essential for the development of Black writers and their growing numbers, "many have been shortlived [and have] failed probably because of lack of trained leadership. [...] It tended to become a social rather than a serious artistic movement" (Brown 12). Here, he places significant responsibility for the failure of these companies on leadership and writership rather than on the audience, noting that writers were too focused on the message of their work rather than its artistic quality. It is important to note that Brown mentions an increase in Black theatrical spaces and an increased development of the "Negro show." These Black companies began to break the minstrel tradition around 1890, displaying "syncopated Negro music" and musical comedies. However, despite the important contributions of Black playwrights to American theatre and the increase in Black artists and theatre companies in serious dramatic areas, Brown describes them as "not well-organized or outstanding enough to make an impression upon the chroniclers" (Brown 6). Black playwrights and actors attempted to break free of stereotypes heavily present in theatre but were rejected by larger audiences and never took off. Instead of noting that audiences on Broadway at the time were looking for mass appeal rather than artistic and social statements, Brown blames the minimal presence of Black people in serious drama on effort: "The Negro was

on his part to write it" (Brown 7). Through critiques of various efforts to foreground educational messages, Brown claims that the authors "apparently knew nothing of the theatre," reinforcing his general blame of misrepresentation on skill (Brown 7). Negro Poetry and Drama highlights similar points, however, with the acknowledgment of the audience's role. He draws attention to the internalized expectations of the audience when watching drama produced by Black playwrights: "The audience was readier to sympathize with heroes and heroines nearer to themselves in appearance" (Brown 113). Already, by virtue of a difference in race, social status, and the current stage of development in drama at the time, audiences were set up not to regard the "Negro show" as serious drama. Furthermore, he notes that because Black playwrights were respected less than their white counterparts, it was necessary to use the little theatres as laboratories for the Black dramatists to aid in their gaining respect in the theatrical industry. Brown uses more subtle uplift to stimulate the improvement of Black playwrights, conscious of the fact that the life of a Black dramatist is made more difficult by their position in society: "The necessary apprenticeships of the playwright in the theatre, beyond the footlights, is still too rare, and college dramatics cannot sufficiently offset this" (Brown 123). However, he confesses that this is no excuse not to be assiduous. Ultimately, Brown's condensed message in "Drama" from his more holistic message in Negro Poetry and Drama indicates the continued unfortunate state of Black representation in the dramatic industry. While in 1937, the theatre was dominated by discriminatory practices, which persisted through 1941 in Brown's timeline. The stagnancy of the industry prompted Brown to continue his literature on the subject more forcibly. Brown's praise of Black playwright's attempts at significant theatre and his awareness of the difficulty for Black artists to get their foot in the door in Negro Poetry and Drama are offset by his criticisms in "Drama." His abridging of an integrated, encouraging message in his book only allows space for an intensified message that the Black playwright must make space for himself in the field of drama, rather than waiting for an audience to readily accept a broadened industry.

Brown's eagerness to foreground Black playwrights and encourage their improvement highlights his commitment as a teacher. In 1973, the Library of Congress recorded Brown performing a selection of poems. During the recording, Brown frequently pauses between poems, drinking water, or beckoning for his wife, and sometimes, stopping to chat with the technicians for up to a few minutes. It is not until about halfway through the session that Brown clarifies why he must take these breaks. He comments that his poetry readings are exhausting because he regards them as a performance: "Now, I'm gonna stop after each one, but not too long, you know, it uses me up. I'm kind of acting them out" (30:12). By admitting that these readings take a substantial amount of energy to produce, he demonstrates a level of effort that is unique to most artists. His commitment to genuineness in his readings demonstrates how Brown expects Black life to be portrayed and shared with one's whole being. Therefore, Brown's attempt to condense his much larger narrative into a shorter, potentially more accessible format may indicate his desire to encourage others to do the same. He aims to build up the Black playwriting community, not beat them down. He does this by example in his recording for The Library of Congress and through frustrated and urgent critiques in "Drama." Brown may not believe that poor representation of Black drama is caused entirely by a lack of ability among playwrights. However, his emphasis on the need for technical improvement rather than on the audience's internalized expectations of Black people in drama denotes an effort to bring Black writers forward in the dramatic industry.

Brown's description of the "Modern Period" is a further indication of the unfortunate state of the reception of Black drama. While Brown notes an overall improvement in messaging in a creative sense, praising the (slow) incorporation of Black folklife into the theatre, he displays hints of disappointment in the community for their continued shortcoming in storytelling ability. Having published numerous critical reviews, Brown has direct contact with the intentions behind the drama, is in touch with the current theatrical scene, and has some authority in defining what "good" drama looks like. Brown praises playwrights such as Ridgely Torrence, who "showed the dramatic possibilities of the folk element" in The *Rider of Dreams, Simon the Cyrenian*, and Granny Maumee (Brown 8). His positive feedback focuses on Black creative (not storytelling) ability, and he notes that after Torrence's plays, many playwrights followed his lead. However, he reverts to his initial assertion that plays were too heavily centered on social statements and that they fail to effectively and authentically convey the realities of Black life. His focus shifts to the broader dramatic scene as he considers how Black characters were used by white writers who had no connection to Black folk life. Many white writers used Black characters as "a symbol of social protest," indicating that there has been a healthy social change in the perception of Black people, especially in an artistic sense:

> James Knox Millen's *Never No More* (1932), Frederick Schlick's *Bloodstream* (1932), John Wexley's *They Shall Not Die* (1934), and Paul Peters and George Sklar's *Stevedore* (1934) all protest the injustice which is the Negro daily lot in America. This trend, though a reversion to the problem drama, is exceedingly healthy because it takes the Negro out of any narrow racial groove and puts him in the full stream of the proletarian movement. These plays make the Negro character

the oppressed of the earth. (Brown 9)

Although he praises the newly found representation of folklife in the theatre, Brown suggests that plays have a long way to go, technically speaking, in delivery and writing. While these contributions to drama heightened the impact of the "Negro Renaissance," he recommended that a "School of New Negro dramatists" should be established," indicating his sentiment of continued inadequacy in the Black playwright community (Brown 9). He continues to emphasize that while many plays contain "much good raw material," which they fail to use effectively, playwrights both Black and white fail to successfully unveil the richness of Black life (Brown 10). Frequently, plays of important premises would make their way into mainstream media only to be overshadowed by the rest of the dramatic scene after a short time. Brown shows frustration with Black theatre with the realization that even when a play "showed the most brilliant promise of any Negro vehicle to appear on Broadway, [...] the promise [would] not [be] fulfilled by a subsequent work" (Brown 10). Brown's dismay comes from an apparent belief that the beauty in Black folklife speaks for itself. His grievances with the dramatic industry concerning Black representation come from his perceived inauthenticity in writing. Since these plays tended to be social rather than artistic projects, only appealing to white audiences, they lacked the honesty and emotion required to convey to an audience that Black life is essential in a social justice context. His lament to the industry suggests that Brown's role as a social activist is best characterized by his commitment to portraying Black life with genuineness and passion and his encouragement for others to follow suit.

Unlike in "Drama," Brown does not discuss the history of Black characters in the format of a clear chronology in *Negro Poetry and Drama*. Instead, he emphasizes plays that accurately portray Black life, exhibiting that creativity exists in the Black community to portray Black life. While he critiques the narrative quality of the plays, he does not resort to the shortcomings in the skill of Black playwrights as harshly. Instead, he takes on a more constructive yet hopeful tone: "None of the Negro folk playwrights show the structural skill of white dramatists like Marc Connelly, or the power and scope of Paul Green. This is to be expected since they are still learning" (Brown 122). His softer tone highlights that because there has been such a lack of representation in the arts, there has simply not been enough time for Black artists to develop the same skills and draw from the same vein of artistic history as white writers. He also attributes undeveloped skills to a lack of effort to educate Black playwrights in universities and other institutions. While Brown conducts his analysis of Black characters starting from the perspective of writers, beginning in a similar manner to "Drama," he later moves on to the audience's contributions to the acceptance of Black artists in the industry. Firstly, Brown notes that most "serious" theatre that included Black characters was "produced by whites for whites" and "soon lost its rudimentary realism: the dialect became gibberish and caricature a cartoon" (Brown 106). However, his hopefulness persists throughout the book as he highlights that the rise of Black companies and theatre education greatly "enriched the lives of countless students and mentored several generations of scholars" (Brown 1). Brown notes that this rise in education for Black playwrights is a first step in catalyzing the abilities and stories of Black life. One play Brown praises is *The Green Pastures*, written in 1930 by Marc Connelly. Connelly's play, based on a book of fictionalized "folk stories" by Roark Bradford, a southern-white writer, was also praised as a simple, yet glorified representation of Black folk life: "Newspaper files reveal that audiences of the 1930s were so affected by the 'simple folk charm' of this glorified pageant that it ran for eighteen solid months in New York, then toured the south and Canada" (Harold 41). Since Connelly was a white playwright, Brown, nor other play critics, do not discuss any technical deficiency in his writing in reviews of *The Green Pastures*. Instead, Brown focuses on its tribute to Black folk life: "If the play is not accurate truth about the religion of the folk-Negro, it is movingly true to folk life" (Brown 119). This play was highly regarded in the theatre community due to Connelly's preexisting status as a "good" playwright, predisposing him to success. Connelly had an existing audience to present his work to, unlike most Black playwrights. Connelly's pre-established following was vital to the play's success and accessibility to a large audience. Brown, a renowned Black play critic, could watch and review the play. However, one must consider who *The Green Pastures* was written for and who ended up in the audience. An article in Volume 42 of the *Negro History Bulletin* by Walter C. Daniel describes the discriminatory environment where *The Green Pastures* showed, illustrating that Brown, as a renowned Black critic, was an anomalous witness to the alleged accurate portrayal of Black life: "The management announced that the National Theatre had not changed its racial policy and that Negroes would not be permitted to enter the theatre" (Daniel 42). Despite Brown's high praise for the accuracy in the portrayal of Black life, he was an exception to the accessibility barrier. This is further demonstrated by the fact that during the time *Green Pastures* was running "Negroes did not support the play in any noticeable numbers" (Harold 41). Brown, therefore, is slightly biased in his perception of the impact of the play. Because it was not widely accessible to a Black audience, no one else could vouch for its truthful portrayal. Brown himself notes that

"if the play is not accurate truth about the religion of the folk-Negro, it is movingly true to folk life," which indicates that the play was only accurate to some aspects of Black life (Brown 119). Brown presents minor criticisms of *The Green Pastures* yet maintains that it is a moving portrayal of Black life. This follows its white audiences, who also saw it as a profound insight into Black folk life. However, without a Black audience or the perspective of a Black author, it is evident that despite being praised for its "holistic" portrayal, aspects of Black life were still overlooked.

Despite a seemingly grim attitude toward the efforts of Black playwrights, at the end of "Drama," Brown affirms that there is hope for their future in the slowly growing field. He claims that in the "Modern Era…individual actors like Robeson, Ingram, and others, have been given unusual (i.e., for America) opportunities on the national stage," even mentioning that "treatment by white writers has grown tremendously in depth, sympathy, and understanding" (Brown 13). White audiences, as noted in his book *Negro Poetry and Drama,* frequently have rejected plays and art by Black playwrights and artists because of preconceived expectations of Black character roles. However, because there has been "precious little" drama produced by Black playwrights, Brown stands in a unique position to elevate and inspire Black dramatists (Brown 2). As a figure of relative authority in the dramatic industry as a critic, Brown wields some power in defining good drama. He demonstrates his authority in his literature on drama, including numerous articles published in *Opportunity: Journal for Negro Life* magazine, his book, *Negro Poetry and Drama*, and in his unpublished manuscript, "Drama." His contributions to the dramatic industry foregrounded Black artists on more accessible platforms, spreading his message to wider audiences beyond the world of theatre. However, his criticism also served to encourage consistent growth in Black playwriting. Archival materials, such as drafts, allow us to track not only Brown's thinking about the evolution of drama but also the state of the theatre from a social justice perspective. Through his tonality and urgency, we see his disappointment in the theatre and Black playwrights since the publication of *Negro Poetry and Drama*. However, he does not lose hope. Rather, he encourages the Black playwright with a heavier hand. Brown's continued analysis of the role of Black people in drama is a tribute to Brown's scholarly approach, which he would continue throughout his career. It was once Brown did reach the end of his career and his archive was acquired by Howard University, his place of employment from 1929 to 1969, and organized by Williams College in 2018, that his narrative opinions and throughlines can be pieced together. While manuscripts like "Drama" demarcate the numerous, tumultuous, and changing opinions toward Black drama, his choice to publish *Negro Poetry and Drama* shows his overall dedication to encouragement and hope and a resistance to the dominant narrative about Black theater.

Conclusion: Brown's Pedagogy

So, what does Brown think is absent from the Black dramatic narrative? Brown's archived work, published literature, and public-facing content suggest that authenticity and emotion are the missing ingredients to portraying Black life to its fullest capacity. Until the time of the writing of "Drama," Brown seems to notice that "vast areas of Negro experience and character remain unexplored" (Brown 138). Because Black characters had been reduced to predictability, single dimensionality, and stereotypes, there had been no exploration of the vitality and richness of Black life. Genuine performance and authenticity are Brown's solutions. While he knows that education and improved leadership can remedy the technical abilities of Black playwrights, Brown demonstrates in his work and performances that the way to an audience's heart is through emotion and realism. As the situation becomes more pressing, it becomes clear that Brown is increasingly frustrated with Black writers, urging them to break free of centuries of expectation and stereotype. As Brown writes in *Negro Poetry and Drama*, "the treatment of the Negro character with honest realism certainly does not seem too much to ask" (Brown 137).

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