

Allen Ginsberg's Wichita Vortex Sutra

February 14, 1966

Allen Ginsberg

1966

Face the Nation
Thru Hickman's rolling earth hills
icy winter
gray sky bare trees lining the road
South to Wichita
you're in the Pepsi Generation Signum enroute
Aiken Republican on the radio 60,000
Northvietnamese troops now infiltrated but over 250,000
South Vietnamese armed men
our Enemy—
Not Hanoi our enemy
Not China our enemy
The Viet Cong!
McNamara made a "bad guess"
"Bad Guess?" chorused the Reporters.
Yes, no more than a Bad Guess, in 1962
"8000 American Troops handle the
Situation"
Bad Guess
in 1954, 80% of the
Vietnamese people would've voted for Ho Chi Minh
wrote Ike years later Mandate for Change
A bad guess in the Pentagon
And the Hawks were guessing all along
Bomb China's 200,000,000
cried Stennis from Mississippi
I guess it was 3 weeks ago
Holmes Alexander in Albuquerque Journal
Provincial newsman
said I guess we better begin to do that Now,
his typewriter clacking in his aged office
on a side street under Sandia Mountain?
Half the world away from China
Johnson got some bad advice Republican Aiken sang

to the Newsmen over the radio
 The General guessed they'd stop infiltrating the South
 if they bombed the North—
 So I guess they bombed!
 Pale Indochinese boys came thronging thru the jungle
 in increased numbers
 to the scene of TERROR!
 While the triangle-roofed Farmer's Grain Elevator
 sat quietly by the side of the road
 along the railroad track
 American Eagle beating its wings over Asia
 million dollar helicopters
 a billion dollars worth of Marines
 who loved Aunt Betty
 Drawn from the shores and farms shaking
 from the high schools to the landing barge
 blowing the air thru their cheeks with fear
 in Life on Television
 Put it this way on the radio
 Put it this way in television language
 Use the words
 language, language:
 "A bad guess"
 Put it this way in headlines
 Omaha World Herald—Rusk Says Toughness
 Essential For Peace
 Put it this way
 Lincoln Nebraska morning Star—
 Vietnam War Brings Prosperity
 Put it this way
 Declared McNamara speaking language
 Asserted Maxwell Taylor
 General, Consultant to White House
 Viet Cong losses leveling up three five zero zero per month
 Front page testimony February '66
 Here in Nebraska same as Kansas same known in Saigon
 in Peking, in Moscow, same known
 by the youths of Liverpool three five zero zero
 the latest quotation in the human meat market—
 Father I cannot tell a lie!
 A black horse bends its head to the stubble
 beside the silver stream winding thru the woods
 by an antique red barn on the outskirts of Beatrice—
 Quietness, quietness
 over this countryside
 except for unmistakable signals on radio
 followed by the honkytonk tinkle
 of a city piano
 to calm the nerves of taxpaying housewives of a Sunday morn.
 Has anyone looked in the eyes of the dead?

U.S. Army recruiting service sign Careers With A Future
 Is anyone living to look for future forgiveness?
 Water hoses frozen on the street, the
 Crowd gathered to see a strange happening garage—
 Red flames on Sunday morning
 in a quiet town!
 Has anyone looked in the eyes of the wounded?
 Have we seen but paper faces, Life Magazine?
 Are screaming faces made of dots,
 electric dots on Television—
 fuzzy decibels registering
 the mammal voiced howl
 from the outskirts of Saigon to console model picture tubes
 in Beatrice, in Hutchinson, in El Dorado
 in historic Abilene
 O inconsolable!
 Stop, and eat more flesh.
 “We will negotiate anywhere anytime”
 said the giant President
 Kansas City Times 2/14/66: “Word reached U.S. authorities that Thailand’s leaders feared that in Honolulu John-
 son might have tried to persuade South Vietnam’s rulers to ease their stand against negotiating with the Viet Cong.
 American officials said these fears were groundless and Humphrey was telling the Thais so.”
 AP dispatch
 The last week’s paper is Amnesia.
 Three five zero zero is numerals
 Headline language poetry, nine decades after Democratic Vistas
 and the Prophecy of the Good Gray Poet
 Our nation “of the fabled damned”
 or else ...
 Language, language
 Ezra Pound the Chinese Written Character for truth
 defined as man standing by his word
 Word picture: forked creature
 Man
 standing by a box, birds flying out
 representing mouth speech
 Ham Steak please waitress, in the warm café.
 Different from a bad guess.
 The war is language,
 language abused
 for Advertisement,
 language used
 like magic for power on the planet:
 Black Magic language,
 formulas for reality—
 Communism is a 9 letter word
 used by inferior magicians with
 the wrong alchemical formula for transforming earth into gold
 —funky warlocks operating on guesswork,
 handmedown mandrake terminology

that never worked in 1956
for gray-domed Dulles,
brooding over at State,
that never worked for Ike who knelt to take
the magic wafer in his mouth
from Dulles' hand
inside the church in Washington:
Communion of bum magicians
congress of failures from Kansas & Missouri
working with the wrong equations
Sorcerer's Apprentices who lost control
of the simplest broomstick in the world:
Language
O longhaired magician come home take care of your dumb helper
before the radiation deluge floods your livingroom,
your magic errandboy's
just made a bad guess again
that's lasted a whole decade.
NBCBSUPAPINS LIFE
Time Mutual presents
World's Largest Camp Comedy:
Magic In Vietnam—
reality turned inside out
changing its sex in the Mass Media
for 30 days, TV den and bedroom farce
Flashing pictures Senate Foreign Relations Committee room
Generals faces flashing on and off screen
mouthing language
State Secretary speaking nothing but language
McNamara declining to speak public language
The President talking language,
Senators reinterpreting language
General Taylor Limited Objectives
Owls from Pennsylvania
Clark's Face Open Ended
Dove's Apocalypse
Morse's hairy ears
Stennis orating in Mississippi
half billion chinamen crowding into the
polling booth,
Clean shaven Gen. Gavin's image
imagining Enclaves
Tactical Bombing the magic formula for
a silver haired Symington:
Ancient Chinese apothegm:
Old in vain.
Hawks swooping thru the newspapers
talons visible
wings outspread in the giant updraft of hot air
loosing their dry screech in the skies

over the Capitol
Napalm and black clouds emerging in newsprint
Flesh soft as a Kansas girl's
ripped open by metal explosion—
three five zero zero on the other side of the planet
caught in barbed wire, fire ball
bullet shock, bayonet electricity
bomb blast terrific in skull & belly, shrapneled throbbing meat
While this American nation argues war:
conflicting language, language
proliferating in airwaves
filling the farmhouse ear, filling
the City Manager's head in his oaken office
the professor's head in his bed at midnight
the pupil's head at the movies
blond haired, his heart throbbing with desire
for the girlish image bodied on the screen:
or smoking cigarettes
and watching Captain Kangaroo
that fabled damned of nations
prophecy come true—
Though the highway's straight,
dipping downward through low hills,
rising narrow on the far horizon
black cows browse in caked fields
ponds in the hollows lie frozen,
quietness.
Is this the land that started war on China?
This be the soil that thought Cold War for decades?
Are these nervous naked trees & farmhouses
the vortex
of oriental anxiety molecules
that've imagined American Foreign Policy
and magick'd up paranoia in Peking
and curtains of living blood
surrounding far Saigon?
Are these the towns where the language emerged
from the mouths here
that makes a Hell of riots in Dominica
sustains the aging tyranny of Chiang in silent Taipeh city
Paid for the lost French war in Algeria
overthrew the Guatemalan polis in '54
maintaining United Fruit's banana greed
another thirteen years
for the secret prestige of the Dulles family lawfirm?
Here's Marysville—
a black railroad engine in the children's park,
at rest—
and the Track Crossing
with Cotton Belt flatcars

carrying autos west from Dallas
Delaware & Hudson gondolas filled with power stuff—
a line of boxcars far east as the eye can see
carrying battle goods to cross the Rockies
into the hands of rich longshoremen loading
ships on the Pacific—
Oakland Army Terminal lights
blue illumined all night now—
Crash of couplings and the great American train
moves on carrying its cushioned load of metal doom
Union Pacific linked together with your Hoosier Line
followed by passive Wabash
rolling behind
all Erie carrying cargo in the rear,
Central Georgia's rust colored truck proclaiming
The Right Way, concluding
the awesome poem writ by the train
across northern Kansas,
land which gave right of way
to the massing of metal meant for explosion
in Indochina—
Passing thru Waterville,
Electronic machinery in the bus humming prophecy—
paper signs blowing in cold wind,
mid-Sunday afternoon's silence in town
under frost-gray sky
that covers the horizon—
That the rest of earth is unseen,
an outer universe invisible,
Unknown except thru
language
airprint
magic images
or prophecy of the secret
heart the same
in Waterville as Saigon one human form:
When a woman's heart bursts in Waterville
a woman screams equal in Hanoi—
On to Wichita to prophesy! O frightful Bard!
into the heart of the Vortex
where anxiety rings
the University with millionaire pressure,
lonely crank telephone voices sighing in dread,
and students waken trembling in their beds
with dreams of a new truth warm as meat,
little girls suspecting their elders of murder
committed by remote control machinery,
boys with sexual bellies aroused
chilled in the heart by the mailman
with a letter from an aging white haired General

Director of selection for service in Deathwar
all this black language
writ by machine!
O hopeless Fathers and Teachers
in Hué do you know
the same woe too?
I'm an old man now, and a lonesome man in Kansas
but not afraid
to speak my lonesomeness in a car,
because not only my lonesomeness
it's Ours, all over America,
O tender fellows—
& spoken lonesomeness is Prophecy
in the moon 100 years ago or in
the middle of Kansas now.
It's not the vast plains mute our mouths
that fill at midnite with ecstatic language
when our trembling bodies hold each other
breast to breast on a mattress—
Not the empty sky that hides
the feeling from our faces
nor our skirts and trousers that conceal
the bodylove emanating in a glow of beloved skin,
white smooth abdomen down to the hair
between our legs,
It's not a God that bore us that forbid
our Being, like a sunny rose
all red with naked joy
between our eyes & bellies, yes
All we do is for this frightened thing
we call Love, want and lack—
fear that we aren't the one whose body could be
beloved of all the brides of Kansas City,
kissed all over by every boy of Wichita—
O but how many in their solitude weep aloud like me—
On the bridge over Republican River
almost in tears to know
how to speak the right language—
on the frosty broad road
uphill between highway embankments
I search for the language
that is also yours—
almost all our language has been taxed by war.
Radio antennae high tension
wires ranging from Junction City across the plains—
highway cloverleaf sunk in a vast meadow
lanes curving past Abilene
to Denver filled with old
heroes of love—
to Wichita where McClure's mind

burst into animal beauty
 drunk, getting laid in a car
 in a neon misted street
 15 years ago—
 to Independence where the old man's still alive
 who loosed the bomb that's slaved all human consciousness
 and made the body universe a place of fear—
 Now, speeding along the empty plain,
 no giant demon machine
 visible on the horizon
 but tiny human trees and wooden houses at the sky's edge
 I claim my birthright!
 reborn forever as long as Man
 in Kansas or other universe—Joy
 reborn after the vast sadness of War Gods!
 A lone man talking to myself, no house in the brown vastness to hear,
 imaging the throng of Selves
 that make this nation one body of Prophecy
 languaged by Declaration as Pursuit of
 Happiness!
 I call all Powers of imagination
 to my side in this auto to make Prophecy,
 all Lords
 of human kingdoms to come
 Shambu Bharti Baba naked covered with ash
 Khaki Baba fat-bellied mad with the dogs
 Dehorahava Baba who moans Oh how wounded, How wounded
 Sitaram Onkar Das Thakur who commands
 give up your desire
 Satyananda who raises two thumbs in tranquillity
 Kali Pada Guha Roy whose yoga drops before the void
 Shivananda who touches the breast and says OM
 Srimata Krishnaji of Brindaban who says take for your guru
 William Blake the invisible father of English visions
 Sri Ramakrishna master of ecstasy eyes
 half closed who only cries for his mother
 Chaitanya arms upraised singing & dancing his own praise
 merciful Chango judging our bodies
 Durga-Ma covered with blood
 destroyer of battlefield illusions
 million-faced Tathagata gone past suffering
 Preserver Harekrishna returning in the age of pain
 Sacred Heart my Christ acceptable
 Allah the Compassionate One
 Jaweh Righteous One
 all Knowledge-Princes of Earth-man, all
 ancient Seraphim of heavenly Desire, Devas, yogis
 & holymen I chant to—
 Come to my lone presence
 into this Vortex named Kansas,

I lift my voice aloud,
make Mantra of American language now,
I here declare the end of the War!
Ancient days' Illusion!—
and pronounce words beginning my own millennium.
Let the States tremble,
let the Nation weep,
let Congress legislate its own delight
let the President execute his own desire—
this Act done by my own voice,
nameless Mystery—
published to my own senses,
blissfully received by my own form
approved with pleasure by my sensations
manifestation of my very thought
accomplished in my own imagination
all realms within my consciousness fulfilled
60 miles from Wichita
near El Dorado,
The Golden One,
in chill earthly mist
houseless brown farmland plains rolling heavenward
in every direction
one midwinter afternoon Sunday called the day of the Lord—
Pure Spring Water gathered in one tower
where Florence is
set on a hill,
stop for tea & gas
Cars passing their messages along country crossroads
to populaces cement-networked on flatness,
giant white mist on earth
and a Wichita Eagle-Beacon headlines
“Kennedy Urges Cong Get Chair in Negotiations”
The War is gone,
Language emerging on the motel news stand,
the right magic
Formula, the language known
in the back of the mind before, now in black print
daily consciousness
Eagle News Services Saigon—
Headline Surrounded Vietcong Charge Into Fire Fight
the suffering not yet ended
for others
The last spasms of the dragon of pain
shoot thru the muscles
a crackling around the eyeballs
of a sensitive yellow boy by a muddy wall
Continued from page one area
after the Marines killed 256 Vietcong captured 31
ten day operation Harvest Moon last December

Language language
U.S. Military Spokesmen
Language language
Cong death toll
has soared to 100 in First Air Cavalry
Division's Sector of
Language language
Operation White Wing near Bong Son
Some of the
Language language
Communist
Language language soldiers
charged so desperately
they were struck with six or seven bullets before they fell
Language Language M 60 Machine Guns
Language language in La Drang Valley
the terrain is rougher infested with leeches and scorpions
The war was over several hours ago!
Oh at last again the radio opens
blue Invitations!
Angelic Dylan singing across the nation
"When all your children start to resent you
Won't you come see me, Queen Jane?"
His youthful voice making glad
the brown endless meadows
His tenderness penetrating aether,
soft prayer on the airwaves,
Language language, and sweet music too
even unto thee,
hairy flatness!
even unto thee
despairing Burns!
Future speeding on swift wheels
straight to the heart of Wichita!
Now radio voices cry population hunger world
of unhappy people
waiting for Man to be born
O man in America!
you certainly smell good
the radio says
passing mysterious families of winking towers
grouped round a quonset-hut on a hillock—
feed storage or military fear factory here?
Sensitive City, Ooh! Hamburger & Skelley's Gas
lights feed man and machine,
Kansas Electric Substation aluminum robot
signals thru thin antennae towers
above the empty football field
at Sunday dusk
to a solitary derrick that pumps oil from the unconscious

working night & day
& factory gas-flares edge a huge golf course
where tired businessmen can come and play—
Cloverleaf, Merging Traffic East Wichita turnoff
McConnell Airforce Base
nourishing the city—
Lights rising in the suburbs
Supermarket Texaco brilliance starred
over streetlamp vertebrae on Kellogg,
green jeweled traffic lights
confronting the windshield,
Centertown ganglion entered!
Crowds of autos moving with their lightshine,
signbulbs winking in the driver's eyeball—
The human nest collected, neon lit,
and sunburst signed
for business as usual, except on the Lord's Day—
Redeemer Lutheran's three crosses lit on the lawn
reminder of our sins
and Titsworth offers insurance on Hydraulic
by De Voors Guard's Mortuary for outmoded bodies
of the human vehicle
which no Titsworth of insurance will customize for resale—
So home, traveler, past the newspaper language factory
under Union Station railroad bridge on Douglas
to the center of the Vortex, calmly returned
to Hotel Eaton—
Carry Nation began the war on Vietnam here
with an angry smashing ax
attacking Wine—
Here fifty years ago, by her violence
began a vortex of hatred that defoliated the Mekong Delta—
Proud Wichita! vain Wichita
cast the first stone!—
That murdered my mother
who died of the communist anticommunist psychosis
in the madhouse one decade long ago
complaining about wires of masscommunication in her head
and phantom political voices in the air
besmirching her girlish character.
Many another has suffered death and madness
in the Vortex from Hydraulic
to the end of 17th—enough!
The war is over now—
Except for the souls
held prisoner in Niggertown
still pining for love of your tender white bodies O children of Wichita!
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fifth Estate

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