

Works in Progress:

Excerpt from “Unacknowledged Language Makers: Mass Media, Poetry, and Allen Ginsberg in the 1960s”

Into the Vortex: Poetic Language and Ending the War in Vietnam

Following the Berkeley/Oakland protests in 1965, Bob Dylan gave a gift to Ginsberg that significantly impacted Ginsberg’s ability to record the mind in motion in his poetry: six hundred dollars to buy a Uher reel-to-reel recorder. According to biographer Michael Schumacher, Ginsberg took the machine everywhere, recording his impressions of the world around him, his mantra chanting, and all of the ambient sounds—from the crashing ocean to radio news reports—that accompanied them.¹ Ginsberg had been thinking for several months about an ambitious project in the tradition of Whitman’s celebration of America, and now setting out on a road trip to a February reading in Wichita, Ginsberg recorded his visions of America as he traveled across it in a Volkswagen camper with Peter and Julius Orlovsky.² As Michael Davidson points out, the Uher allowed Ginsberg to fulfill quite literally Whitman’s claim to “sing the body electric.”³ The project that resulted was published in 1972’s *The Fall of America: Poems of These States 1965-1971*, for which Ginsberg won the National Book Award for Poetry in 1973. The centerpiece of the series was “Wichita Vortex Sutra.”⁴

Wichita held a special place in Ginsberg’s imagination. It had come to represent for him the heartland of America whose steadfast support for the war in Vietnam baffled him. Ginsberg knew several poets and artists who had emerged from the area, including close friend Michael McClure, and he marveled at the ability of the region to produce

such creative minds despite its seemingly repressive and conservative values. On April 16, 1964, the *Wichita Beacon* published an op-ed by Ginsberg in which he responded to the harassment of Moodie Connell and the closure of Connell's Skidrow Beanery, a place in downtown Wichita that had begun to serve not just as a place for the homeless to buy cheap hot meals, but also as a gathering place for students to read their poetry and to buy recent work by poets like Ginsberg and Wichita native Charles Plymell. Ginsberg wrote to the paper: "I understand...that local police have banned or threaten to take steps to ban the sale of poetry by me and several other writers." He lists at length his formal accomplishments to indicate the merit of his work and demands to know: "Now what the heck is going on in Wichita?" The question was no doubt on his mind as he made his way there in early 1966.

Since Ginsberg's 1964 letter, Moodie Connell had briefly reopened and then closed the Beanery, opening in its stead the Vortex Gallery. It was at the grand opening of the Vortex Gallery on Monday, February 14, 1966, that Ginsberg first read his anti-war poem "Wichita Vortex Sutra," to a crowd of about one hundred. Ginsberg had just dictated the poem while on the way from Nebraska to Wichita.

In the writing of "Wichita Vortex Sutra," Ginsberg tried to understand, explore, and experiment with technologies of language. At the same time that he undertook composition with the aid of a tape recorder, he turned his focus to the language making its way into the car from other sources—radio, newspaper, and billboards. Justin Quinn puts it eloquently when he argues that the poem is "an exploration of the ways in which the U.S. imaginary is produced, through its mass media."⁵ The poem offers a new perspective on Ginsberg's career-long interest in the way consciousness works, and as

such is part of a larger project of exploring the possibility of becoming, as Ginsberg put it, “a stenographer of my own mind.” The record of the mind in motion had been a goal of Ginsberg’s since his early Beat days; now, with the tape recorder, Ginsberg was theoretically able to come closer than ever to recording unedited ordinary thoughts. Such a practice became, in the context of the Vietnam War and Ginsberg’s emerging media critique, resolutely political. Gramsci famously writes in his *Prison Notebooks*: “The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. Such an inventory must therefore be made at the outset.”⁶ Obviously, such an inventory could never be complete, but the important notion here is the need for the awareness of the historical processes that constitute one as an individual, and it was just this awareness that Ginsberg sought.

With the help of this technology, Ginsberg quickly discovered that what dominated these ordinary thoughts were reactions to mass media input. In some of the *Planet News* poems of this era, a faithful representation of unedited thoughts seems to be a goal. But “Wichita Vortex Sutra” stands out because it moves ambitiously beyond attempting a recording of thought. Rather than attempting a stream of conscious litany, “Wichita Vortex Sutra” is a carefully crafted inventory of information coming into a mind. “Wichita Vortex Sutra” is one version of what such an inventory might look like if composed in real time with a focus on the traces left by the constant input of the mass media. Which is to say, the poem demonstrates the overwhelming role of the corporately owned mass media in informing and structuring the thoughts of individuals in its

particular historical moment, at the same time that it seeks to encourage an appropriately critical approach to these sources of information.

The form of the poem is innovative, and specifically informed by the new technology with which it was composed. When Ginsberg spoke about the composition of poems done with the Uher recorder, he indicated that in transcribing them he used the clicks made by turning the machine on and off to indicate line breaks. He explains:

These lines in “Wichita” are arranged according to their organic time-spacing as per the mind’s coming up with the phrases and the mouth pronouncing them. With pauses maybe of a minute or two minutes between each line as I’m formulating it in my mind and the recording.⁷

Here it becomes apparent that Ginsberg is not trying to approach a stream of consciousness record of the kind that one might see attempted some modernist works. He is only recording a phrase every minute or two. Further, the poem is thoughtfully structured and organized by particular themes, and is not a fully realized catalogue of the thousands of conscious thoughts, let alone representations of partially conscious thoughts and feelings that must have flitted through Ginsberg’s head as he sat in the back of the van talking to himself with a tape recorder. In fact, Ginsberg as a narrative personality force retreats further into the background in this poem than in most of his works. Cary Nelson also notes this feature of the poem, stating that the poem is largely free of Ginsberg’s characteristic “insistent personal lamentation,” and Nelson argues that in this poem “History writes much of the text, and Ginsberg can try to identify what history has written, but he cannot pretend to dominate it.”⁸ Nelson’s characterization suggests Ginsberg as mere receptacle for the information he encounters in the poem, a kind of passive recorder. In a way, this is correct, insofar as the pace and content of the poem are guided by things that make themselves apparent to Ginsberg’s senses as he hurtles across

the country in a van and to which he issues a reaction; he is a passive recorder much more than actor in the landscape. The poem, however, is also about the negotiation between receivers and producers of information, and Ginsberg's work here is not merely that of receptor or even historian. The information that comes to Ginsberg through mass media sources in the poem is then worked upon critically. History, or more accurately, the mass mediated language Ginsberg sees as shaping and constituting the history of his era, may account for the driving force of this text (with the crucial exception of the visionary moment which is its apex) but Ginsberg does not receive it passively. As such, at the same time that he draws into relief the way in which individuals in this historical moment are subject to a perpetual barrage of manipulative language and images through mass media sources, constantly appearing on the horizons of their perception, he also models a critical attitude toward incoming information for his reader.

Part II of the poem, chronicles the poet's journey from Lincoln, Nebraska, to Wichita. It begins:^{9, 10}

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 no infiltrated but over 250,000
 South Vietnamese armed men
 our Enemy— (157-169)

The opening three-word line "Face the Nation" indicates a number of important ideas that guide the poem.¹¹ It announces the importance of the position of Ginsberg in the physical landscape that constitutes the material substrate of the nation which Ginsberg is facing as it speeds by his window, while at the same time suggesting the role of television

and radio in constructing the national imaginary. A thirty minute Sunday morning talk show that debuted in 1954, *Face the Nation* was one of the premier platforms for politicians and public figures to disseminate information from the birth of the medium of television to our present day. At the same time, it reads as an imperative; the line demands that the audience inspect, or face up to, this relationship between physical and imaginary suggested by the other valences of the phrase.

The first parts of this section consist of juxtapositions between representations of the material world—especially landscape and human flesh—and news report language related to the Vietnam War, searching for connections. In the opening section, Ginsberg investigates an excuse he hears from Republican Senator George Aiken on a radio broadcast of *Face the Nation*:

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 thro 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 (CP 191-201)

Several distinct scenes exist in this short passage. President Johnson gets bad advice from General McNamara and executes orders for the bombing of North Vietnam. Vietnamese boys come upon the terrifying scenes of the bombing. Aiken sings, a verb emphasizing the staged, performed quality of his delivery of news, to the Newsmen who report this error to Ginsberg through the radio. Finally, a roadside grain elevator sits quietly in the middle of Kansas while the bombing occurs (and presumably continues to sit there

carefully crafted mass mediated language has been the medium for generating support for this war. Through the rhetorical choices of those in the media, a miscalculation that has costs thousands of U.S. and Vietnamese lives becomes “a bad guess.” Newspaper headlines are manipulated, calling for war in the name of peace, pointing out the benefits of the violence. For example, we learn that 3,500 Viet Cong are dying each month. The overwhelming nature of such large-scale murder should be immediately appalling, and yet of course counts as a victory in the context of speech by McNamara or Maxwell Taylor. That Ginsberg spells out the number deadens the initial impact of the reality, suggesting how easily a fact such as this can be made to shrink into the background of a news report, until he draws out that these four words actually represent 3,500 dead bodies on the “human meat market.” What comes through very clearly in this passage and throughout the poem is the distance between mass media language and lacerated bodies as a key enabler of the war, which is underscored by the subsequent line, “Have we seen but paper faces, Life Magazine?” (CP 249) The extent to which broken bodies have been mediated—with newsprint, pixels, or sound waves—allows for the manufacturing of the American detachment that is crucial to the continuing support of the war. Thus media language is a bad, detached, rhetorical language, asunder from its referent to a greater extent than poetic language is. Ginsberg offers his own dissection of the process in this analysis of *Time*’s stripped and debased language from a 1967 interview:

...the main instrument of brainwash and hallucinatory political control in America at the moment is language. That is you can get the American people, apparently, to fight gentle Indochinese by labeling them “communists.” And you can get the American people to accept their desecration and death, torture and tear gas, as “legitimate weapons” as long as they’re used against the “reds.” So that if you have a newspaper lead story or television bulletin saying “75 reds” or “75 communists” were killed today in an attack on Bong-Son, then it doesn’t seem like any human beings have been hurt, just “reds.” It depersonalizes them. So

that the use of labels makes atrocities committed more acceptable to the American consciousness which doesn't want to seem them as atrocities...In other words, governments can use language to make people feel something's not abnormal when the situation is quite plainly and simply very abnormal. Or I can use language to say it is abnormal.¹²

What Ginsberg could not understand, what he was hoping to discover in Kansas, is why this seemingly obvious manipulative process was working so effectively on so many Americans. The above explanation clearly correlates to the following lines in the poem, the lines where Ginsberg introduces his magical theory of language:

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 (*CP* 288-292)

The immediate answer the poem offers for the question it poses is that the words coming to us through the media constitute "Black Magic language." As Schumacher reports:

Allen mulled over the concept of language the magic of language as his Volkswagen circled about the Midwestern vortex. The reports on the radio or in newspapers only confirmed his theories about the power of language. A newspaper headline read RUSK SAYS TOUGHNESS ESSENTIAL FOR PEACE. Language: People were being tricked into basing their faith on magic; if something was said, it became real. The war was real because our leaders said it was, just as in India when mantras were chanted, the gods became real simply through the process of reciting their names.¹³

In making this analogy, Ginsberg makes the case that the seemingly supernatural authority of the language of mass media may actually be supernatural. Within this logic, the sanctioned leaders of the U.S. government become priest-like, the only ones endowed with the capacity to utter the performative language that brings the war into existence. Ginsberg advances this theory of Black Magic language to experiment with fighting back with his own White Magic language, a poetic Sutra containing a communal language that hasn't been "taxed by war." The project was an ambitious one within the context of

Ginsberg's philosophy; after all, Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* declared the transcendent poetic language in the age of television a technical impossibility:

For the expression of this other order, which is transcendence within the one world, the poetic language depends on the transcendent elements in ordinary language. However, the total mobilization of all media for the defense of the established reality has coordinated the means of expression to the point where communication of transcending contents becomes technically impossible.¹⁴

Entering a visionary mode, Ginsberg issues a call to "all Powers of imagination / to my side in this auto to make Prophecy." He invokes a litany of names of religious figures, including gurus, William Blake, and various gods, setting the proper scene for a poetic voice that speaks in transcendent language. He then pronounces an end to the war:

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. (CP 550-554)

Ginsberg first makes this declaration *alone*, in his automobile, a single voice into a microphone on a lonely midwestern highway. He begins his *own* millennium.

Ginsberg's magic language is not broadcast across the airwaves into millions of homes, but rather is

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 (CP 561-565)

In his prophetic moment he speaks to himself and for himself. In the face of the tyranny of the mass media as the corrupt channel for communication with his fellow Americans, he turns to embrace the lone lyric voice that had cried out a howl a decade earlier. The end of the war is accomplished in his own imagination. As such, the next section of the

poem, though insisting that “The War is gone,” (583) nonetheless continues to observe the proliferation of headlines and news language that belie that assertion. The poem maintains the assertion that the war is over to its close, despite making ample observations that show it is not, showcasing its own failure, alongside a persisting delusion about that failure:

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 Service Saigon—
Headline Surrounded Vietcong Charge Into Fire Fight
the suffering not yet ended
for others

Finally, it concludes on a wholly dispiriting note, hurtling down the streets of Wichita toward the Vortex and declaring finally:

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! (CP 693-696)

The poem concludes by pointing out that even if the Vietnam War were over, things are far from equitable in U.S. society. In his few days in town, Ginsberg had already discovered that the black ghetto in Northeast Wichita was called “Niggertown,” and in closing he points toward a whole new body of strife connected to the same media language his poem has revealed.¹⁵

Readers of “Wichita Vortex Sutra” have tended to have one of two reactions to the poem: dismissing it as a tragically flawed experiment in magical language—

the extreme representation of the ineffectual politics of the counterculture—or, to see it as expressing the powerlessness of poetry to impact politics. Paul Breslin argues the former in his reading of “Wichita Vortex Sutra”: “Ginsberg wrote a great deal of political poetry in the late 1960s and early 1970s, all of it sentimental in its insistence that the war in Vietnam resulted directly from bad consciousness, and that good consciousness drives out bad...But the cure for magical thinking is not counter-magical thinking.”¹⁶ Breslin’s reading makes the mistake of reading the poem too superficially, and dismissing it too quickly. Ginsberg *does* attempt an experiment in magic with this poem, but that is only one aspect of this complex poem, as we have seen. In fact, Ginsberg issued a press release shortly after the completion of this poem, in which he declared his position in verse; while the content of the press release advances a theory of “counter-magical thinking,” the strategy of issuing it as a press release indicated a thinking that exceeds magic in its strategy.¹⁷

Cary Nelson expresses the second common reading of the poem, which emphasizes the poem’s expression of poetry’s failure: “the poem [“Wichita Vortex Sutra”] is finally only elegiac about the vocation of poetry. There is little left for poets to do, and no convincing reason for them to do even that. Nonetheless, Ginsberg manages a gesture whose political significance is precisely its powerlessness.”¹⁸ Nelson’s reading of the poem is more generous than Breslin’s, but nonetheless deems it an exercise in failure. Despite his characterization of the poem as “only elegiac,” however, in describing his personal experience of the poem, Nelson inadvertently suggests that there *is* something left for poets to do—to perform a poem that dramatizes this powerlessness. This dramatization of powerlessness, when performed before the large crowds for whom

Ginsberg was frequently reading in 1966, had an effect that Nelson himself characterizes as “exhilarating”: “Hearing Ginsberg read ‘Wichita Vortex Sutra’ during the war was exhilarating. In a large audience the declaration of the war's end was collectively purgative. The text of the poem retains that fragile, deluded but **dramatic effectiveness** because it registers its unresolvable ambiguities with such clarity” (emphasis mine).¹⁹ This is a key aspect of the poem: the performance of the poem becomes an occasion for exhilaration, a moment of ecstatic community in the increasing fractured anti-war movement, an acknowledgement of the conflicted thinking in which they are caught. So, while it is true that the poem demonstrates that the poet does not himself have the power to end the war, and while it may elegize the power of the poet, it nonetheless *did* exert a significant positive affect as a performed poem.²⁰

In this context, I would suggest a reading that moves past both Breslin and Nelson’s conclusions of the poem’s failure to take more seriously the way in which individual declaration in the poem works as an instructive model for single imagination to deny the war, especially in the context of live performance. This imaginative act could be emulated by his listeners, and as such, according to the laws of democracy, might yet hold out some promise for helping to end the war. There is nothing magic about this idea. Indeed, this is eventually how the war in Vietnam did end, at least in part—through the increasingly vocal discontent of individual Americans.²¹ So, in addition to offering a magical solution to the War, the poem *at the same time* offers a more practical democratic solution. Ginsberg mingles the practical and visionary aspects of his experiment in a 1968 interview:

If *one* single person *wakes up* out of the mass hallucination and pronounces a contrary order...if *one* person wakes up out of the Vast Dream of American and

says *I* declare the end of the war, well, what'll happen? It was an interesting experiment, to see if that *one* assertion of language will precipitate other consciousnesses to make the same assertion, until it spreads and finally until there's a majority of consciousnesses making that same assertion, because the whole War is WILL-FULL-NESS, and the War is a Poetry, in the sense that the War is the *Happening*, the *Poem* invented and imagined by Johnson and Rusk and Dulles, Luce, and Spellman..."²²

What Ginsberg theorizes here is at once a magical end to the war through his single visionary declaration, and a theory of changing the public will-to-war one opinion at a time through creating an awareness of how mass media language influences thinking. In creating such a powerful communal moment—imagine, for example, Ginsberg reading the poem to “a crowd of eight hundred cheering people”²³ at the University of Pennsylvania on May 5, 1967—Ginsberg provided a crucial space of catharsis and exaltation for a deeply conflicted anti-war community, and brought together many voices who could declare their own individual ends to the war. Coupled with the poem's ability to awaken the reader to his or her mass media manufactured consent to the war, we can see that the poem works at a liberal, democratic level that was intended to exist alongside its metaphysical effectiveness.

In re-viewing the work of Ginsberg, as well as that of other New Left writers and activists, I hope to show that it is imperative to evaluate their actions and publications within the contexts of changes in mass media in the period, and to recognize the complexity and often contradictory or dual nature of their work. It is easy to dismiss a figure like Ginsberg if one thinks that he actually thought he would end the war in Vietnam with a clap of his finger-cymbals. If we read him fairly, however, we see that the idea that the New Left undertook a destruction of “organized political life”—which I take to be the premise of the revisionary history of liberalism evident in the work of

critics like Michael Szalay and Sean McCann²⁴—relies on a flattening out of the actual practices of the New Left, which were actually, even at their most absurd, often very much invested in discovering how one might practice of liberal dissent within a political life so thoroughly mediated by corporately-owned mass media.²⁵

26

¹ Michael Schumacher, *Dharma Lion: A Critical Biography of Allen Ginsberg*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 457-458.

² *Ibid.*, 458-459.

³ Michael Davidson, *Ghostlier Demarcations: Modern Poetry and the Material Word*, (Los Angeles, U of California P, 1997), 206.

⁴ "Wichita Vortex Sutra" has a slightly more complicated publication history. It was first published in its entirety on April 28, 1966 in the *Village Voice* and later in the *Berkeley Barb*, and an excerpt appeared in an article in *Life Magazine* that focused on Ginsberg's visit to Wichita. Coyote also published it in 1966 in a pamphlet form that was distributed by City Lights. The poem went on to be included in Ginsberg's next book, *Planet News*, although his *Collected Poems* reinserts the poem into the sequence published in *The Fall of America* of which it was originally a part.

⁵ Quinn, "Coteries," 201.

⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, eds. Quintin Hoary and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, (Electric Book Company, 2001), <http://www.elecbook.com>, 628.

⁷ Allen Ginsberg, *Composed on the Tongue*, (Bollinas, CA: Grey Fox Press, 1980).

⁸ Cary Nelson, *Our Last First Poets: Vision and History in Contemporary American Poetry*, (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1981).

⁹ In my analysis I'm going to focus primarily on Part II of the two-part poem, which draws from recordings made as Ginsberg returned to Wichita from Lincoln, Nebraska. Part II constitutes the bulk of the poem and was the text of the earlier version of the poem published as a pamphlet.

¹⁰ Allen Ginsberg, "Wichita Vortex Sutra," *Collected Poems 1947-1980* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 394-411. Further references to *Collected Poems* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically as *CP*.

¹¹ The original transcription of the poem in Ginsberg's journal does not include this opening phrase. The poem was largely consistent to original transcription, but significant revisions do occur. Ginsberg was never able to master Kerouac's "first thought, best thought" aversion to editing, though he aspired to it.

¹² Allen Ginsberg, *Spontaneous Mind*, New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 72.

¹³ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 461.

¹⁴ Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 68.

¹⁵ The implications of these theories of psychopolitics, poetry, and media, for race, specifically Black Nationalism, will be explored in more depth in my next chapter on Amiri Baraka.

¹⁶ Breslin, *Psycho-Political*, 37.

¹⁷ The statement reads, in part:

As a U.S. language chief I hereby use language to make a unilateral declaration of the
end of the Vietnam War,

The poet says the whole war's nothing but black magic caused by the wrong language
& authoritatively cancels all previous magic formulas & wipes out the whole war scene
without further delay.

Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 463.

¹⁸ Nelson, *Our Last First Poets*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ As many as 2,500 students showed up for Ginsberg's readings in Lincoln, Lawrence, and Topeka, and they all drew both public outcry and significant media interest, most notably becoming part of a *Life*

Magazine feature on the trip called “The Guru Comes to Kansas,” which explains that his readings made overflow crowds of students “deeply excited” and “ecstatic.” Farrell, “Guru,” 84, 89.

²¹ The recently published journals of Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. remind us of the incredibly important role public opinion played for the politicians conducting the Vietnam War. His July 28, 1966, entry records that Johnson’s lies to the American public about war victories sprung from “the feeling that widening the war will enable him [Johnson] to pursue the domestic strategy of rallying the country around the flag.” Johnson actually saw the war as a political tool to garner votes at this time, and this goal was more central than incidental to the way he conducted the war. Schlesinger goes on to suggest that at this time Richard Goodwin, Johnson’s speechwriter, felt that “the only thing likely to reach Johnson is vigorous political opposition; and we have discussed the possible formation of a committee against the widening of the war as a means of rallying resistance.” Goodwin and Schlesinger discussed this with Robert Kennedy, who offered “skepticism about a mass [anti-war] movement.” Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *Journals: 1952-2000*, (New York: Penguin, 2007). All quotes here come from the reprint of selections from the book in *The New York Review of Books*, “The Turning Point,” October 11, 2007, 11.

²² qtd. in Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 464.

²³ Schumacher, *Dharma Lion*, 468.

²⁴ See their special issue of *Yale Journal of Criticism* 18.2 (Fall, 2005). Amy Hungerford’s article on Ginsberg in this special issue, “Postmodern Supernaturalism: Ginsberg and the Search for a Supernatural Language,” is indicative of the approach to Ginsberg that accounts for the “supernatural” aspect of his politics and poetics (and it does so extremely well), but fails to recognize its co-existence with a more rational, liberal Ginsberg.

²⁵ I would cite work like Leerom Medovoi’s recent *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity* (Duke UP, 2005) as a book that undertakes a new and more accurate approach, one that sees liberal and identity politics not as distinct forms of political practice, but rather as a dialectically related within the context of late capitalism.