

Magic and Collage: Language in Ginsberg's "Wichita Vortex Sutra"

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Abstract: "Wichita Vortex Sutra" might be Allen Ginsberg's most successful anti-war poem. Written in the technique of the collage, and inspired by Burroughs' cut-ups, the poem presents a variety of voices. These include a Whitmanian, prophetic tone which becomes increasingly prevalent and the mediatic chaos of the news, featuring advertising, newspaper extracts, and radio broadcasts. In "Wichita Vortex Sutra," Ginsberg's use of language is especially noteworthy: on the one hand, the poet charges language with a spiritual, magical power, and on the other hand, he destroys it, fragments it, and recreates it through the collage. This article explores Ginsberg's experiments 'with' and 'beyond' language in this poem, analysing his use of voice throughout the piece and his philosophy of the cut-up. Ultimately, this article proposes an understanding of "Wichita Vortex Sutra" as a 'magical collage,' as a place where the spiritual and the political, the personal and the public, peacefulness and violence, and the East and the West meet.

Keywords:

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Büyü ve Kolaj: Ginsberg'in "Winchita Vortex Sutra" Şiirinde Dil

Öz: "Winchita Vortex Sutra", Allen Ginsberg'in en başarılı savaş karşıtı şiiri olarak görülebilmektedir. Kolaj tekniğiyle yazılmış ve Burroughs'un *cut-up*'larından (kes-yapıştır) ilham almış olan bu şiir, çok çeşitli sesler sunmaktadır. Bu seslerin arasında, gittikçe esere hakim olan Whitmanvari, kahince bir ton ile reklamları, gazete alıntılarını ve radyo yayınlarını içeren haberlerin medyatik kaosu da yer alır. Ginsberg'in "Winchita Vortex Sutra"daki dil kullanımı bilhassa kayda değerdir: şair dili bir yandan ruhani, büyülü bir güçle dolduruyorken, öte yandan da bu dili yıkmakta, parçalamakta ve kolaj yordamıyla yeniden yaratmaktadır. Bu makale de, Ginsberg'in eserin tamamında ses kullanımını ve *cut-up* felsefesini inceleyerek, şairin bu şiirdeki dil 'ile' ve dilin 'ötesinde' deneylerini araştırmaktadır. Makale, sonuç olarak, "Winchita Vortex Sutra" şiirinin ruhani ile siyasinin, kişisel ile kamusalın, sükunet ile şiddetin ve Doğu ile Batı'nın bulunduğu bir yer, 'büyülü bir kolaj' olması fikrini ileri sürmektedir.

Keywords:

Allen Ginsberg,
Amerikan şiiri,
Beat kuşağı,
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In his years in Columbia, Allen Ginsberg met with Lucien Carr, Jack Kerouac, and William S. Burroughs, marking the beginning of the group of writers and friends which would come to be known as the Beat Generation. They soon began to theorize a new type of sensibility, a new consciousness or 'New Vision,' as they named it following W. B. Yeats' poem "A Vision." This would oppose the closure, paranoia, materiality, and conformity of the Cold War with unrestrained honesty, vulnerability, and exploration of one's own individuality and consciousness. The early Beats soon began to observe, beginning with language and personal interactions, how official environments differed from theirs. "Consciousness within the academy was narrowing down, becoming more anxious and rigid, and it was the initiation of the cold war theoretics for them, the beginning of that grand international paranoia" Allen Ginsberg recalls; "everybody else around us was talking like some kind of strange lunar robots in business suits. Everybody sounded like the police in some funny way, even the professors at the university" ("The New Consciousness" 70-72). Ginsberg would equate these "Ionescoesque hallucinations of language" and "hallucinatory public consciousness" (71, 72) with a national crisis in consciousness, a 'Syndrome of Shutdown,' in the poet's words, from which the United States as a nation was suffering at its nervous and emotional cores. "The whole cold war is the imposition of a vast mental barrier on everybody, a vast antinatural psyche," according to Ginsberg; "A hardening, a shutting off of the perception of desire and tenderness which everybody *knows* and which is the very structure of ... the atom!" ("*Paris Review*" 285; emphasis in the original).

Thus, Ginsberg diagnoses the Cold War as a personal, psychological phenomenon as well as a political and cultural situation, denouncing it accordingly in his poetry (as perhaps most evident in *Howl* and *Kaddish*, where the poet specifically analyses the 'madness' of non-conforming individuals as both caused by the socio-cultural contexts of the Cold War and as wrongfully treated, through marginalization, conformation, or dehumanizing therapies, by the medical institutions). The analysis of the Cold War as both a public and private phenomenon supports the argument that, as several Cold War literature scholars report, American poetry written during the Cold War becomes the locus of challenging and negotiating the boundaries between public and private, between state and self (see Brunner 2001; Nelson 2002). This resonates with Ginsberg's long line both in form and in content. At times, Ginsberg's line takes on 'Whitmanian' associations, abounding in repetition, anaphora, and parallel structures:

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. . . . (“Wichita Vortex Sutra” 353-61)

This bardic line may be defined as Whitmanian in that it most significantly takes after Whitman, the Romantic fellow-traveller and poet-prophet whose line shocked the landscapes of mid-century American literature with its length, repetition, parallelism, and raw, emotional power. Whitman’s most exemplificative poem, *Song of Myself* (1855), begins for instance by establishing parallelism and an authoritative, bardic voice: “I celebrate myself and sing myself, / And what I assume you shall assume, / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you” (1-3). The rhythm of this line makes it resemble an incantation and evokes the chanting of the poet-shamans of other cultures. Daniel McGuinness also remarks that “The long line, generally, has been traditionally a public line, a symptom of the showman or the shaman, the poet on a raised surface: altar, stage, soapbox” (273). In “Wichita Vortex Sutra” (1966), Ginsberg’s line significantly engages with the public sphere, both in form and in content. For the purposes of this interaction, the poet experiments with language and beyond language. This article specifically explores how, in “Wichita Vortex Sutra,” Ginsberg alternatively charges language with magical powers, in Whitmanian fashion, and conveys meaning through the fragmentation of the collage technique.

The ‘public’ socio-political context which “Wichita Vortex Sutra” most notably engages with is the Vietnam War. One of the principal ways in which the poem does this is through an exploration, contradiction, satire, and exposition of the news. This article’s focus on language reflects the poem’s engagement, through language, *with* language; in other words, the language of the news, the ‘language of war.’ As Jahan Ramazani suggests, one valuable way of understanding twentieth-century American poetry is through its vexed relationship and dialogue with the genre of the news (123). Through the cut-up long line of poems such as “Wichita Vortex Sutra,” Ginsberg aims to create new ways of understanding language, consciousness, and reality which elude the ‘hallucinatory public consciousness’ superimposed on individual ‘natural’ consciousness. What mainly separated the ‘hallucinatory’ and the ‘natural’ language and consciousness would be, according to the Beats, complete and utter honesty. Indeed, in a 1952 letter to Ginsberg, Kerouac writes that what unites their group is the capacity to reveal to each other their most profound feelings and sensitivities (Tytell 3). Cold War consciousness, on the other hand, opposed this sincerity with competitiveness, paranoia, and a barrier of coldness and separation between people. Beat honesty extended from comrades, or ‘*camerados*,’ in Whitman’s term, to oneself. “Quarrel with yourself. Your quarrels with yourself often make the best poems. Tell yourself your own secrets, and reveal yourself,” the poet insists: “The purpose of art is to provide relief from your own paranoia and the paranoia of others. You write to relieve the pain of others, to free them from the self-doubt generated by a society in which everyone is conniving and manipulating” (qtd. in Raskin xvi).

This article illustrates how a strong, prophetic, and outspokenly honest voice progressively emerges in “Wichita Vortex Sutra” throughout the poem. This voice may be

termed 'Whitmanian' because of its previously outlined 'magical' associations. Where collage is more prominent at the beginning of the poem, this voice rises to confront the fragmentation and confusion which the cut-up both creates and exemplifies. Considering the bardic, rising voice which opposes cut-up fragmentation, Ginsberg's formal dialogue between poetry and the news echoes Wallace Stevens' idea that poetry has the power to resist the violence of reality (especially in the context of war), that "It is a violence from within that protects us from a violence without. It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality" (36). In "Wichita Vortex Sutra," the 'violence from within' finds expression both in the affective power and rawness with which Ginsberg charges his voice and, perhaps most significantly, in the formal violence which the cut-up method entails, reflected in destruction, recreation, and fragmentation of voice in traditional poetic terms. These are some of the interplays which this article explores in "Wichita Vortex Sutra": those between poetry and the news, the individual and the public realms, unity and fragmentation, the 'hallucinatory public consciousness' and honesty. Specifically, this article analyses, as seen in "Wichita Vortex Sutra," Ginsberg's belief in the power of words, which allows him to charge his bardic voice with magic, and the fragmentation which he both creates and imitates with the cut-up technique. These discussions propose an original textual engagement with the poem and an insightful, fresh analysis of one of Ginsberg's best known, most interesting, and less discussed poems. Considerations on the interplay between a magic, Whitmanian voice, and the poet's use of the collage technique, significantly contribute to an innovative understanding of the text both on formal levels and with regard to its meaning and affective power.

Published in *Planet News* (1968), "Wichita Vortex Sutra" is arguably Ginsberg's most successful anti-war poem. Written in a collage of impressions and voices, the poem intermingles Ginsberg's own fantasies and thoughts with landscapes, advertising, and extracts from the radio. The poem was recorded on an Uher tape recorder while the poet was sitting in the back seat of the car, as Orlovsky drove through Kansas with the radio turned on:

Thru Hickman's rolling earth hills
 icy winter
 gray skybare 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— (159-67)

The poem clearly uses the language of the news, but this is intermixed with other voices so that the mediatic utterances are employed to create a new language. In fact, as this article later illustrates, the poem is particularly effective as a denunciation of the media's biased coverage of the war in Vietnam because it incorporates, and therefore reveals, that same language. In its reinterpretation and rearrangement, through collage, of these

impressions, the poet aims “to expose and demystify the warmakers’ attempts to create public support for the conflict through media spin-doctoring and factual obfuscation” (Katz 152). At the same time, and perhaps most importantly, the poem creates a new language with which to speak of the Vietnam War, one which envisions a different future, and which successfully liberates itself from the news bombardment it has come to be identified with. When the speaker says: “I search for the language / that is also yours / almost all our language has been taxed by war” (“Wichita Vortex Sutra” 485-87), the speaker also means: “I call all Powers of imagination / to my side in this auto to make Prophecy” (515-16) as to resist this taxation which has plagued language. This may be seen as a continuation of William Carlos Williams’s “A new world / is only a new mind” (34-35): Ginsberg adds that “a new mind is only new words” (“An Exposition” 151). By taking control of language, the speaker, therefore, takes control of his consciousness and, at the same time, attempts to change and inspire the public consciousness which instigates the war.

As Rona Cran elaborates, in the poem, Ginsberg’s mind represents the national mind: it is always invaded by language – biased, charged language – but it attempts to resist, taking control of the fragmentation and abstraction of speech which is employed to discuss the war (680). For instance, in these lines: “Stop, and eat more flesh. / ‘We will negotiate anywhere anytime’ / said the giant President” (258-60), the speaker’s grotesque remark sets the President’s statement in the context of carnage, rather than diplomacy, therefore painting the official narrative in a different light. Eliot Katz further suggests that the political distortions and advertising slogans that Ginsberg records were infiltrating American consciousness (and the speaker’s mind) in the same way that the United States was infiltrating Vietnam (152). In this sense, the poem represents the violence perpetrated both on a concrete, large-scale, and public level in Vietnam and the violence imposed on a more subtle level on the individual, through the media of communication and journalism. The struggle for liberation from the latter affirms a liberation from the former: the individual voice which reclaims mental independence from the media can ultimately impose itself on the media and call for both a personal and a public liberation from the war. This takes shape at the climax of the poem, where the speaker’s voice rises and resounds with exclamations, capitalizations, and a prevalence of monosyllabic accented words which declare strong affirmation: “I lift my voice aloud, / make Mantra of American language now, / I here declare the end of the War!” (“Wichita Vortex Sutra” 545-47). This is a magic language, just as:

The war is language,
 language abused
 for Advertisement,
 language used
 like magic for power on the planet:
 Black Magic language,
 formulas for reality. . . . (283-89)

In fact, the speaker's language is 'magic' because it exposes the biased language of the media and brings the release of unspoken truths. Ginsberg brings in facts which challenge the war and its morality – "in 1954, 80% of the / Vietnamese people would've voted for Ho Chi Minh / wrote Ike years later" (177-79) – alongside sadly representative contemporary fragments of journalism – "Omaha World Herald— *Rusk Says Toughness / Essential For Peace* / . . . Lincoln Nebraska morning Star— / *Vietnam War Brings Prosperity*" (216-17, 219-20; emphases in the original). As Ginsberg employs words to juxtapose truth and lies, he both reports and denounces the language of media of communication and formulates his own magic language. Here, 'magic' may be also understood in the sense of performative, creative because of creating and actuating, the poet hopes, an effect and change in the readers and society at large. In his creation of a 'magical' language, as this article has mentioned, Ginsberg evokes Walt Whitman. Throughout the poem, the speaker does this both implicitly, in his formal elements and tone, and explicitly. As the following section illustrates, Ginsberg's belief in the power of words itself, and his charging them with magical effects, appears to take after Whitman's writing and poetics; in fact, the Romantic poet-prophet literary forefather expressed in his poetry a strong belief in the effect and affectivity of words.

In poems such as "Wichita Vortex Sutra," at times, Ginsberg adopts and adapts Whitman's poetic language, which is charged with spiritual, actively creative meaning. "All words are spiritual," Whitman writes in *An American Primer* (1904), and "names are magic" (1, 18; emphasis in the original). As scholars point out, Whitman's preoccupation with the significance and power of words underlies his poetics (see Nolan 1994; Manganelli 2013). Whitman was in a sense the 'primitive conjurer' (Matthiessen 556), the poet-shaman who utters and, through his uttering, brings to life: "The masters know the earth's words and use them," he writes in "Song of the Rolling Earth" (1856) (16). This poem is predominantly preoccupied with the essence of words, as the first lines already declare: "A song of the rolling earth, and of words according, / Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright lines? those curves, angles, dots? / No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in the ground and sea, / They are in the air, they are in you" (1-4). Whitman's treatment of words is therefore imbued with magic and incantation, exceeding linguistics in a narrower sense. Language emerges as the speaker's medium to extrapolate another – and Other – unutterable language: "All merges toward the presentation of the unspoken meanings of the earth, / Toward him who sings the songs of the body and of the truths of the earth, / Toward him who makes the dictionaries of words that print cannot touch" (99-101).

As James Nolan notes, the magic and manifesting power of words are ancient and basic in essence: "The primitive function is to evoke by naming, as Adam does in the prelapsarian garden" (72). This process corresponds to what J. L. Austin named performative language in his lectures *How to Do Things with Words* (1962): where constative speech acts are mere statements of facts, performative speech acts do not describe but rather perform, and aim to produce an effect. Whitman also incites the

readers to follow him in his magic speech acts – an action which would not only contribute to making ‘the dictionaries of words that print cannot touch,’ but which would also enable humanity to build a new world: “Say on, sayers! sing on, singers! / Delve! mould! pile the words of the earth! / . . . When the materials are all prepared and ready, the architects shall appear” (“Song of the Rolling Earth” 121-22, 125). Significantly, Ginsberg’s use of language borrows from but also vastly differs from Whitman’s. The main point of convergence lies in the poets’ shared belief in the power of words and in words’ and language’s abilities to change the world: to actuate a change in consciousness, in the reader and, by extension, in society. As this article illustrates, Ginsberg borrows from Whitman’s shamanic authority of tone and utterance, often calling on the American bard. However, the Beat writer also pushes the formal limits of his poetry beyond the significance of words, attempting to move *beyond* language, as his understanding of the cut-up technique shows.

The collage moves beyond language by employing words in an active reinvention of meaning and reality. As Cran notes, collage is based on tearing apart and subsequently reassembling existing phenomena: the technique embodies a layered – physical, intellectual, and emotional – relationship with the environment on the side of the artist (670). Moreover, as a form, collage is an inherently deeply political practice, as it “subvert[s] traditional methodologies of reading and interpretation” and “evokes the performance of an autopsy, a historically public act of constructive mutilation dependent on incision and scrutiny to bring about the destruction of one accepted body (of the meaning) and the creation of another” (671-72). Collage also creates a “dialogic mass of voices” (Banash 89), opening the space (by cutting it up) to a multiplicity of perspectives. Where Whitman had begun to incorporate different voices in his work through an identification with them – indeed, *Song of Myself* presents long, detailed catalogues of ontology – Ginsberg reports these voices without that identification, but as they occur in reality. Ginsberg’s poetry is thereby set more solidly and deeply in time and space. Whereas Whitman’s voice includes the abundance which composes his absorbent self, which allows him to move as far as to say, for instance, “I am the hounded slave” (*Song of Myself* 838), Ginsberg’s voice is distinctly recognizable as one among the others. In the poem’s culmination, his voice reunites all voices, and pushes itself forward and beyond them, raising its tone: “I here declare the end of the War!” (“Wichita Vortex Sutra” 547).

In “Wichita Vortex Sutra,” the speaker’s voice is not the only one because the poem reflects the struggle of the individual amid media noise. The fragmentation of voice which allows for a multiplicity of perspectives thus reflects mediatic chaos; this is notable, for instance, when the speaker presents what he sees from the car: the scenery and his thoughts are constantly interrupted by advertising signs and the hostile voice of the radio:

Thru Hickman’s rolling earth hills
 icy winter
 gray skybare trees lining the road
 South to Wichita

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. . . . ("Wichita Vortex Sutra" 460-72)

These lines present a musicality which comes to resemble incantation. Because of this, this type of line further evokes the poet-prophets and shamans of the cultures and literatures in which it has been employed, together with the spiritual, magic contexts in which it has been employed. In fact, chanting is an essential feature of all indigenous expressions.

Whitman continues to be evoked throughout the poem, but often without pathos: "Three five zero is numerals / Headline language poetry, nine decades after Democratic Vistas / and the Prophecy of the Good Grey Poet / Our nation of the 'fabled damned' / or else..." ("Wichita Vortex Sutra" 269-73). Here, he references Whitman's prophecy in *Democratic Vistas*:

I say of all this tremendous and dominant play of solely materialistic bearings upon current life in the United States, with the results as already seen, accumulating, and reaching far into the future, that they must either be confronted and met by at least an equally subtle and tremendous force-infusion for purposes of spiritualization, for the pure conscience, for genuine esthetics, and for absolute and primal manliness and womanliness – or else our modern civilization, with all its improvements, is in vain, and we are on the road to a destiny, a status, equivalent, in its real world, to that of the fabled damned (128).

Before reaching its climax, and leading onto "make Mantra of American language now" ("Wichita Vortex Sutra" 546), the poem incorporates, as another facet of its collage, mantric elements and religious references which charge it spiritually, create an incantatory rhythm, and provide a large (as large as civilizations, the poet suggests) perspective in that the speaker calls upon Buddhist and Hindu holy men and deities, William Blake, and "merciful Chango judging our bodies / Durga-Ma covered with blood / destroyer of battlefield illusions" as well as "million-faced Tathagata gone past suffering / Preserver Harekrishna returning in age of pain / Sacred Heart my Christ acceptable / Allah the Compassionate One" (532-38). It may be argued that much of the poem's emotional power comes from the intermingling of spiritual evocations and social, political statements; the interplay between the religious and the political perspectives recalls that between the public and personal worlds. In this sense, as well, Ginsberg's line in "Wichita Vortex Sutra" challenges the boundaries between public and private, state and self. Moreover, the parallelism and repetitive rhythm of the lines which evoke holy men and deities create a chanting, incantatory structure within the lines, which come to sound like a mantra.

Together with a unifying, strong, Whitmanian voice which emerges throughout the poem, much of the poem presents a collage technique. Writers such as Burroughs, Corso,

O'Hara, and Pound had already been using collage, which William Burroughs called cut-up, underlying an even more physical relation with the text in that he would literally cut it up and rearrange it. Ginsberg's major inspiration for experimenting with this technique came from Burroughs when he visited him in Tangiers in 1961: "I met someone I didn't know. . . . [H]e was cutting up all known human feelings between us, and cutting up the newspapers, and cutting up Cuba & Russia & America & making collages; he was cutting up his own consciousness", he reports in *Prose Contribution to Cuban Revolution* (1962) (par. 14). The title of this essay is misleading, as the poet has little insight into the Cuban Revolution, but rather expresses a distrust of language and society which leads him to argue for a complete revolution in consciousness: "Can any good society be founded, as all have been before and failed, on the basis of old-style human consciousness?" (par. 19). His only imaginable solution to the failure of society is "widening the area of consciousness in all directions feasible" (par. 20). He, therefore, suggests a cut-up in consciousness, which would be accompanied by a literal cut-up in words and in thoughts. The latter, moreover, would stimulate the former. In the wished-for creation of a new way of thinking and understanding reality, Ginsberg attempts to create what might be named 'magical collage.' Ginsberg's insight into the technique of the cut-up in the early 60s illuminates how he employs it in "Wichita Vortex Sutra," reaping the power of words by moving beyond their traditional use:

It meant dropping language itself, *words*, as medium of consciousness. It meant literally altering consciousness outside of what was already the fixed habit of language-inner-thought-monologue-abstraction-mental-image-symbol-mathematical abstraction. It meant exercising unknown & unused areas of the physical brain. . . . But that's what I thought Poetry was doing all along! *But* the poetry I'd been practicing depended on living inside the structure of language, depended on words as the medium of consciousness. (par. 15; emphases in the original)

He even adds: "Perhaps we've reached point in human or unhuman evolution where art of words is oldhat dinosaur futile, & must be left behind" (par. 16).

However, Ginsberg would not embrace the cut-up technique in Burroughs' extreme and impersonal manner. The two writers had different aims and purposes, and different poetics, in spite of their collaborations and friendship. When Ginsberg's voice emerges among the collage of voices of "Wichita Vortex Sutra," it does so with a prophetic, Whitmanian tone, proclaiming himself "U.S. language chief" (Ginsberg qtd. in Schumacher 462) and announcing the end of the war. This underlies a profound belief in language and in words: Ginsberg cannot eschew 'the structure of language' – after all, he still writes a poem which looks like a poem – but rather employs it in an innovative manner. His cut-up is 'magical' also in the sense that he charges words with spiritual power, even with mantra. His conception of language is manifesting, a notion that was inspired by Whitman's poetry but also by his trip to India in 1963, where Ginsberg observed the 'language of spirituality,' in opposition to the 'language of war' of the United States (Schumacher 46). His request in "Wichita Vortex Sutra" to "make Mantra of American

language now" (456) comes from his experience of Hindu mantra: as he explains, "one function of a mantra is that the name of the god is identical with the god itself": he wanted to create a sequence of syllables and words which could correspond with and become identical to an imagined historical event, the end of the war ("Improvised Poetics" 46). On a theoretical plane, this meant creating a "force field of language which is so solid and absolute as a statement and a realization of an assertion by my will, conscious will power, that it will contradict – counteract and ultimately overwhelm the force field of language pronounced out of the State Department" (46). On a practical plane, it meant giving people the opportunity to hear something with which they could identify and follow, releasing in them a recognition of the same thought, allowing the latent to come to the surface so that it might be acted upon. He wanted to make people say "*Oh yeah! That's what I think too! Why didn't I say that before? I didn't think you were supposed to say that, I thought you were supposed to think about it maybe, but not say it, publicly...*" and, essentially, "to see if that *one* assertion of language will precipitate another consciousness to make the same assertion, until it spreads and finally until there's a majority of the consciousnesses making the same assertion" (49; emphases in the original).

This article has shown that much happens, on a formal level, in "Wichita Vortex Sutra." Interestingly and creatively, form often influences and shapes content in the poem. On the one hand, a bardic voice rises progressively throughout the poem, evoking Whitman's long line, tone, and affectivity, charging the speaker's poetic voice with magic powers. This suggests, on Ginsberg's side, a strong belief in the power of language. This article has also shown, however, how the poem aims to move *beyond* language, employing a collage technique which might help, through a reinvention of language, to liberate the reader's consciousness from language. The speaker's 'Whitmanic' voice becomes stronger and ultimately, in the climax of the poem, takes control over the fragmentation and media noise of the poem, reflecting the struggle of the individual consciousness in a '*planet news*.' The invasion of the news, as suggested, might be also compared to the American invasion of Vietnam, the individual struggle for liberation from the overpowering, biased language of the media to the struggle for liberation from the war. In this sense, the poem challenges the borders between the individual and the public spaces, the personal mind and the 'hallucinatory language' of the media of communication, Cold War consciousness.

In "Wichita Vortex Sutra," to show how overwhelming the news is, Ginsberg lets it invade and occupy much of the poem; to show how biased it is, he juxtaposes it with facets and fragments of a hidden truth; to show the personal attempt at liberation from this influence and control, he raises his voice among the others periodically, prophetically, in these moments taking control of all other voices, too. In this sense, the speaker's voice corresponds to "the violence from within that protects us from a violence without . . . the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality" (Stevens 36). This 'violence from within' is aptly expressed by an inherently violent form like the collage or cut-up, which operates destruction and recreation of language. At the same time, it also finds expression in the prophetic authority of Ginsberg's 'magic,' Whitmanian voice. Ultimately,

"Wichita Vortex Sutra" may be aptly understood as a poem of fragmentation and unification, of border movements of invasion and struggle for liberation. The speaker's voice of resistance calls out, at the climax of "Wichita Vortex Sutra," to "make Mantra of American language now, / I here declare the end of the War" (546-47). Throughout the poem – beginning with the title of the poem – there can be observed a coexistence of East and West – "Prajnaparamita Sutra over coffee— Vortex / of telephone radio aircraft assembly frame ammunition / petroleum nightclub Newspaper streets illuminated by Bright / EMPTINESS" (39-42). While Wichita is a city commonly thought to exemplify conventional Americana, the *sutra* is a form of Buddhist wisdom literature which references the Buddha's sermons (Katz 147). At least on the page, in "Wichita Vortex Sutra," through a 'magic collage,' Ginsberg can call forth an encounter between East and West – by extension, between Vietnam and the United States – which is intense and charged, as a vortex, but peaceful, as a *sutra*.

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