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Allen Ginsberg

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“Poetry Reading”

Allen Ginsberg

Portland State University, 05/22/1967

PSU Library Special Collections and University Archives

Oregon Public Speakers Collection

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Transcribed by Ruby Bontrager, June 17-26, 2020

Audited by Carolee Harrison, October 2021

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HOST: There's time at the end to answer questions but he finds flash bulbs and so on pretty disturbing. I'll ask you to hold that for the intermission.

On behalf of the faculty and the Educational Activities Office, I want to welcome you to the last of the poetry readings of this academic year. A long list of poets who have visited with us this year—among them John Crow Ransom, George Starbuck, James Tate, Galway Kinnell, Gary Snyder—reminds us that one of the proper functions of the college is to bring the living voices of our own time onto the campus. Those of you who listen only to the past may indeed learn what the good life was, but you will have difficulty recognizing it around you. If the vocabulary and the syntax and the rhetoric of our own time has changed substantially, it's because the substance of our lives and its arrangements and arguments have also changed. It might seem appropriate to suggest that our poet today brings us further along the growing edge of poetic form and poetic statement than our other visitors, but I think that's true only in a very limited sense.

Perhaps I can best discharge this pleasant task of introduction by passing over the usual biographical data. Mr. Ginsberg was born and does stand here before us today, and in fact no

one has told us so much about himself as he himself in his poems. I want to pass over these to comment very briefly on two facets of his poetry: the first is that referred to in the cheap and vulgar press as its obscene qualities, the second is that term which critics have used to identify the major mode of his poetry: its confessional strain. And I believe these are not unrelated questions.

It's not difficult to recognize in Allen Ginsberg's poetry the rhetoric of indictment. In its syntax we see a string of statements punctuated by apostrophes of vituperation, joined together in a catalogue of our sins, whether they are sins of omission or sins of commission, venial or mortal sins, which record the how and why the best times of his generation are destroyed by madness. Or as Carlos Williams has suggested, "Nothing can destroy the man with faith in love and in art to survive."

The vocabulary of Ginsberg's "Howl" has shocked some people, and they have called it obscene, meaning that it should not be printed publicly without penalty. But we soon discovered that printing words we have not seen but only heard did not cause the heavens to fall in around us. Rather, those who survived the initial shock saw that the vocabulary pointed attention to the decaying forms of our outworn idealisms, and they help to illuminate the underlying assumptions beneath the hidden, cancerous vices in this society. Some people have objected foolishly that Mr. Ginsberg has used the wrong vocabulary in asking why God has forsaken us and why we have forsaken ourselves. But the vocabulary, syntax and rhetoric that can help us hear the cry "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*" in a saxophone cry that shivers the cities seems to us hardly to need any other justification.

If I turn now to the confessional strain, it's clear that Mr. Ginsberg, like other contemporary poets—Robert Lowell, for example—has come to what is an ultimate romantic fulfillment. He explores the cultural crises of our own time by recording the degrading crisis in his own, the odyssey of his own soul. Here he has found his best poetic voice and it is in the end the voice of a poet of social and political revolution. It makes us face the awesome and terrible truth that even here, in the ultimate paradise—in fact especially in the ultimate paradise that is America, the land of the free and easy corrupted dream—the odyssey towards love is painful and destructive.

Perhaps no one who has not stood before an open grave and chanted a kaddish for the dead not yet departed and heard it echo through his life can fully understand this poet's work. But if you listen carefully, you will hear a voice that speaks of your own dilemma, living in a world that has forsaken love to run after Moloch. It is my privilege to present to you this afternoon Mr. Allen Ginsberg. [applause]

ALLEN GINSBERG: I'll begin... let me know if you can't hear me at any point. I want to begin generally as I begin poetry readings with an interesting poetic text, the "Prajnaparamita Sutra," which I ended with last night at the Crystal. It's a text used by Tibetan Buddhists, Japanese Zen Buddhists for chanting; almost all schools of Buddhism accept this as a statement of ultimate reality. It's... Sino-Japanese, first, and then English so you get the import... Sino-Japanese as taught me by Gary Snyder; the translation into English is by Roshi Suzuki of the Soto Zen Temple in Bush Street, San Francisco.

[chants the sutra in Sino-Japanese and English, self-accompanied by chiming percussion instrument until 14:39]

GINSBERG: The text is available in the most recent issue of the *San Francisco Oracle*.

"Who Be Kind To." [reading] Be kind to yourself, it is only one and perishable of many on the planet, thou art that one that wishes a soft finger tracing the line of feeling from nipple to pubis—one that wishes a tongue to kiss your armpit, a lip to kiss your cheek inside your whiteness thigh. Be kind to yourself Harry, because unkindness comes when the body explodes napalm cancer and the deathbed in Vietnam is a strange place to dream of trees leaning over and angry American faces grinning with sleepwalk terror at your last eye. Be kind to yourself, because the bliss of your own kindness will flood the police tomorrow, because the cow weeps in the field and the mouse weeps in the cat hole. Be kind to this place, which is your present habitation, with derrick and radar tower and flower in the ancient brook. Be kind to your neighbor who weeps solid tears on the television sofa, he has no other home, and hears nothing but the hard voice of telephone. Click, buzz, switch channel and the inspired melodrama disappears; he's left alone for the night, he disappears in bed.

Be kind to your disappearing mother and father gazing out the terrace window as milk truck and hearse turn the corner. Be kind to the politician weeping in the galleries of Whitehall, Kremlin, White House, Louvre and Phoenix City, aged, large nosed, angry, nervously dialing the bald voice box connected to electrodes underground converging through wires vaster than a kitten's eye can see on the mushroom shaped fear-lobe under the ear of the sleeping Dr. Einstein crawling with worms, crawling with worms, crawling with worms. The hour has come.

Sick, dissatisfied, unloved the bulky foreheads of Captain Premiere President Sir Comrade Fear! Be kind to the fearful one at your side who's remembering the Lamentations of the bible the prophecies of the crucified Adam, son of all the porters and char-men of Belgravia. Be kind to your self who weeps under the Moscow moon and hide your bliss hairs under raincoat and suede Levi's. For this is the joy to be born, the kindness received through strange eyeglasses on

a bus through Kensington, the finger touch of the Londoner on your thumb, that borrows light from your cigarette, the smile of morning at Newcastle Central station, when longhair Tom blond husband greets the bearded stranger of telephones—the boom bom that bounces in the joyful bowels as the Liverpool Minstrels of Cavern Sink raise up their joyful voices and guitars in electric Afric hurrah for Jerusalem, the saints come marching in, Twist & Shout, and Gates of Eden are named in Albion again. Hope sings a black psalm from Nigeria, and a white psalm echoes in Detroit and reechoes amplified from Nottingham to Prague, and a Chinese psalm will be heard, if we all live our lives out for the next six decades—so be kind to the Chinese psalm in the red transistor in your breast.

Be kind to the Monk in the 5 spot who plays lone chord-bangs on his vast piano, lost in space, hearing himself in the nightclub universe. Be kind to the heroes that have lost their names in the newspaper, and hear only their own supplication for the peaceful kiss of sex in the giant auditoriums of the planet, nameless voices crying for kindness in the orchestra, screaming in anguish that bliss come true, and sparrows sing another hundred years to white haired babes and poets be fools of their own desire—O Anacreon and angelic Shelley! Guide these new-nippled generations on spaceships to Mars' next universe. The prayer is to man and girl, the only gods, the only lords of kingdoms of feeling, Christs of their own living ribs. Bicycle chain and machine gun, backstage noises, fear, sneer, and smell, cold logic of the dream bomb anxiety have come to Saigon, Johannesburg, Dominica City, Phnom Penh, Pentagon, Paris and Lhasa. Be kind to the universe of self that trembles and shudders and thrills in XX century, that opens its eyes and belly and breast chained with flesh to feel the myriad flowers of bliss that I Am to Thee—

A dream! A dream! I don't want to be alone! I want to know that I am loved. I want the orgy of our flesh, orgy of all eyes happy, orgy of the soul kissing and blessing its mortal-grown body. Orgy of tenderness beneath the neck, orgy of kindness to thigh and vagina. Desire given with meat hand and cock, desire taken with mouth and ass, desire returned to the last sigh! Be kind to the poor soul that cries in a crack in the pavement because he has no body. Prayers to the ghosts and demons, the lackloves of Capitals and Congresses who make sadistic noises on the radio. Statue destroyers and tank captains, unhappy murderers from Mekong & Stanleyville. For a new kind of man has come to his bliss to end the cold war he has borne against his own kind flesh since the days of the snake.

"Uptown New York."

[reading] The yellow lights of Budweiser signs over oaken bars, "I've seen everything!" said the bartender. [speaking] No-- [reading] "I've seen everything," said the bartender, giving me change of ten dollars. As I stared at him amiably, eyes through an obvious Adamic beard, with young Montana musicians homeless in New York, teenage curly hair themselves. So, we sat at

the antique booth and gossiped of Madam Grady's literary salon like curious value in New York. "If I had my way I'd cut off your hair and send you to Vietnam!" "Bless you then," I replied to the hatted, thin citizen leaving from bar to door upon wet dark Amsterdam Avenue decades later. "If I couldn't do that I'd cut your throat!" he snarled farewell, and "Bless you sir," I added as he went to his fate in the rain, a dapper Irishman.

[laughter]

[speaking] Portland Coliseum. 2/27/65.

[reading] A brown piano in the white round spotlight. Leviathan, the auditorium, ribbed and wired, hanging organs and vox of black battery. A single whistling sound of ten thousand children's larynxes a-singing pierced through the ears and flowing up the belly; the bliss of the moment arrive. Apparition, the four brown jacket and Christ-hair boys. Goof Ringo batting the round white drum, silent George fluff hair patient soul of horse, short, black-skulled Paul with his thin guitar, Lennon, the captain, his mouth a triangular smile. All jump together to end some tearful memory song, ancient to years, and the million children of the thousand worlds bounce in their seats, bash each others' sides, press their legs together nervous to the move of the black knees of the musicians, scream again and clap hands, become one animal in the new world auditorium, hands waving like the myriad snakes of thought, screech beyond hearing, while a line of police with folded arms stands sentry to contain the red-sweatered ecstasy that rises upward to the wired roof.

[laughter, applause]

[speaking] "First party at Ken Kesey's with the Hell's Angels." [laughter]

[reading] Cool, black night through the redwoods. Cars parked outside in the shade, behind the gate. Stars dim above the ravine. A fire burning by the side porch and a few tired souls hunched over in black leather jackets. In the huge, wooden house, a yellow chandelier at 3 a.m. and the blast of loudspeakers, hi-fi, Rolling Stones, Ray Charles, Beatles, Jumping Joe Jackson and twenty youths dancing to the vibrations in the floor. A little weed in the bathroom, girls in scarlet tights, one muscular, smooth-skinned man, sweating, dancing for hours. Beer cans, bent, littering the yard. A hanged man sculpture dangling from a high creek branch. Children sleeping softly in their bedroom bunks. And four police cars parked outside the painted gate, red lights revolving in the leaves.

[speaking] Beginning of a poem of these states...oh one other before then. [flipping pages]
"This Form of Life Needs Sex."

[reading] I will have to accept women if I want to continue the race. I'll have to kiss breasts, accept the strange, hairy lips behind the buttocks, look in those questioning womanly eyes and

answer soft cheeks. Bury my loins in the hang of the pear-plum fat tissue I had abhorred before I have given godspasm Babe leap forward through death. Between me and oblivion an unknown woman stands; not the Muse but a living meat phantom, a mystery scary as my own fanged god sinking its foot in its gullet and vomiting its own image out of its ass. This woman Futurity I am pledged to being born not to die,

But issue my own cockbrain replica Me-Hood again—out of fear of the Blot? Face of Death, my Female, as I am sainted to my very bone, I am fated to find me a maiden for ignorant fuckery—flapping my belly and smeared with saliva, ashamed face flesh and wet—and have long droopy conversations in Cosmical Duty boudoirs, maybe bored? Or, excited my New Prospect, to discuss with her, Futurity, my Wife, my Mother, Death, my only hope, my very Resurrection. Woman herself. And why have I feared to be joined true embraced beneath the Panties of Forever in with the one hole that repelled me from 1937 on?

[laughter]

Pulling down my pants to show the cars from the porch my behind in the rain. She'll be interested in this new contact with the Silly Male that sucked my lovelorn's cock in Adoration and sheer beggery romance-awe-gulp-choke Hope of Life to come. And buggered myself innumerable with boy-yangs gloamed inward so my solar plexus could feel godhead in me like an open door.

Now all that changed on top of me. Though I still admire the male thigh at my brow, the hard love pulsing through my ears, stern buttocks upraised for my masterful Rape that were meant for a private shit if the Army were All—but no more of an answer to life than the muscular statue I felt up its marbles, envious of Beauty's immortality in the museum of Yore—You can fuck a statue but you can't have children... [laughter]

You can joy man to man... you can joy man to man but the sperm comes back in a trickle at dawn in the toilet on the forty-fifth floor. [GINSBERG chuckling; audience laughter] And you can't make a continuous mystery out of that but a finished performance & ghastly thrill that ends as it began, a stupid reptile squeak, denied life by the Fairy Creator who became imaginary because he decided not to incarnate in his opposite—Old Spook who didn't want to be a baby and die, who didn't want their shit and scream exposed to bombardment on a Chinese railroad track, and grow on to pass his spasm onto the other half of the universe—Like a homosexual capitalist afraid of the masses—and that's my situation, folks—

[laughter, applause]

[speaking] "Beginning of a Long Poem on These States." This is a record of an auto trip in a Volkswagen that I took with Gary Snyder, in... about... let's see it, would be fall sixty-five...

Covering... this is the beginning of a long poem, so this is called "Beginning of Poem on These States." Taken from Whitman, beginning then with the Canadian border and starting out down towards San Francisco on the other side of the Cascades.

[reading] Under the bluffs of Oroville, blue clouds, September skies, entering U.S. border. Red, red apples bend their tree boughs propped with sticks. At Omac, a fat girl in dungarees leaves her big brown horse by the asphalt highway. Through the lodgepole pine hills of Colville near Moses Mountain, a white horse standing in the back of a two-ton truck moving forward between the trees. At Nespelem in the yellow sun a marker for Chief Joseph's grave. Over the real, brown hills, white cross on the highway. At Grand Coulee under leaden sky, giant red generators hum through granite and concrete to materialize onions. And grey water laps against the grey sides of steamboat mesa. At Dry Falls, forty Niagaras stand silent and invisible. Tiny horses graze on the mesquite floor of the rusty canyon. At Mesa, on the car radio passing a new corn silo, the walking boogie of teenagers, tender throats, I wish they could all be California girls. As the black highway curls outward, on the plains towards Pasco, Oregon hills in the horizon, Bob Dylan's voice on airways, a mass machine-made folk song of one soul, please crawl out your window. First time heard.

Speeding through space, radio: the soul of the nation. The eve of destruction, and the universal soldier. And tasted the Snake, water from Yellowstone under Greenbridge, Darshan with Columbia, oil slick and small bird feathers on mud shore, across the river, silver bubbles of refineries. There, Lewis and Clark floated down in a raft, the brown mesa gorge of Lake Wallula smelling of rain in the sage, Greyhound buses speeding by. Searching neither for Northwest Passage, nor gold, nor the prophet who will save the polluted nation, nor for guru walking the silver waters behind McNary dam. Roundup time in Pendleton, pinched women's faces and hulking cowboy hats in the tavern. I'm a city slicker from the north. The barman murmurs to himself, two hands full of beer, "Who wanted that?" [laughter]

Heavy rain at twilight, trumpets massing and ascending repeat the eve of destruction. Georgia-Pacific sawmill burners lifting smoke through the dusky valley. A cold night in the Blue Mountains. Snow powdered on tops of droopy tamarac and fir at grey sunrise. Coffee, frozen in the brown coffee pot. Toes chilled in Czechoslovakian tennis sneakers. Under Ponderosa pine, this place is for sale. Forty-fifth parallel, halfway between the equator and the north pole. Tri-city radio broadcasting clear skies and freezing night temperatures, big yellow daisies, hay bales piled in square stacks house high. Don Carpenter has a real geologist hammer, he can hit a rock and split it open and look inside and utter some mantra.

Coyotes jumping in front of the truck and down the bank, jumping through the river running up the fields of the wooded hillside stopped on a bound and turned round to stare at us, [barks like a coyote] shook himself and bounded away shaking his bushy tail. Rifles and cyanide bombs

unavailing. He looked real surprised and pointed his thin nose in our direction. *Om namah shivaya*. Eat all sorts of things and run solitary. Three nights ago hung bear dung on a tree and laughed. Bear: Are you eating my corpses? Say that again! Coyote: I didn't say nothing. Sparse juniper forests on the dry lavender hills, down from Ritter Butte to Pass Creek, a pot dream recounted. Crossing the Canada border with a tin can in the glove compartment. Hip, young border guards laughing. [laughter]

On a field in the meadow... on a field in the meadow the skeleton of an old car settled, "Look to Jesus" painted on the door. Fox in the valley, road markers dripped with small icicles, all the windows on the white church broken, brown wooden barns lean together, thin snow on the gas station roof. Malheur... Malheur National Forest. Signs glazed with snow frost. Last night's cold, frozen dreams come back. Staring out through the skull at the cold planet. Milarepa accepted no gifts to cover his jeweled penis. Strawberry mountain top white under bright clouds. Postcards of Painted Hills. Fossil beds near Dayville. Where have all the flowers gone? Flowers gone? Ra and Coyote are hip to it all. Nailed footpaw tracks in the bottom of Day River, cows kneeled at rest in the afternoon meadow. Ichor motel, white tail fins in the driveway of the isolate belfry brown farmhouse circled with trees. Chainsaws ringing in the vale. Rilled lava overgrown with green moss, cracked in the cold wind. Blue heron and the American white egret migrate to shrunken waters of unhappy.

Mirage lakes on the wrong side of the road. Dust streaming under Riddle Mountain, Steen Range powder white on the horizon. Slept, water froze and Sierra cup, a lake of bitter water from my solar plexus to throat, dreamt my knee was severed at the hip and sutured back together. Woke, icy dew on poncho and saffron sleep bag, moon like a Coleman lantern dipping the icicle points of the stars. Vomited on my knees in the arroyo grass. Nostrils choking with wet red acid and weak flashlight. Dawn weakness. Climbing warm lava walls following the muddy spring. Waterfowl whistling sweetly and a tiny raccoon pawed forward daintily in the green mud looking for frogs burrowed away from arctic cold, disappeared into a silent rock shelf. Climbed toward Massacre Lake road, sagebrush valley floor stretched south, pronghorn abode that eat the bitter root and dry spicebush, hunters gathering in trucks to chase the antelope. A broken corral at the bottom of Highway Hill. The wreck of a dead cow and cold slanting sunset rays. Eyes eaten out, neck twisted to the ground, belly caved in on knee bone, smell of sweet dread, flesh and acrid new sage.

Slept in rusty tin feeding trough, Orion's belt, crystalline sky. Numb, metal chill at my back, raven settled on the cow when sun warmed my feet. Up hills following trailer dust clouds. Green shotgun shells and beer bottles on the road. Mashed jackrabbits. Through a crack in the granite range an alkali sea, Chinese armies master the borders of India. Mud plate of Black Rock desert passing, Frank Sinatra lamenting the distant years, old sad-voiced September

recordings and the Beatles crying for "Help," their voices woodling for tenderness. All memory at once in present time returning, vast dry forests of fire in California, U.S. paratroopers attacking guerillas in Vietnam mountains. Through white porcelain road over a hump, the tranquil azure of a vast lake. Pyramid, rocks knotted by Pleistocene rivers, top heavy lava isles castled, in Paiute Indian water filled with cutthroat trout. Tomato sandwiches in silence. Reno's motels' signs and traffic, low mountains walling the desert oasis. Crooning city music and afternoon news, Red Chinese ultimatum 1 a.m. tomorrow.

Up Donner Pass, hung with grey clouds over concrete bridge superhighway. Mongolion idiot Chau Yuk the laughable menu of this last party arrived. Ponderosa hillsides cut down for railroad track. I have nothing to do. Laughing over the Sierra top, gliding adventurer on the great fishtail iron-finned road. Heaven is renounced, *dharma nopad, no sadhana* to fear. My man world will blow up, the humming of insects under the wheel sings my own death in rasping migrations of mercy. I tickle the Bodhisattva and salute the new sunset, home, riding home from the... to the old city on ocean Francisco, a new mantra to manifest removal of disaster from myself. Smoking mass of autumn brush fire in dusk light, sun a bright red ball on horizon purpled with earth cloud. Chanting to Shiva in the car cabin, Pacific gas high-voltage antenna trailing thin wires across flat lands, entering coast range, four-lane highway over the last hump to the giant orange bay glimpse.

Dylan ends his song, you'd see what a drag you are and the Pope cometh to Babylon to address the United Nations. Two thousand years since Christ-birth, and the prophecy of Armageddon hangs the hell bomb over the roads and cities of the planet, the year-end has come, the lights of Oakland Army Terminal burn green in evening darkness, Treasure Island Naval Base lit yellow with night business, thousands of red taillights move in procession over Bay Bridge, San Francisco stands on modern hills, Broadway lights flash in the center of gay honky-tonk Elysium, fairy buildings, sweet green clock lamps, the black Embarcadero waters. Negroes are screaming over the radio, Bank of America burns a red sign under the neon pyramids. Here is the city, here is the face of war. Home, riding home, gliding down the freeway ramp to City Lights, Peter's face, and television money, and new wanderings to come.

[applause]

[speaking] Continuing... that same poem, one section. Then, I think, chant a little, then have an intermission. On the road to Los Angeles from San Francisco. Let's just continue this then. "To America."

[reading] Christmas Eve, sixty-five, organs and war news. Radio static through Saigon, and the glory of the lord, newscaster voice through the ether, the truce. Twelve hours, thirty hours, thirty days said Mansfield. The car rolls on the right lanes, lights of the bridge rising and falling

in the night slope. Reflector cross speeding headlights. Columbia Records present Handel, rejoicing. The whine and requiem whistle in the roar in my shoulders. Memories of Christmas, and the deep Christmas begins. The president at home in his swinging chair on the porch listening to Christmas carols. Vice-president returning from Far East. Check into yourself that you are wrong. You may be the wrong, says Pope, his Christmas message. Overpopulation, overpopulation.

Give me three acres of land, give my brother how much? Each man to have a fine estate, or settle giant communes. LSD, shack these snakes settle like gas into consciousness. Brightest Venus I've ever seen. On the road along the canyon floor, bursting tides, and the caves we'd slept in earlier in the year filled with sand, covered the height of a man. A stranger walked on that ground. Five years ago we picnicked on this spot. Bixby Creek that wove channels through the shifting sands. I saw the ghost of Neal pass by. Ferlinghetti's ghost. The ghost of Homer roaring at the surf, barking and wagging his tail. My own footprint at the lips of the sea, white foam up to the rock where I sang, the garden of kelp, standing heads-upward, drying in the sand. Expectations ahead. Isherwood, Brando, the Hell's Angels behind. Where's Stravinsky? Where's Theda Bara? Where's Chaplin? Where's Harpo Marx? Where's Laurel and his Hardy? Laughing phantoms going to the grave.

Last time I was here in this town, I saw them in movies ending with Laurel aged and white-haired Hardy. Hydrogen comic smoke hiding their kingdom. Raccoon crouched at the edge of the road, praying. Car lights pass. Merry Christmas to Mr. and Mrs. Chiang Kai Shek, Merry Christmas to President Johnson, Merry Christmas to McNamara, to Rusk, to Khrushchev in his apartment house, to Ho Chi Minh, to rosy-cheeked Mao Zedong, Happy New Year [...]. Merry Christmas to the Pope and to the Dalai Lama, to the highest priests of Benin to the chiefs of the fairy churches. Merry Christmas to the four shankaracharyas, to all the [...] and naga sadhus chanting dervishes from Egypt to Malaya. Black sign Los Angeles one forty miles. Stifling car heat, music on the techie radio, senseless, senseless coughs of emotion.

The Allied ceasefire will not be extended dot dot dot on a densely populated area. Peking will never join the United Nations as long as it remains under what he terms American domination. Mobilize the National Guard, said Senator Anderson. One why mental rejectees will be reexamined for service in Vietnam. [laughter] Bradley high on LSD, drawing pictures on the Army forces? Drawing pictures on the Army forms? All this stack of papers on the president's desk for work on Xmas day, a foot high. He has to finish them by tonight. Determined by radio, entering Lompoc, famed of W.C. Fields who proved that every man is a natural bullshit artist. Spends about seventy-five percent of his time on foreign matters and is very involved with them. Quote, and all letters are answered, unquote. What, no Xmas message from the Texas White House? The president must be very down. He's maintaining his communications network

circling the planet. Mambo and march canned music for Xmas on the Ventura station, poor taste. Few minutes of live speech, but commercial announcements, very little of joy or thanksgiving, no news voice from the Himalayas announcing good cheer or benign tidings for Dominica, Vietnam, Congo, China, India, America, though England rang with the Beatles, healing all that was oppressed with the devil. And Lodge from Saigon, we're morally right we're morally right, serving the cause of freedom forever, giving these people an opportunity dot dot dot almost like thinking unquote he's broadcasting in a serious voice on Xmas eve to America.

Entering Los Angeles in the space age. Three stations, simultaneous on the radio. Sounds that fill ether, voices at the back of the brain. The voice of Lodge: oh well, moral; the voice of the poor poverty worker: well they don't know anybody don't know anything about the poor, all the money's going to the politicians in Syracuse, none of it's going to the poor. The voice of ethers in the black Christmas march: we want to be treated like men, like humans. Mass arrest of campers outside LBJ ranch. Aquamarine lights revolving along the highway. Turquoise night brilliance shining on the side streets, bright neon signs like Christmas trees, but a mile on, Orion's muzzle raised up toward the center of heaven.

[pause; light applause] ...and then chanting. Oh—and chanting. To Shiva. Or... a Hare Krishna mantra probably. Best. Then take a break for ten minutes or so, and I'll come back and read another hour as long as we have the hall for an hour... I wanted to read the "Wichita Vortex Sutra," which is the main poem of this set.

To Krishna, the god of preservation. An aspect of Vishnu, the preserver. From the *Bhagavad Gita*.

[chanting "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. Krishna, Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Ram, Hare Ram, Ram Ram..." accompanied by chiming percussion until 53:21; applause]

HOST: We'll have a ten-minute intermission. [recording stops and resumes]

Mr. Ginsberg will be reading poetry tonight and lecturing on the subculture in 75 Old Main, this building, seven-thirty to nine-thirty. This program is part of an ongoing seminar on the psychedelic movement. There will be a small admission charge for students and faculty. Mr. Ginsberg has been kind enough to agree to try to answer some questions at the end of his reading, as long as we have some time. He'll take as many questions as he has strength for, but I ask you to be a little kind. He has been meeting with faculty and students since noon; I do want to give him a little time to rest. Mr. Allen Ginsberg. [applause]

GINSBERG: How many... were there anybody here who heard any of the other readings I gave in town? Because I don't want to repeat material... so next, then, "Wichita Vortex Sutra." Between L.A. and Albuquerque, so we continue it geographically. We've gotten from Omak to San

Francisco, San Francisco to Los Angeles, now Los Angeles, a few sketches on the way to Albuquerque.

[reading] Up, up and away, we're off through America heading East to San Berdo as West did. Afternoon light, entrenchments and barbed wire. California radio lady's voice talking about the Viet Cong. [singing] Oh, what a beautiful morning. [speaking] Sung for us by Nelson Eddy. Two trailer trucks of Sunkist oranges bright-colored piled over the sides rolling on the highway. Grey hulk of Mount Baldy under white misted skies. Red square signs unfold tilted over the superhighway. Afternoon light, children in the back of a car with bubblegum. Several battalions of U.S. troops in a search and destroy operation the coastal plain near Bangsan, three hundred miles northeast of Saigon. Thus far the fighting has been a series of small clashes. In a related action twenty-five miles to the south, Korean troops killed thirty-five Viet Cong near coastal highway number one. For he's [singing] oh so good and he's oh so fine and he's oh so healthy in his body and his mind. [speaking] The Kinks on car radio. In Riverside, a 1920s song, with the only words I know that you'll understand. From my Uncle Max, it's settled. Died five years ago, buried under the wall of cold mountain, veined with snow at the top, clouds passing on the icy, remote heights. A pile of tiny automobiles crushed and mangled topped by a hanging crane.

Palm trees on the valley floor, sticking up their toothpick hairheads. The planet hanging, the air hanging, trees hang their branches, a dirt truck hanging down the highway, spectacle of afternoon, giant pipes glistening in the universe. Magic that weighs tons and tons. Old bum with his rough, tattered pack, hunched walking up the hill, hanging to Yucaipa. Cloth cap pulled over his head. Black fingernails.

Space stretching forth in Albuquerque dotted with silver gas tanks to the Sandia range. The hitchhiking student, supported by the national defense fund, with his black horn-rimmed glasses, thin blond hair. If your country calls you would you go? If my country drafted me, then I would go. Selfish young American always interested in his own skin. And a blue car speeding along the highway with a sticker on the back, "I'm proud to be an American." In the right front seat, a ten-gallon hat, on the left a fat car salesman. [laughter] And over the hilltops the icy tips of distant peaks sitting on the earth. And here's an ugly little oasis of used cars and tractors, fenced off by barbed wire below the side of the road. Evenings cool and clear with brilliant blue stars. Just what we needed, a state penitentiary. Two miles off into the brown firs, rolling right of the highway. This is Ford country, what are you driving? Be a Ford dealer.

Great meadows of snow on the Sangre de Cristo range, clouds north dipping misty rivulet tails of pointy fog. It's a hard question: which would you rest here, your mother-in-law or the last text of Shakespeare? [laughter]

[speaking] Between Wichita... between Lincoln, Nebraska and Wichita, Kansas. A longer section.

[reading] Face the nation. Through Hickman, rolling earth hills. Icy winter, grey sky, bare trees lining the road south to Wichita. You're in the Pepsi generation. Signum on route. Akin, Republican, on the radio. 60,000 North Vietnamese 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 quote "bad guess" unquote. Bad guess? chorused the reporters. Yes, no more than a bad guess. In 1962 quote "8,000 American troops handled the situation" unquote. Bad guess. In 1956, eighty percent of the Vietnamese people would have 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 million," cried Stennis from Mississippi, I guess it was three weeks ago. Holmes Alexander, an *Albuquerque Journal* provincial news man said, "I guess we'd better begin to do that now," [laughter] his typewriter clacking in his aged office under the side street, under Sandia mountain, half the world away from China.

Johnson got some bad advice Republican Akin 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 through the jungle in increased numbers to the scene of terror while the triangle roofed farmers' 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 bread, drawn from the shores and farms, shaking from the high schools to the landing barge, blowing the air through 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 the White House. Viet Cong losses leveling up three five zero zero per month, front page testimony February sixty-six, see here in Nebraska, same as Kansas, same known in Saigon, in Peking, in Moscow, in Liverpool, same known by the use of Seattle 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 through 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 honky-tonk tinkle of the city piano, to calm the nerves of tax-paying housewives of a Sunday morning. Has anyone looked in the eyes of the dead? U.S. Army recruiting service sign: careers for the future. Is anyone living to look for future forgiveness? Water hoses frozen on the street. Crowds gathered to see strange happenings in the garage. How red the 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 a mammal voice howl from the outskirts of Saigon to the console model picture tube in Beatrice, in Hutchinson, in El Dorado, in historic Abilene, oh inconsolable! Stop and eat more meat. 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 Johnson 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 Thai, "So, AP dispatch, the last week's paper is amnesia." Three five zero zero is numeral headline language poetry. Nine decades after democratic vistas and the prophecy of the good grey 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, a word picture, a fort creature man standing by a box with birds flying out representing speech from the mouth. Ham steak please, waitress in a warm cafe. Different from a bad guess. The war is language, language abused for advertisement, language used like magic for power over the planet. Black magic language, formulas for reality, communism is a nine letter word with a wrung-out chemical formula used by magicians for transforming earth into gold.

Funky warlocks operating on guesswork, hand-me-down mandrake terminology that never worked in 1956 for grey-domed Dulles brooding over at state, that never worked for Ike who knelt to take the magic wafer in his mouth from Dulles' hand outside the church in Washington, communion of bum magicians, Congress of failures from Kansas and Missouri, working with the wrong equations, sorcerer's apprentices who lost control of the simplest broomstick in the world, language, oh long-haired magician, come home and take care of your stupid kid before the deluge of radiation floods your living room, your magic errand boys just made a bad guess again, that's lasted a whole decade. N-B-C-B-S-U-P-A-P-I-N-S-L-I-F-E Time Mutual presents world's largest camp comedy, magic in Vietnam. Reality turned inside-out, changing its sex in the mass media for thirty days, a bedroom farce in the TV den, flashing pictures of 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 objective, owls from Pennsylvania, Clark's face open end, doves' apocalypse, Morse's hairy ears, Stennis orating in Mississippi, one hundred million Chinamen crowding into his polling booth. Clean-shaven General Gavin's image imagining enclaves. Tactical bombing, the magic formula for a silver-haired Symington. Ancient Chinese [...], old in vain.

Hawks swooping through the newspapers, talons visible, wings outspread in the giant updraft of hot air, losing their dry screech in the skies over the capital, napalm and black cloud 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, fireball, bullet shot, bayonet electricity, bomb blast terrific in skull and belly, shrapnel throbbing meat. While this American nation argues war conflicting language, language proliferating on the 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 for desire, for the girlish image bodied on the screen. Or, smoking cigarettes and watching Captain Kangaroo, the fabled damned of nation's prophecy come true.

Though the highway's straight, dipping downward through low hills, rising narrow on the far horizon, cows browse in the caked fields, ponds in the hollows lie frozen in quietness. Is this the land that started war on China? This be the soil that fought Cold War for decades. Are these nervous naked trees and farmhouses the vortex of Oriental anxiety molecules that have imagined American foreign policy and magicked 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 make a hell of riots in Dominica, sustains the aging tyranny of Chiang in silent Taipei city, paid for the lost French war in Algeria, overthrew the Guatemalan polis in fifty-four, maintaining United Fruit's banana greed another thirteen years for the secret prestige of the Dulles family law firm?

Here's Marysville. A black railroad engine in the children's park at rest. And the track crossing with Cotton Belt flat cars, carrying autos west from Dallas, Delaware, and Hudson gondolas filled with power stuff. A line of boxcars as 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 terminals light blue illumined all night now, crash of couplings and the great American train moves on, carrying its cushioned load of metal doom, Union Pacific, Norfolk, and Western 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 through Waterville, electronic machinery in the bus humming with prophecy, paper signs blowing in cold wind, mid-Sunday afternoon silence in town, under a frost-grey sky that covers the horizon, that the rest of earth is unseen. The outer universe: invisible, unknown, except through language, air print, magic images, or prophecy of the secret hark the same in Saigon as Waterville, one human form. When a woman's heart bursts in Waterville, a woman screams equal in Hanoi.

Onto Wichita to prophesy, oh frightful bard, into the heart of the vortex where anxiety rings the university with millionaire pressure. Lonely crank telephone voices sighing in dread, students waken trembling in their beds with dreams of a new truth, warm as meat. Little girls suspecting

their elders of murder committed with 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 death war, oh hopeless fathers and teachers in your way, 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, oh tender fellows, and spoken lonesomeness is prophecy in the moon a hundred years ago or the middle of Kansas now. It's not the vast plains mute our mouths that fill at midnight with ecstatic language when our trembling bodies hold each other breath to breath 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 the 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, or read with naked joy between our eyes and 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, oh 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 a 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 fifteen years ago. To Independence, where the old man's still alive that loosed the bomb that 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 sky edge, I claim my birthright reborn forever as long as man in Kansas or other universe. Joy reborn after the vast sadness of the war gods. A lone man talking to myself, no house in the brown vastness to hear, imagining the throng of selves that make this nation one body a prophecy language by constitution as happiness.

I call all powers of imagination to my side in this auto to make prophecy. All lords of human kingdoms to come, shambhal, bhakti, baba, naked covered with ash, Khaki Baba fat-bellied, mad with the dogs, [...] baba... oh how wounded, how wounded, [...] who commands give up your desire, Satyananda who raises two thumbs in tranquility, Kalipada Guharoy whose yoga drops before the void, Sivananda who touches the breath and says "Om." Sri Mata Krishna ji of Vrindavan who says take for your guru William Blake the invisible father of English visions, Sri Ramakrishna, master of ecstasy with eyes half-closed who only cries for his mother, Chaitanya with arms upraised, singing and dancing his own praise, sacred heart my Christ acceptable,

Preserver Hare Krishna returning in the age of pain, Durga Ma covered with blood destroyer of battlefield illusions, million-faced Tathagata gone past suffering, Allah, the compassionate one, Yahweh, righteous one, all knowledge princes of Earthman, all ancient seraphim of heavenly desire, divas, yogis, and holy men I chant to, come to my lone presence into this vortex named Kansas. I lift my voice aloud; make mantra the American language now, I here declare the end of the war.

Pronounce the human 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 voice, nameless mystery, publish to my own senses, blissfully received by my own form, approved with pleasure by my sensations, manifestation of my very thought, accomplished in my imagination, all realms of consciousness fulfilled, sixty miles from Wichita near El Dorado the golden one, in the chill earthly mist, houseless brown farmland plains rolling heavenward in every direction, one midwinter afternoon on Sunday called the day of the Lord. Pure springwater gathered in one tower, where Florence is set on a hill, stopped for tea and gas.

Cars passing their messages along the country crossroads, to populaces cement network on flatness, giant white mist on earth, and the Wichita *Eagle Beacon* headline: Kennedy urges Cong get chair in negotiations. The war is gone, language emerging on the motel newsstand, the right magic, language, the formula that was known in the back of the mind before, now in black print of daily consciousness. Eagle News Services Saigon headlines: surrounded Viet Cong charge into fire fight, the suffering not yet ended for others. The last spasms of the dragon of pain shoot through 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 two five six Viet Cong captured three one ten-day operation harvest moon last December language, language. U.S. military spokesman language, language, Cong death toll have soared to one-hundred and first air cavalry division sector of language, language, operation white wing near Bangsan, 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, M60 machine guns, language, language in Ladrang Valley, the terrain is rougher and infested with leeches and scorpions. The war was over several hours ago.

Oh, at last a radio opens blue invitation, 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 ether, soft prayer on the airwaves, language, language and sweet music too. Even unto thee hairy flatness, even unto thee, despairing town of burn, future speeding on swift wheels straight through the heart of Wichita, now radio voices cry population hunger, world of unhappy people waiting for man to

be born, oh man in America! You certainly smell good the radio says, passing mysterious families of winking towers grouped around a quonset hot on a hillock. Feed storage or military, fear factory here.

Now sensitive lights of city hamburger and skellies gas feed man and machine, Kansas electric substation, aluminum robot signals through thin antennae towers above the empty football field at Sunday dusk, to a solitary derrick that pumps oil from the unconscious, working night and day. And factory gas players edge a huge golf course, retired businessmen can come and play. Cloverleaf, merging traffic at east Wichita turnoff, McConnell Air Force 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, center town, ganglion entered, crowds of autos moving with their lightshine, sign bulbs winking in the drivers' eyeball, the human nest collected, neon-lit and sunburst signed for business as usual except on the Lord's Day. Redeemer Lutheran three crosses lit on the lawn, reminder of our sins, and Titsworth offers insurance on hydraulic, by [...] mortuary for outmoded bodies of the human vehicle which no Titsworth of insurance will customize through resale.

So home traveler, pass the newspaper language factory, under the Union Station railroad bridge on Douglas, to the center of the vortex, calmly return to Hotel Eaton. Carry Nation began the war on Vietnam here with an angry, smashing axe-attacking whine. 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 also murdered my mother who died of the communist-anti-communist psychosis, in the madhouse one decade long ago, complaining about wires of mass communication 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 seventeen. Enough. The war is over now. Except for the souls held prisoner in nigger town, still pining for love of your tender white bodies, oh children of Wichita.

[pause; applause]

HOST: Mr. Ginsberg will try to answer some questions. If you want to ask a question would you please stand and we'll try to get it, it's a little difficult coming the other way without a mic.

[voice off-microphone]

Any other questions?

GINSBERG: [quietly] Well, I had a few statements I wanted to make.

HOST: Mr. Ginsberg will make a few statements *without* questions. [laughter]

GINSBERG: The picture... I understand there was some... a confusion of feelings about the picture on the front page of the campus newspaper. [laughter] It's apparently a legitimate artwork done by Richard Avedon. It was published in a book and I think has been reprinted in other college newspapers, so actually as far as I was concerned I was delighted to see it, naked and all. It wasn't any insult to me because that was me [chuckling] and I'm certainly not insulted by myself, and I hope nobody else is.

So I don't see how anyone really could be insulted by oneself. So I mean, if you want... there's no words attached to it even, just standing there. So... that was sort of charming, I thought. [laughter] I thought there was a... one section of the thing which said that... which I thought rather in a sense... freaked out, which is that a letter had been sent to me requesting me to go easy or something. I don't... no letter was sent to me, that I know of. I didn't see any, I didn't answer any. I have an agent who takes care of all arrangements, so... I just arrived here happily. [laughter] Fortunately there's no great mob scene either; we have no problem with crowd control. People were driven out after the first hour of poetry, so yeah.

So everything worked out nicely, though there was anxiety about the reading. Which all, which shows you, how our anxiety is a mass hallucination, and that's the whole scene. Simple as that. I think the whole Vietnam war is a mass hallucination of a similar nature. Just anxiety being acted out. And the problem then is control of anxiety and self-awareness, which I don't think is a specialty of our government at the moment. [laughter] So I think like, politically what will be necessary ultimately, is to be aware of people as aware of themselves, and let's vote for somebody who's aware of himself. If he's free enough of his awareness to be able to be in politics. And of course there are some people like Gandhi, who made their mistakes too. Anybody got anything they want to ask or know? The other statement I had to make was as well... I gave my blood to be tested by the way. See what happens with the LSD with me.

[audience member asks question in background regarding the late President John F. Kennedy]

I missed... yeah, I think so. I felt more affection from him than I do from Johnson. [laughter] Well, I felt the possibilities of affection. Also the obvious thing of there being sex in the White House, finally, after many years of aged presidents. [laughter, applause]

But I don't necessarily trust the policies he had, nor trust his brother, Robert. I don't think Robert is hip enough yet. I think what he oughta do is take some LSD and then he'd be more qualified to run. [laughter] He's got enough children already so he doesn't have to worry about his chromosomes. [laughter] I think, actually, that would be quite a thing, if he took LSD and then ran with Martin Luther King as a vice-presidential candidate we would be... Otherwise we're going to be stuck—someone was telling me we're gonna be stuck next time round, big choice offered to us, to our consciousness, is a combination of Rockefeller and Reagan, the vice

president, Ronald for Vice President, that unlikely haiku [chuckles], and I guess Johnson and Humphrey again or something like that. And that's no choice for anybody any longer... that's not even politics any longer. So between here and the elections I think something should be done by all you upstanding, righteous-thinking citizens. To make your democracy work... with or without LSD.

[question asked in background]

No, very little of it has been published. A lot of what I was reading from was manuscript, handscript, *manu*. The "Wichita Vortex Sutra," the last long poem, was published in the underground newspaper syndicate, beginning with the *Village Voice*, and then reprinted in a pamphlet put out by a young man named Van Alstyne, up in Eugene. Ed Van Alstyne, Coyote Press. That's available through City Lights. Another section which I didn't read... if you wanna hear another short section, there actually is one I would like actually to read. It is a prefatory piece to that longer one, which is on the road from Wichita to Lincoln. This was on the road from Lincoln to Wichita. It's much shorter and there's one or two statements in it that are interesting.

[applause]

Lincoln, Nebraska is the home of William Jennings Bryant. Bryant opposed the gold standard, I understood he had interests in Baby Doe's silver mines... [laughter] He was the... let's see, he defended the Biblical interpretation of the Bible of the creation of man, the Biblical interpretation of creation as distinct from the evolutionary interpretation, which was outlawed in Tennessee schools up to this week. And so the famous Scopes Monkey trial, which you may have seen the movie of... and there's a beautiful poem written about him by Vachel Lindsay. There's a dormitory named after him at Nebraska U in Lincoln.

[reading] Turn right next corner, the biggest little town in Kansas, McPherson. The red sun setting streaked along the flat plains west, gauzy veils of chimney mist around the Christmas tree lights of the refinery, aluminum white tanks squat beneath winking signal towers, bright lit bulbs, and flares of orange gas flame. Billows of smoke amidst machinery, transparent towers in the dusk. In advance of the cold wave, snow is spreading eastward toward the Great Lakes. News broadcast, old clarinet, car radio speeding across railroad tracks, lighted dome water tower on the flat plains, Kansas, Kansas, shuddering at last.

Person appearing in Kansas, angry telephone calls to the university, police dumbfounded at the hoods of their radio cars, while poets sing to Allah in the roadhouse showboat. Blue-eyed children dance and hold thy hand oh aged wolf, who came from Lawrence to Topeka to envision iron interlaced above the city plain. Telegraph wires strung from city to city, O Melville. Television brightening thy rills of Kansas loam. I come, a lone man from the void, riding in a bus,

hypnotized by the red taillights in the straight space road ahead. And the Methodist minister with cracked eyes, leaning over a table quoting Kirkegaard on the death of God, a million dollars in the bank, owns all West Wichita, come to nothing. Prajnaparamitra Sutra over coffee. Vortex of telephone, radio, bank, nightclub, aircraft, newspaper streets illuminated by bright emptiness.

Thy sins are forgiven, Wichita. By lonesomeness annulled, O Kansas dear. As the Western twang prophesied through the banjo, when the lone cowboy walked up the railroad track, past the empty station, toward a squared canyon where the sun sank westward, giant, bulbed orange at the other side. Music strung over his back and empty handed, singing on this planet Earth: I'm a lonely dog, O mother. Come, Nebraska, sing and dance with me. Come, lovers of Lincoln and Omaha, hear my soft voice at last. As babes need the chemical touch of flesh in pink infancy lest they die, idiot returning to the inhuman nothing, so, tender-lipped adolescent girl, pale youth, give me back my soft kiss. Hold me in your innocent arms, accept my tears as yours to harvest. Equal in nature to the wheat that made your bodies muscular on their bones. Broad-shouldered boy bicep from leaning on cows and drinking the milk of Midwest solitude. No more fear of tenderness. Much delight in weeping, ecstasy in singing, laughter rises and confounds staring idiot mayors and stony politicians eyeing thy breasts. Oh, man of America, be born. Truth breaks through, how big is the prick of the president, how big is cardinal Vietnam? How little the prince of the FBI, unmarried all these years. How big are all the public figures? Uniform or televised, what kind of hanging flesh have they hidden behind their images?

Approaching Salina. Prehistoric Indian excavation. Apache uprising in the drive-in theater. Shelling, bombing range mapped in the distance. Crime prevention show, sponsored by Wrigley Spearmint. A dinosaur on a Sinclair advertisement glowing green. South Ninth Street lined with poplar and elms, spread over the evening's pining headlights. Salina's high school's gothic brick darkened over lighted door at night, what wreaths of naked bodies, thighs, and faces. Small, hairy bun vaginas, silver cocks, armpits and breasts, moistened by tears. For twenty years, for forty years.

Peking radio surveyed by Luden's cough drops. A tax on the Russians and Japanese. Big Dipper leaning above the Nebraska border, handle down to the blackened plain. Dark night, giant T-bone steaks, and in the *Village Voice* New Frontiers Productions presents: "Fairies I Have Known": camp comedy. Blue highway lights along the horizon east at Hebron, Homestead National Monument near Beatrice. Language, language, a circle of black earth in the rear window, no cars for miles along the highway, beacon lights on oceanic plain, language, language over the big blue river chanting "*La Ilaha illallah, O la Ilaha illallah...*" Revolving my head to my heart like my mother, chin abreast at Allah, eyes closed, blackness vaster than midnight prairies, Nebraskas of solitary Allah.

Joy, I am I, the lone one, singing to myself at last. God come true. Thrills of fear, nearer than the vein in my neck. What if I opened my soul to sing to my absolute self, singing as the car crash chomped through blood and muscle tendons, skull. What if I sang and loosed the chords of fearbrow, what exquisite noise would shiver my car companion? I am the universe tonight riding in all my power, riding chauffeured through myself by a long-haired saint with eyeglasses. What if I sang til students knew I was free of Vietnam, trousers, meat, free of my own body, free to die in my thoughtful, shivering throne, freer than Nebraska, freer than America, freer than my own self? May I disappear in magic smoke of joy. Poof. Reddish vapor, Faustus vanishing, weeping and laughing under the stars on Highway 77 between Beatrice and Lincoln.

Better not to move but to let things be, Reverend Preacher. We've all already disappeared, space highway, open, entering Lincoln's ear, round to the stop at the tracks, warning, Pioneer Boulevard, William Jennings Bryant sang thou shalt not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold, oh Baby Doe, Gold's department store castle hulks o'er Tenth Street now. An unregenerate old fop who didn't want to be a monkey, and now he's the highest perfect wisdom dust, and Lindsay's cry survives, compassionate in a high school anthology. A giant dormitory brilliant on the evening plain drifts with his memories. There's a nice white door over there, for me—O dear—on zero street.

[applause]

HOST: On behalf of the students and the faculty, we want to thank you Mr. Ginsberg, for this reading this afternoon.

[applause; program ends]