ON PHIL WHALEN (ON WHALEN)

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In "The Idea of Order at Key West," Wallace Stevens distinguishes between the content of his protagonist's song and the shape or "voice" given to that song. He hears in her voice something beyond the "genius of the sea," something distinctly spiritual, and the singer's voice is said to transform the world, word by word. We're told, for instance, that it isn't the outer voice of the sky that he hears, but rather that the singer's voice has "made / The sky acutest at its vanishing" (129). Consequently, her voice becomes a trope for human agency. Stevens' preoccupation with voice and agency emerges from the Modernist "crisis of the subject" (Eysteinsson 26), the specific link being loss of public and private authority. That same loss of authority is the circumstance T. S. Eliot wrote from in *The Waste Land*, and Eliot had a similar concern with voice and authority, clear from his early title for that poem, "He Do the Police In Different Voices" (or later in "The Three Voices of Poetry"). In fact, Eliot's involvement with voice is especially clear in his miming of the church litany at the conclusion, where the protagonist's voice takes on biblical force. The same concern with voice and agency is evident in Pound's use of multiple voices in *Personae* (used in the "search for oneself," as he said, which parallels a "search for 'sincere self-expression'" [85]), and in Williams' prosodic experiments with the vernacular.

A larger pattern emerges when these Modernist instances are aligned with a mid-century preoccupation with originality—construed as "finding your own voice"—and with such striking voices as those of Berryman, Plath, Merwin, and Creeley, to name just four poets for whom voice operates as a key stylistic device and often as a metaphysical event, for the connection between voice and person is an intricate one. One thinks here of Creeley's "The Pattern" where "As soon as / I speak, I / speaks" (294), or in a related way, of Olson's use of the page as a score and his recuperative insistence on breath as allowing "*all* the speech-force of language back in (speech is the 'solid' of verse, is the secret of a poem's energy)" (152). In light of this trend, the autobiographical intimacy of Ginsberg and Kerouac, with their emphasis on the immediate, becomes part of a larger cultural concern, perhaps one of reconstructing a social voice, especially as regards the prophetic stance they take, for they reclaim private and social authority. Yet the poet whose work I think is best served by this approach is their friend, Philip Whalen,[1] whose poetry, while

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[1] For those unfamiliar with Whalen, he was born in Portland, Oregon in 1923, and after WWII attended Reed College, where he met poets Gary Snyder and Lew Welch. By 1952, he was living in San Francisco, where he eventually met Ginsberg and Kerouac. Whalen figures in two of Kerouac's novels, *The Dharma Bums* and *Big Sur*, and he participated

engaging the personal and while certainly personable, is not actually the poetry of personality at all, nor, as importantly, the poetry of impersonality, to use Eliot's famous phrase. In fact, Whalen's work is important for his "non-representational" or perhaps better non-referential, multi-linear uses of voice.[2] That is, while phrasing and content may be characteristic of Whalen, there is, oddly, little self-representation involved. Nor can poems be taken at face value as representing statements by the poet, proposing a point of view, for such positioning is often undercut by Whalen's shifts in direction, tone and use of perspective. The voice of that speaker, however, is striking, and the work exemplifies, I think, a culture practice of some importance, exemplary in Altieri's sense of works of art "providing exemplary acts of mind that then enter into the dispositions that agents in a culture assume . . ." (1989, 376). This is evident in the influence Whalen has had on younger poets,[3] Coolidge, Waldman, Notley, and Scalapino, for example.

What's striking about Whalen's voice is, at the least, the emotional range he achieves, moving from informal complaint to highly particularized imagery, self-parody, snippets of song, or philosophical statement, perhaps all four, within very few lines, so that a poem can hit a number of exotic tones and simultaneously express, say, frustration, resignation and exultation (see Davidson [114] for a reading of this emotional variety). Whalen's range and flexibility contribute to the speed at which the poems occur, a second characteristic, for one can cover lots of distance. One source of the speed and distance is the way in which he assembled poems from notebook passages, creating gaps or leaps between lines. As Paul Christensen writes, poems are "built up as in mosaic, in which bits and pieces of the journals are juxtaposed into a single, high-velocity streak of perception that implodes years of rambling and digression" (in Whalen, 1985, x).[4] From a different perspective, however, a major source of that speed and flexibility is the self-reflexive distance between the writer of the poem and the speaker in the poem, a distance often made tangible by deliberate contradictions, shifts in perspective, self-parodies, and general goofiness, all of which serve, among other things, to undercut the speaker's credibility. This self-

in the famous Six Gallery reading in 1956, where Ginsberg first read "Howl." Like Snyder and Ginsberg, Whalen has had a long involvement with Buddhism; he lived twice in Japan and recently retired as abbot of the Hartford Street Zen Center in San Francisco. He passed away in June, 2002. Much of his work is out of print, but in 1999, Penguin released *Overtime*, an impressive selected poems. That said, not much critical work has been done on Whalen. Three of the important pieces are Paul Christensen's entry in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, a chapter on Whalen and Snyder in Michael Davidson's *The San Francisco Renaissance*, and an introductory essay to *Overtime* by Leslie Scalapino. In what little has been written, however, there seems consensus that Whalen's voice is immediately striking and a considerable gift (for instance, in Davidson 115-6, or Thurly 172-6).

[2] My three critical terms require a note. I used the term "non-representational" in quotes following Altieri's discussion of 'non-representational' painting (1982, 1). The more accurate term for such paintings would be 'nonfigurative,' but that term couldn't be used in literary studies. I wanted to convey the idea that Whalen doesn't use voice to represent the implied author, but the terms "represent" and "nonrepresentational" have been used in too many conflicting ways to

reflective distance has a doubling effect on the lyric voice of the poet, one which allows Whalen to innovate in multiple directions, a multiplicity which takes him beyond a statement-based poetic and conspicuously extends his emotional range. This distance may reflect Whalen's involvement with Buddhism, for it becomes clear in retrospect that his overall concern is with the "mind" making the poem, rather than with the thoughts or self expressed, and here "mind" is not simply self or ego; it has little to do with personality.[5]   Whatever the source, this reflexive distance allows Whalen remarkable range and flexibility.

As with others of his generation, Whalen's poetry is process-oriented, disjunctive, multi-vocal, often digressive and parodic. The texts are writerly, the focus often on writing processes, often within immediate contexts. The consistent themes intertwine problems of perception, knowledge and identity, suggesting a Modernist preoccupation with subjectivity. One early area of concern is with the Modernist subject/object paradigm, a paradigm inherited in turn from scientific practice and the Romantics (as in Abrams 1953, 51-6; and Whitehead 75-94). As the progression of Whalen's work makes clear, this paradigm imposes untenable structures on perception, structures which he consequently abandons, shifting to a highly subjective process-orientation, emphasizing what Altieri, in another context, has called "a conjectural poetics faithful to the act of thinking," a poetics which explores the possibility of a "transpersonal self virtually co-extensive with the world's existence *as* an object of concern" (1984, 18, 104). Alternately, one could say that when the boundaries of that subject/object paradigm begin to shift or blur, one senses in Whalen's work a recognition that there is no position or ground to sustain that para-

help here. Second, I've taken the term "multi-linear" from Basil Bunting (as quoted in Quartermain [9]). In early drafts, I used the term "nonlinear" to indicate a text which employs more than linear sequence, but Perloff's (1998) use of the term for recent poetries seems more accurate, especially in that some recent (English) texts don't employ linear progression, which is not the case with Whalen. Finally, "non-referential," which is the more difficult term. When I argue that Whalen's use of voice is nonreferential, I simply mean literary voice isn't constructed such that it reflects back on the speaker as part of the overall theme, as one finds say with Plath or Lowell. I don't mean that Whalen doesn't make normal use of reference, but rather that, as an imaginative strategy, he often makes a particular use of statements such that they are understood as having momentary reference, are nonbinding or canceled in some way. This strategy occurs in several ways, the most obvious of which are hyperbole and conspicuous incongruity, and it compares to Goodman's notion of "null denotation" (19-26) or the way Ricoeur discusses metaphor as an imaginative act of suspension (154).

[3] The well-known antipathy of the Language poets for the "personal voice poem" might seem to contradict my claim, but in fact their objection to notions of the authenticity of literary voice is exactly to the point.

[4] Scalapino has pointed out in two essays (1989, 1999) that Whalen explicitly told her that he does not consider his poems to be collages, as might be inferred from Christensen's description.

[5] The argument doesn't require these as critical terms, but for reference, use of "ego" follows from Husserl, especially as "the substrate of habitualities" (66-7) and also Jung (3-7), use of "self" follows from Jung (23-35) and use of "mind" from Suzuki (123-141).

digm. Consequently, artistic processes assume priority over referential effects, wherein the mind structuring experience as poetry—or better, the lyric subject itself— becomes Whalen's focus of concern.[6]

As has been said above, what's especially interesting about Whalen is that there emerges a self-reflexive distance between the author and the lyric subject which tends to foreground voice in its construction, a doubling effect[7] which allows Whalen to innovate in multiple directions. The consequence—and this bears on interpretation—is that Whalen often cancels, suspends or deflects the normative reading process of referring back from voice to an imagined speaker. Said a different way, Whalen uses voice to fashion and innovate on a poetic text in distinctly multi-linear, often nonpropositional ways,[8] a strategy by which he avoids limitations inherent in grounding the lyric subject in a "self," stance or position. Rather, his innovative turns, shifts, halts and feints, the intrusions and clowning about, the general zaniness, all involve using voice as a kind of tool, wherein flexibility of thought and feeling is given priority over point of view. More narrowly, when the speaker's voice in a poem isn't reflective of a self or authorial stance, it becomes a conspicuous part of the construction of the text, a part of the methodology. In the following, I'd like to show how this flexibility of voice emerges by lifting voice from a referential function, creating a self-reflexive distance between writer and lyric subject, such that it allows Whalen to use multi-linear modes of lyric development and a wider range of emotional effects.

2.

"The principle of intelligibility, in lyric poetry," de Man writes, "depends on the phenomenalization of the poetic voice." That is, the lyric becomes intelligible (as a lyric) when we construct a "voice" from the text. "Our claim to understand a lyric text," de Man continues, "coincides with the actualization of a speaking voice," even though making that voice actual, he also argues, involves denying the figural nature of voice, since acknowledging that voice as a figure would deprive the text "of the attribute of aesthetic presence that determines the hermeneutics of the lyric" (55). The term "presence" however is conspicuous; de Man's purpose is to deconstruct what he sees as the suppression of the figural. But something is amiss in de Man's

6 Because I suggest Whalen moves beyond a statement-based poetic and my analysis focuses on the voice of the lyric subject, this analysis also lends itself to Benveniste's distinction between "le sujet de l'énonciation" and "le sujet de l'énoncé" (as in Todorov 323-8). I have consequently thought of Whalen's shift as prioritizing the act of enunciation, but Lyons' discussion of the two phrases has convinced me not to employ the English translation (e. g. the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enounced) because an English translation does not capture Benveniste's distinction. Consequently, I have down-played that aspect and have used the more conservative phrases "act of speech" and "statement" where possible, even though the distinction between the subject producing an act of speech and the signs of person registered in that speech are of importance.

account, for as Garrett Stewart has argued (1-3 and passim) to read a text is to "evocalize" the text, and the lyric has an obvious phonemic domain. The consequence is that poetic voice is inevitably "actualized" whenever one reads a text, for the figure of voice can't emerge sui generis; it has that prior phonemic base.[9] That said, one point is well taken. We work backwards from the text to an imagined author and context, a characteristic exploited in the lyric, perhaps because of the special relation between voice and emotion. Much of what allows literary voice to become phenomenal, one might add, derives from its conversational base, for poetic voice has both figural and literal domains, and signs of voice intensify how the lyric is to be imagined. A second point of note here is that poetic texts are, as Maud Ellmann has phrased it, manufactured forms of subjectivity, rather than reflections of personalities (ix). But that in turn requires a qualification, because such manufacture does not, in itself, mean that poetic texts are fictional (as argued, for example, in Forrest-Thomson [18-37] and Smith [14-35]).[10] It follows that "voice" is a literary construct, but not necessarily that it's part of a persona (as in Chatman 26-7 and Brower 19-30; see Culler 1988, for a discussion). For assuming the lyric subject to be a persona carries with it the unwarranted implication of a mask worn in a dramatic performance, and that in turn identi-fies poetry as a mode of drama or fiction. But there is nothing inherent in a poetic text that makes it either fictional or theatrical. De Man is surely correct that we phenomenalize poetic voice, if only because readers provide the text with their own voices. If we infer speakers, how-ever, that inference is guided by signs of what Halliday calls "implicates of utterance" (133), signs often provided by authors as part of the construction of the text.

As a critical term, "voice" is difficult to control, for instance, when trying to distinguish voice from style, and it's all the more difficult because one tends to use "voice" in both literal and figurative ways, confusing the two, and that confusion lends itself, as de Man claims, to a sup-pression of the figural. On the other hand, using "voice" as a critical term doesn't require a complicated apparatus.[11] Whalen writes in a demotic style, one based on speech, in the tradition of Whitman and Williams. The tone is typically intimate, casual and humorous. He considers himself a lyric poet (Allen 1972, 20), which is to say his perceptions and thought processes are

[7] Both the doubling and the splitting of the lyric subject has been the topic of several powerful studies, which offer a spectrum of causes. The doubling or splitting can be caused, for instance, by linguistic factors, i.e. as a consequence of what Peter Hühn calls the double set-up of poetry, which he believes involves several dialectical operations (enuncia-tion/enounced, signified/signifier, reference/rhetoric); or it can occur as the result of conflicting functions, modes and domains of subject construction, as Vimala Herman argues; and finally, doubling of voice can be the result of the literary use of voice itself, for instance, in what Rogers calls the "anomalous voice," where the speaker is obviously not the author (80-1). All three factors may be involved here, but emphasis will be on the later.

[8] I mean by proposition the simple notion of "statement," and follow the general notion that a theme is constructed from a group of related propositions which function like premises, just as with argument. Strictly speaking, such

used as part of the poem's content. Whalen's poems aren't always short, but they do involve a single speaker who expresses states of mind and processes of perception, thought, and feeling, to crib from Abrams' definition of the lyric (1993, 108-9). In his use of first person, Whalen follows the common practice of allowing the speaker to be understood as the author and the poem to be understood as an act of speech. Whalen uses speech in several ways, such as when quoting conversations or recording snippets overheard, instances of what he calls "Native Speech"; he has a penchant for vernacular phrasing. Stephen Ross has termed such uses as instances of "*mimetic* voice because it derives from verbal imitation and representation." My focus, in contrast, will be on the voice of the lyric subject, what Ross calls "*textual* voice" (300). While voice has typically meant both style and degrees of authorial presence in a text, by "voice" I'll single out prosodic cues (e.g. punctuation and rhythm) and related semantic features that aid in constructing voice, features and cues often marked in the text by the writer, who will be understood as "the actual author," following Wayne Booth (74). My special area of concern will be the theoretical space between what Booth refers to as "the implied author," and the lyric subject or speaker.[12] While my interests are more methodological than chronological, the distance between implied author and lyric subject in Whalen's work emerges over the course of a career, and I'll begin with two early poems.

statements are considered either true or false, but in common usage there are various degrees of accuracy involved as well as various uses to which statements are put. A statement-based poem, then, is one developed by the organization of propositions into a theme. The organization is typically hierarchical in that the theme or overarching statement subsumes the propositional elements, what Kintsch calls the macrostructure (64-9). It's also of note that certain elements in a text, such as the images, sounds, and rhetorical gestures, can have the force of propositional statements.

[9] Obviously, a discussion of texts, persons and voice invokes Derrida's argument, in *Of Grammatology*, against the privileged status of voice in philosophic discourse, and de Man is similarly concerned here with reference, if I read him correctly. But I don't think either argument is at issue in this essay. For detailed arguments on the issue of literary voice as regards Derrida's argument, see Evans, *Strategies of Deconstruction*, Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry*, Hartman, *Saving the Text*, Stewart, *Reading Voices*, and Wesling and Stawek, *Literary Voice: The Calling of Jonah*.

[10] Culler is careful to give readers the responsibility of constructing fictions from poetry and so the construction of a lyric personae (1975, 165-70), which is to the good, but I don't think imagining a speaker per se is an act of fictionalizing, nor are the structures developed from reading necessarily fictive, although often acts of imagination. See Culler 1985 for an indication that he may no longer be satisfied with such a classification; see Pratt for an argument on classifying literary texts as a type of speech act (i.e. as display texts) which may or may not be fictional.

[11] Recent criticism of the "personal voice poem" by writers like George Hartley and Marjorie Perloff is relevant to this study, and certainly the critical apparatus in a text like Hartley's is complex. But theoretical issues involved in their arguments, socio-cultural analysis for example, are not fully pertinent to the issues discussed here. Moreover, I will not be arguing for, as Perloff puts it, "late English Romantic lyrics in which a particular self mediates on the external scene and moralizes on the landscape" (61); nor will I promote the notion, as Hartley writes, "that the poet (a self-present subject) transmits a particular message ('experience, emotion') to a reader (another self-present subject) through a language which is neutral, transparent, 'natural'" (xii). I think the texts involved in this study will make that clear.

3.

In a 1971 interview with Ann Waldman, Whalen talks of a peyote trip in 1955 as a "great cure" for a six year depression during which time he wrote little poetry. Afterwards, he says, he dropped prior Imagist ideals (e.g. precision, economy, unity of tone) and began his first long, experimental poems, remarking that he now began to see that a poem "could be what I was going to be or what it was going to be itself, and it started making itself and I started having to go along behind it and write it the way it was . . ." (Allen 1972, 22-3). The conflation of "I" and "it" here sounds casual, but it proves critical, as I'll later show, and note that the poem is said to constitute a kind of force which the poet follows, that the poem can have a direction independent of the author's intent, for this nascent split suggests one way the lyric subject's voice might become distinct from the actual poet's voice. In the interview, Whalen cites "If You're So Smart, Why Ain't You Rich" as a breakthrough poem. As will be evident, that poem establishes a speaker said to be impoverished by the need to express an unreachable beauty which exists "outside" in the world, but a beauty which is not reducible to objects, and the poem makes a fairly dense philosophical statement, yet notice below how the hyperbolic opening lines establish a slightly comic tone, one that reflects back on the speaker. Here is the opening third of the poem:

> I need everything else
> Anything else
>   Desperately
> But I have nothing
> Shall have nothing
>   but this
> Immediate, inescapable
>   and invaluable
> No one can afford
>   THIS
> Being made here and now
>
>   (Seattle, Washington
>   17 May, 1955)

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[12] John Oliver Perry made a similar distinction in terms of the "disparate voices" in poems, when clarifying what he termed the implicit author and the overt speaker.

MARIGOLDS

> Concise (wooden)
>   Orange.
> Behind them, the garage door
>   Pink
> (Paint sold under a fatuous name:
> "Old Rose"
>   which brings a war to mind)
>
> And the mind slides over the fence again
> Orange against pink and green
> Uncontrollable!

While the poem opens with a paradox which the speaker works to resolve, a fairly straightfor-ward approach in the 1950s, the poem also develops a speaker who, while credible, seems fallible, not fully in control, and who in fact forecloses on one obvious way to resolve his problem. For instance, the speaker states that he needs "everything else," because what he now has—the imme-diate situation—is invaluable and "No one can afford / THIS." His problem, then, involves a kind of displacement from the immediate. Yet the speaker also acknowledges that he can't escape from the immediate, so while he speaks an internal poverty, readers already know that what he needs is to focus on what's inescapable, to "pay" full attention to that, and part of the playfulness of the poem is that he can't afford not to, the reverse of what he states is the case. These factors contribute to the overall tone. Consequently, one comes to understand that the opening paradox actually involves the way the speaker *perceives* the situation, rather than an existential situation in itself, for notice that the speaker's "mind" is said to spontaneously locate an experience of value independent of the speaker ("Uncontrollable!"). But that is also to say, the poem establishes a fallible voice distinct from the implied author creating that voice, even though there is no indica-tion we should read that voice as fictive. To continue, in the following, take note also of Whalen's use of rhetorical gestures—the feints—such as when he turns to address himself, for such asides spatialize the text, widen a domain potentially multi-linear:[13]

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[13] For a discussion of the concept of "space" in modern literature, see Frank, Mitchell and Gelly.

Returned of its own accord
It can explain nothing
Give no account

What good? What worth?

    Dying!

You have less than a second
    To live
To try to explain:
Say that light
    in particular wave-lengths
    or bundles wobbling at a given speed
Produces the experience
Orange against pink
Better than a sirloin steak?
A screen by Korin?

One discerns from the above one further critical point: The poverty the speaker complains about is actually the result of his not being able to produce an adequate account of his experience, hence the resort to analysis. But that is because the ideological frame Whalen develops for this poem, as articulated by the speaker, posits an equivalence between inside and out, a rudimentary correspondence between his objective experience and his ability to translate that experience into art. This is an artistic stance, then, one which seeks to "capture" an experience of beauty. Although the equivalence between subject and object—the Modernist paradigm—would allow the speaker to reconcile his inability to focus on and respond to the here and now (i.e. to speak of his experience of beauty), this imagined equivalence is also what creates the problem. The poem continues:

The effect of this, taken internally
The effect
    of beauty
        on the mind

There is no equivalent, least of all
These objects
Which ought to manifest
A surface disorientation, pitting
Or striae
Admitting some plausible interpretation

All the more interesting, then, that he states "There is no equivalent, least of all / These objects" when it's just such an equivalence, the inherited subject/object paradigm, which he builds the poem from. If there is no equivalent to "The effect / of beauty / on the mind," then beauty can be termed invaluable, outside of value. Further, that is why beauty demands our attention, for beauty can't adequately be addressed by the subject/object paradigm. In fact, it is the experience of an inexpressible beauty that eclipses the posited equivalence between the outside world and the mind which apprehends that world; they simply aren't separate. The poem concludes:

But the cost
Can't be expressed in numbers
Dodging between
        a vagrancy rap
        and the newest electrical brain curette
Eating what the rich are bullied into giving
Or the poor willingly share
Depriving themselves

More expensive than ambergris
    Although the stink
        isn't as loud. (A few
Wise men have said,
      "Produced the same way . . .
      Vomited out by sick whales.")
Valuable for the same qualities
        Staying power and penetration
I've squandered every crying dime.
                        Seattle 17-18:v:55   (*On Bear's Head* , 5-7; *Overtime* 5-7)

The poem concludes by talking about value, but it concludes with the same poverty that it began, so it apparently lacks a plot. From a slightly different perspective, however, there is a plot-like transformation, but only if we distinguish the speaker from the implied author. That transformation occurs when the author re-situates the problem from its stated location outside in the world—the impossibility of possessing and expressing beauty—to the way the speaker approaches the problem, i.e. by undermining the speaker. Said differently, the apparent lack of closure in the poem suggests a focus not on outside events per se, but rather on the fallibility of the speaker, and that is why tone becomes a key element. At one level, then, the topic is about the relationship between the ideological stance taken by the speaker and the speaker's experience of value; hence the conclusion about staying power and penetration and the remorse that he's "squandered every crying dime." He construes his impoverishment as the result of his pursuit of beauty—beauty located "outside"—but we're given clues not to take that situation at face value, such as when the brain slides over the fence to another source of beauty, albeit without giving an "account" of that experience. Surely, then, the problem originates with the demands the speaker puts on the experience of beauty—his need for personal value—and one reason for his ensuing poverty is that he's attempting to speak of immediate experience from a position outside that experience. This strategy in effect displaces the speaker and consequently puts him in the position of trying to capture his own experience; he has, in effect, produced the impoverishment himself. The overall tone—the humor and humility—supports this interpretation, inasmuch as it is self-deprecatory. But to repeat the main point, one can't say the statements are directly referential to the author, even though speaker and author are given as the same, because statements made by the speaker are consistently undercut by the author. That is also to say, Whalen has established a distance between implied author and speaker, a distance made evident by tone, by framing devices, and by the use of contradiction.

To recast the 1971 interview somewhat, Whalen's breakthrough in the 1950s occurred in the way he understood poetic construction, for he had previously thought he must in some way know the propositional base of a poem prior to its expression. The poem was thought to involve statements initiated by—and originating with—the speaker, hence the centrality of any position the speaker assumes. Part of my argument will be that Whalen came to understand poetry as having a transpersonal force, taking him beyond that expressive model, with at least one important consequence, for this new poetry could no longer be grounded in stable acts of self-reference, at least not in any simply way. As those familiar with Whalen's work know, there was in the 1950s a shift in focus. But having said that, the above breakthrough poem also suggests that Whalen knew both topic and ideological stance beforehand, if only because his way of framing the problem establishes specific relations between self and world, with the poem clearly figuring

as an expression of self or ego. That is likely to be because, in the 1950s, such notions of self-expression were commonplace and, to that extent, unexamined. The propositional base referred directly back (as speech) to the author and directly forward as reference to the objective world, true to the subject/object paradigm which it exemplified. And, in fact, Whalen's poems of the mid-fifties are often sites for philosophical inquiry, with development of theme as a means of investigating purpose and self-identity, often in a straight-forward account of philosophical problems. Whalen is likely, then, to have been employing this older model of poetry to at least 1959. For example, in "The Same Old Jazz" (1957), notice that the same subject/object paradigm is made explicit within the first few lines (ll 9-15):

> So Sunday morning I'm in bed with Cleo
> She wants to sleep & I get up naked at the table
> Writing
> And it all snaps into focus
> The world inside my head & the cat outside the window
> A one-to-one relationship
> While I imagine whatever I imagine
> > (*On Bear's Head* 14)

There's not much question but that the first person pronoun here designates Whalen and that personal references are used to establish a philosophical point about subject/object relations. As Whalen moved through and eventually beyond this subject/object paradigm, however, he relied less on such orientations and less on acts of grounding the poem in external referents as a means to organize the propositional base. As a consequence of his shift away from a statement-based poetic (which I take as his breakthrough), content was no longer employed solely to support a theme, and theme in turn was de-emphasized. When freed of that rhetorical function, propositions were put to other uses, such as developing the emotional range.

4.

Whalen's breakthrough in the 1950s involved a new approach to writing, one made in distinction to writing a text predetermined by theme or point of view, for now the immediate content of the mind provides the writer with no more than a starting point. This new approach and consequent shift to present tense—at basis, self-reflexive rather than expressive in nature—is key to Whalen's often-quoted "press release" in *Memoirs of an Interglacial Age* (1959), where he

talks of his poetry as "a picture or graph of a mind moving, which is a world body being here and now which is history . . . and you" (*On Bear's Head* 93; *Overtime* 50). By 1959, then, Whalen's prior Imagist practice had become not only "graphs" of a mind, but a mind *in movement*, with writing processes themselves as the poem's mimetic base, rather than the representation of events. This point needs elaboration, for the focus shifts from topical concerns—the content of one's thoughts—to thought processes themselves, to an extent superseding the importance of the poem's referential focus. That suspension moreover lessens the impact of the propositional base, while it prioritizes the poem's—and the mind's—immediate development. A text emerges, as he said, from following the poem. In that same passage from *Memoirs* (above), Whalen goes on to construct an analogy between writing poetry and a Wilson Cloud Chamber, wherein a piston forces water-saturated air to condense and make the motion of atomic particles visible. Such particles form paths which are then photographed. This condensation effect illustrates how materializing poetic lines—produced by heuristic writing processes—can be said to graph the mind in its motions and so describes a process by which mind is made manifest (in a word, psychedelic).

Whalen's focus on the mind in motion rather than the mind positioned or represented (by statements) is obviously of key importance, if only because the mind now develops as the poem develops; prior states of mind are not recreated but rather left behind, for the shift also requires disengagement. One conspicuous element that Whalen disengaged from is that subject/object paradigm. This can be shown through a corollary development, Whalen's repeated references (as above) to photography, movies and film, as when he speaks of poetry in the preface to *Every Day* (1964) as "A continuous fabric (nerve movie?) exactly as wide as these lines" (*On Bear's Head* 269), or in "For My Father" (1958), where he writes of being a "Cross between a TV camera and a rotary press / Busy turning itself into many printed pages" (*On Bear's Head* 257; *Overtime* 29). In a related way, Whalen imagines poetry as tripping synapses in the reader's head that cause sections of the brain to light up. These photographic processes and interior flashes can in turn be aligned to what he labeled as "takes,"[14] a term appropriated from movie production and jazz recordings. In a passage from *The Diamond Noodle*, a notebook composed 1956-65, Whalen defines a "take" as "a sense of recognition of change or acceptance of it happening in the physical world and in the ego running concurrently . . ." (57). In that passage, he describes surprise at seeing a friend whom he might well have expected to see, as "therefore a 'Take,' an

[14] Paul Christensen has recently remarked (April, 2000) that the poetic line for Whalen is the unit of perception. I think that captures an important insight, but I think it should be phrased this way: Whalen constructs the text by using lines as if each were a cinematic frame, a perceptual unit for the reader, rather than as the consequence of Whalen's own "unit" of perception.

experiencing of that notion or postulate of liberation, freedom from the ego, the self, the psyche, whoever..." (*sic;* 57). A "take" then involves a recognition of change concurrently—Whalen's word—in both mind and world, one experienced by the poet as a transformation, mind watching mind. That is, a new view or "take" lifts the perceiver beyond habitual modes of thought; for a "take" is a new recognition of one's relationship with the world, a relation that allows for release from the ego ("whoever"), with the word "take" having a root sense of apprehending, but as well the sense of being captivated. Further, that concurrent change implies a unifying reality beyond subject and object. To state this blandly, a "take" is the *experience* of a postulate of liberation from subject/object relations; it is a moment of alignment, close to the Romantic notion of correspondence, one which allows for liberation from ego. Said a second way, there is a unifying reality beyond subject and object, a recognition of which can eclipse ego.

To speak in chronological terms, in my account, Whalen's new use of voice occurs with a shift away from a prior expressive model of poetry, one built from a Modernist subject/object paradigm. While his transition was less tidy than my account is, nevertheless one aspect surely occurred when Whalen allowed the poem at hand to have agency or "voice" over its own development, in distinction to its being an expression of self; for when the poems became less representative of a subject establishing a stance or truth, there was less need for thematic or macroscopic control. By 1959, Whalen speaks of "graphing the mind," a practice in keeping with the goal of "following" the poem's lead, but importantly a poem no longer organized by topical concerns, for poems had now become manifestations of mind, with the movement of the mind understood as a metaphysical event. (Recall that mind assumes the content of a "world body.") By this time, then, literary notions of subject and object had lost definition or were beginning to merge, and to that point, I suspect the dissolving boundary between them can be charted through Whalen's use of "takes." Whalen's use of "takes" emerges coincidentally with a pronounced use of juxtaposition, typically marked by the asterisk, as when placed between topics or images, a standard practice by the 1960s. Whalen initially used the asterisk to signal a suspension or hiatus in thematic development and, coincidentally, the asterisk is visually emblematic of spatial effects, pointing as it does in six directions.[15] This use of "takes" (and the mind in movement) is I think directly related to voice. One place to look at Whalen's use of "takes" in relation to voice is in "Soufflé," written in 1957. The poem is composed of sixteen numbered "takes," each labeled as such and each having topical unity, but generally lacking overt connection to the others. That is, they are juxtaposed. The poem invokes thematic progression and comes to a

[15] At first Whalen signaled discontinuities with a solid line (for instance, see 60-67 in *On Bear's Head*). In one early poem, he commented that use of an asterisk was to be understood as "continuation, in another key" (original in caps; *On Bear's Head* 83).

resounding conclusion, but the actual organization remains in question, and I suspect this poem is unified as much by its rhythms and emotional content as by its themes.

The most important effect on voice in "Soufflé" arises from the rhetorical gaps between sections, important because those gaps both create and disclose a new spatial dimension in the poem, one which allows for what I've called multi-linear uses of voice, a dimensional effect. The dimensional effect on voice (in "Soufflé") occurs chiefly because there's no linear development by which to anchor these "takes" into a sequence. Sections of the poem, though topicalized, don't fit neatly into a theme or narrative. If there is topical unity, it's only apparent as a disconnection motif, that is, a motif reinforced by the lack of connection between parts, although perhaps also by repeated references to feeling, as in "How do you feel?" (later echoed by "How do I feel?"). While the tone of the poem is comic, the feelings generated are typically those of alienation, as when one of the characters reports looking closely at the cells of her body, in TAKE I:

> Carol said, " I looked at all my cells today
> Blood & smear samples from all over me.
> They were all individuals, all different shapes
> Doing whatever they were supposed to
> And all seeming so far away, some other world
> Being I."
>
> (*On Bear's Head* 30; *Overtime* 22)

Carol's use of "all" five times conveys fully how remote she feels from her body, or better, remote from this view of her body. Seeing those discrete cells creates a sense of separation, a non-continuous microscopic world-view separating "I" as alien. This otherworldly sense of distance and immensity is later reinforced at a macroscopic level, with references to absolute light, temperatures in outer space, and "Kali the Black, the horrific aspect / the total power of Siva / absolute destruction." As said above, this distance is also reinforced by the lack of connection between takes, so that they become non-continuous, like snapshots of a life out of control. As we read, we must jump from take to take and at each point reestablish a speaker, for speakers change.

Here is another section, TAKE XI; notice the shift in perspective and the split perspective:

> Bud-clusters hang straight down from the sharply-crooked
> Geranium stem like strawberries, the wild mountain kind
> These flowers almost as wild right here

Barbarous thick-jointed tangle, waist-high
Escaped once for all from the green-houses of the north
A weed, its heavy stalks jointing upwards & winding out
In all directions, too heavy to stand straight
The neighbors clipped some out of their yard
The stalks lay in the gutter & grew for days
In the rain water, flowering red
Ignorant of their disconnection

(*On Bear's Head* 33; *Overtime* 24)

As use of deictic "right here" (l. 3) indicates, this take arises from direct observation but it implies a displacement, a contrastive "there." Although the tone is reportorial, in a way similar to Carol's recorded speech, Whalen's fascination with the wild, escaped tangle, blooming in the gutter, gets established through contrasts of wild and domestic, civilized and barbarous. He imagines it as "almost as wild right here" (as it was there) and "escaped once for all," but this valorization gets muted by the "almost," by its being "too heavy to stand straight," and by its "ignorance," lying in rain water for days, as well as its impending death. So while this weed provides inspiration of a sort, the sense of disconnection is overwhelming.

No overt link connects TAKE XI with any other section of "Soufflé," but the piece can be related to Carol's (TAKE I) and to those where darkness or despair are invoked, so one could argue that the shifts in perspective and voice are unified by that motif. That would also argue for a unified voice in the poem, yet reading "Soufflé" in terms of a unified voice proves inadequate, I think, except in the most obvious sense; for the experience of reading this poem is largely one of disparity, not unity, and that probably best explains Whalen's title. Moreover, there are some four episodes of reported speech, at least six speakers, and the writing style varies in each, as does context, register, and addressee. Clearly, we are intended to shift about. In thematic terms, if one recalls Whalen's preoccupation with subject/object relations at this time—one with Romantic roots—then his repeated shifts in perspective and his references to scientific measurement, weather, temperature, space, darkness and light, do generally cohere, but they cohere to a general miasma or lack of relation, that is, as an emotional response to an alienating cultural context. That cultural context involves a universe of discrete, atomistic parts, the universe modern science had postulated in the 1950s, one which spoke in inhuman proportions, of freezing cold and certain death, hence Whalen's invocation of Kali and references to feeling, in statements like "where there's no sense there's no feeling" (*Overtime* 24). The poem is deliberately disparate at a thematic level, but unified at an emotional level.

A shift to feeling brings us more directly in line with voice—that's how tone is established—but it also gives us a different approach to unity, e.g. to the effects of juxtaposition on that main speaker's voice, but as well to the combined sense of unity and disparity, for one of the effects on voice arises from imaginative relations between takes. For instance, the two stanzas above can be set against TAKE XIII, which is composed of a single remark: "Don't you ever get tired / of your own sunny disposition?" where "sunny disposition," put in the larger context, is linked by both tone and topic to ignorance, darkness and despair. If one assumes that the speaker is the poet—the original passage isn't in quotes—then the line can be read as directed at an immediate auditor, say an acquaintance of the poet's, or perhaps self-reflexively as directed at the poet himself, but it can also be read in more general terms, as directed at his readers, or even as a phrase deliberately stripped of context, without an explicit reference. Given Whalen's use of shifting contexts and various addressees, it's more richly imagined as directed in all these ways. That is, it establishes at least three thematic links and so is multi-directional. Given also the fluctuations in style and tone between takes, we have here the nascent flexibility of voice I mentioned in my opening statements, for juxtaposing takes allows for multiple perspectives and multiple tones. In chronological terms, I read this multi-linear potential as part of the development of Whalen's voice, for tone no longer has to be sustained over the duration of the poem; hence Whalen can leap about, be playful or serious as well as quote other voices, all of which he does here. This leaping about is probably related to what Whalen termed as "following" the poem, for he is no longer constrained by either tone or perspective. His freedom from unities of tone and perspective widens both the range of his material and the poem's emotional domain.

5.

I've stated that Whalen's use of voice is non-referential to the extent that there's often no stance taken which reflects back on the author making statements; that statements are often canceled or suspended in some way, such as with the use of hyperbole. Aligned to this, Whalen's concern with graphing the mind in motion as a "world body," I've suggested, led him to different modes of poetic organization. In tandem, because thematic unity became less of a concern, Whalen could now allow many textual features—shifts in perspective, contingencies (inside and outside the text), unorthodox sequencing and other spatial effects (images juxtaposed, snippets of speech, rhetorical gestures)—to operate as part of the overall development of the poem. I've also mentioned the speed of Whalen's work. That speed becomes evident through word choice, use of abbreviation, ellipsis, and reduction of punctuation, but perhaps the biggest increase in speed is caused by the lack of connectives, the rhetorical gaps (related also to the reduction of thematic

concerns, such as in "Soufflé"). Said more abstractly, Whalen seeks movement in a poem, speed rather than thematic density, but also diversity rather than unity. One thinks here of the *texture* of Whalen's poetry, to borrow from Ransom (280-1). Some texts feel broken open; disparate elements intrude; for Whalen's experimentation with connectives is related to violations of literary code (as in Culler 1975, 161-4), often, for instance, through deflation or by transgression. Simply put, Whalen doesn't elevate the lyric subject; he undercuts it, through self-parody, pastiche and deliberate error, but also through self-reflexive commentaries, use of asides, associations, hyperbole, and parenthetical remarks. These devices fall within the purview of voice and are used to exploit the implicitly spatial dimensions of a text, allowing the poem to move on several levels, rather than in a single linear sequence or with a single thematic focus.

I've also said my concerns are less chronological than methodological, but in passing I should mention that Whalen's most radical experiments with content, structure and voice occur in the early sixties. Their most notable feature is the lack of logical bridgework between images and ideas, sometimes between words, which is to say there simply is no ordering "message" or macrostructure at times. The greatest departures occur in "Brain Candy, 1952-1965," a section in the major early collection, *On Bear's Head*. I'll quote one which I see as a developmental consequence of Whalen's experiments with voice. Consider then "St. Francis Lobbies Allen G."

unsuspected hairpins and inside Gaffney receptions
            Who lost the 7-year itch?

            "Mr. Harry Lane!"
            "Mr. Harry Lane!" is
            a passenger ST.
            FRANCIS PRAY FOR
            THE PENGUINS
                TEACH US

             KARMEL KORN
            ELECTRIC DRILL
            DRAFTY DOOR

        FUR   FUR   FUR
                Jewels
                        (fake)

Where's the Russia Philology?
scrolls and fur

(*On Bear's Head* 114)

Here is what I'd term a "non-referential" use of voice; reference back to the author (or even to the speaker) is oblique at best. From this use, at least two exegetical problems emerge: (1) how to account for the poem and (2) how to relate that account to Whalen's "graph of a mind moving," for what the poem does make reference to is an open question. Obviously, the poem works against normative reading processes, but it provides at least two avenues of analysis, the semantic and syntactic. To begin, then, we could say that the phrases feel syntactically appropriate and that the speaker's tone—almost pastiche—is quickly established by the non sequiturs. There's something of a parody going on. Further, the incongruity in imagery heightens our reading experience, as do contrastive tensions between syntax and semantics. We're often kept at the threshold between syntax and semantics, at the point where lexical choices are made, especially the selection of nouns, so that, besides thwarting a typical reading, lexical selection itself becomes a conspicuous area of concern.

It follows that one way to talk of the poem is by looking at word choice, the "semantic field" established. For instance, mention of Russia in 1960s invokes a Cold War sensibility. There is an associative link among the nouns "penguin," "fur," "Russia," and "drafty door." It also turns out, there was a Mr. Harry Lane in the news at the time, although perhaps by coincidence. A USCG Boatswain's Mate named Harry Lane was charged and found guilty of negligence in October, 1963, for opening a flood valve of a tug in dry dock, causing over a million dollars in damage. This took place the month before the poem was composed ("12:xi:63"). Rhetorical use of that name suggests that it occupies a topic position. Notice also how "Harry" doubles with "hairy," and so connects to fur, which is related to cold and to penguins. Fur can also be associated with jewels, which are ostensibly connected to Marilyn Monroe, who starred in the film *The Seven Year Itch* in 1955. (The "seven year itch" refers to a temptation to marital infidelity which supposedly takes place after seven years of marriage, but also to scabies.) We could go on, for Whalen clearly generates material from associative links and parallel sounds. There was an arms "race" going on at that time; and racers are spoken of as making "hairpin turns." Whalen's use of "hairpins," for that matter, could refer to the reception (as in "Gaffney receptions") of radio transmissions from Russia's Sputnik missiles, for one woman in the news back then claimed she was hearing such transmissions (though I can't remember whether it was hairpins or hair curlers). The Arms Race and potential war are linked to St. Francis, but here the speaker's tone becomes a

factor, for he's being facetious. Moreover, a methodological problem intrudes: The process of establishing an associative field is difficult to restrain and would moreover control a reading which the poem implicitly resists. Although the reading is enriched by contextual factors, there is no special need to decode these choices. One could argue, then, not only that Whalen's word choice deliberately thwarts such a reading, but that word choice forces one to stay at the level of process, here at the threshold between semantics and syntax, in order to experience phrasal incongruities, for certainly the words were not chosen for their referential use, but rather to exploit that usage. That said, I'm not satisfied with classifying the poem as a satire of normative readings, though it partakes of satire.

To take a different tack and speak to organization, notice that the poem opens with an existential statement, that the noun phrases ("unsuspected hairpins and inside Gaffney receptions") promise a disclosure. More closely, the fact that "hairpins" are modified by "unsuspected" and that Gaffney receptions are "inside" rather than outside indicates that normal expectations are violated by new, unforeseen events.   At the rhetorical level, then, Whalen employs a standard opening gesture, announcing an insight. Yet while he preserves the rhetoric of poetry, he fills those nominal slots with incongruous images, images just close enough to a coherent private language to pull us forward. The same effect occurs with the second line, "Who lost the 7-year itch?," where his question signals the presentation of theme but where that signal is likewise canceled or suspended, since the new material is unsupported by contextual information and operates as a kind of joke. Yet the sentence retains interrogative impact, and that impact carries us to the next phrase, the emphatic citation, "Mr. Harry Lane!", oddly set off by those quotes. The quotes in effect suspend that phrase as a response, that is, they undermine its status as an answer. In fact, the poem is characterized by such suspensions, at both grammatical and semantic levels.[16]

Combining both of these approaches, semantic and structural, we could say that these deliberately disparate phrases are held together by grammatical and prosodic cues, and that the

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[16] One clear feature of this poem is Whalen's repeated suspension of lexical items from direct semantic reference, but the suspension occurs at a grammatical level as well. For instance, notice what happens after the invocation of St. Francis. The capitals (at "St. Francis") are a structural parallel to the prior quotes and exclamation points and visually sustain his level of pitch. Grammatically, there is a parallel set up between St. Francis praying for penguins and St. Francis teaching "us." A list of nouns follows from his verb "teach," slotting five items (karmel korn, electric drill, drafty door, etc.) as—potentially—direct objects. I say potentially, because these nouns are suspended between two grammatical functions, the second being simply as a serial list of noun phrases. That is, the verb "teach" fluctuates between a one place and two place transitive. The fourth object, "fur," is transitional in that the mechanical repetition of the word produces a kind of null effect (emotionally numbing) and closes the sequence. Finally with "Jewels," you'll notice the diminished typography and the modification produced by "(fake)," having the effect of lowering the poem's "volume." The poem then closes with a tag question and answer sequence, paralleling the opening lines.

cues sustain the poem's development in lieu of a theme, for recall how use of the interrogative and the phrase "Mr. Harry Lane" propel the poem. The contrastive tensions between syntax and semantics—the phrasal incongruities—are part of what gives the poem its lyric elevation and its effectiveness as satire. But while the poem proceeds to some extent as pastiche, thumb to nose, on a second level it proposes a rhetoric almost devoid of content, one that's composed sheerly of poetic gestures, akin to a mime, for when Whalen collapses or suspends semantic function in this way, he is forced to compose the poem as an imaginative, albeit rhetorical, event. What propels the poem at one level is its novelty, the crazy leaps between phrases, and that explains why his focus is on lexical choice. At another level, however, the poem is propelled by its grammar, by its rhythm, by prosodic cues, pieces of rhetoric, or more concisely, by voice. The incongruities keep the reader's focus on emergent words, but the words are elevated by more than incongruity; they are also made prominent by the poem's underlying structure, a structure composed largely of rhetorical and emotional gestures. Further, it is the speaker's voice that gives the poem its compelling unity, and it does so by working—methodically—through a succession of displacements. To insist on decoding the poem for its "message" misses the point, because a message wouldn't explain this poem at all, and especially not as an imaginative event. The disjointed play of words and the violations of code are what intensify the work, provoke an imaginative response. Those incongruities, however, ride on an underlying gestural rhetoric, a structure which guides the mind in its motions, and it's as an imaginative event that the poem can be accurately said to "graph a mind moving."

6.

As is evident with "St. Francis Lobbies Allen G.," Whalen works at times by suspending the referential use of words, in effect leveling the text, by ignoring or disrupting normative semantic functions through a series of "dislocations." These disruptions are a regular feature of Whalen's mature work and he has related ways of manipulating syntactical and phonemic aspects of a text. As you'll see in the following poem, Whalen works at times by shifting between linguistic modes or textural levels.[17] When he shifts focus to a phonemic mode, for example, he works by recombination and extension, wherein the component sounds (and images) are recast into new words and phrases, suggesting then further configurations, extending the poem as a kind of multi-layered improvisation. As regards voice, you'll notice the poem almost devoid of propositional content, except as it relates to the speaker's mood, the emotional content. That

17 For a related account of textural levels based on Jakobson's six linguistic functions, see Finke.

emotional content is an important key to its theme and overall impact, but only as it's disclosed by voice. The poem is titled "17:III:67" and was written twelve years after the breakthrough poem.

O tell me it's only temporary
A slight pause while the operator changes
All to Corning Glass of Denmark Pennsylvania

O don't disappoint me, I hear
Pages turning Haydn
Quince blossom tits bright coral
Jack London's great blue eye

(Did you remember to bring the gin?)

Passional disease lions/   bronze German song
                "Phrase"

                wind?

Jack London lovely skin
        The changed operator.
        The temporary Danish.
        Pennsylvania coral blossom.
        Bronze alcohol.
Jack Lion glass and coral cock and balls.

Blue eye gin blond London
A glassy pause tit skin don't.
Passional winding phrase.
Palpitant quince. Blind Haydn.
Blue German dong. Gin. Phrase. Wind
        glass in Pennsylvania bronze
Lovely temporary Jack pause.

Pennsylvania operator balls quince.
Alcohol turning coral temporary.

Bright German disease blossoms.
Tell Jack: Slight bronze pages.
                         Wind me disappoint me
                           glass?
                           coral?
                           Haydn?
                                      slide back just a little bit and let me

quit it

(*Heavy Breathing* 3-4)

      I'd start my discussion by making two points about voice, for this poem provides an even better rationale for the terms "non-referential" and "multi-linear" than does "St. Francis Lobbies Allen G." Note, then, that the poem operates, as said, by suspending normative uses of reference, and that the suspension includes referential use of voice, for voice here is not anchored to a stable point of view. This shifting of perspective is paralleled by—perhaps a reflection of—the shifting emotional base. Note secondly, then, the fluctuations in tone as Whalen moves, for instance, from the opening supplications to his claim to hear "Pages turning Haydn," and the intrusive second person "you" (1 8). Obviously these lines are said with great irony, as with the parenthetical "Did you remember to bring the gin?" where shifts in tone and reference directly undercut the supplications. But the poem then shifts again, this time at a grammatical level, when Whalen restructures the sentence into assemblages of noun phrases. My point is that the poem ranges in tone, from the high-pitched opening plaint and parenthetical aside (conspicuously lower in tone), to the more transparent voice, speaking at the level of the noun phrase ("The changed operator./ The temporary Danish."), on to the wry sometimes ribald overtones, and the final self-reflexive close, signaled by the rising tone in the interrogatives. I make this point because such changes in tone provide evidence—at the least—that Whalen's use of voice is methodical. Likewise conspicuous here is his use of musical phrasing, as when the propositions break into component parts, then are rephrased, suggesting a formal element at play. His use of voice, then, is various in its operation, flexible in its turns and twists, non-referential in relation to an authorial stance, and, as will be discussed, multi-linear in its deployment.

In exegetical terms, the poem is almost devoid of statement, yet some kind of thematic development occurs, if only in terms of the speaker's supposed confusion. The poem opens with an invocation, addressed to the reader by default, and the opening lines provide thematic conflict, with the pronoun "it" referring to a bad situation of the metaphysical kind, one parallel to the "slight pause" in line two, a situation supposedly causing panic. The speaker appeals for reassurance that his difficulty will pass, as if a technical problem the operator could fix, connecting us to the right place, at the right time, although that place is conspicuously an imaginative construct. For while there's a Corning Glass, originating from Corning, New York, to my knowledge there is no "Denmark Pennsylvania" (such an "enjambment" perhaps indicative of his panic). This bad situation occurs in explicit contrast to hearing "Pages turning Haydn / Quince blossom tits bright coral / Jack London's great blue eye" all of which are positive in nature and evoke a contrastive interior state, such that this idealization could also be said to work at a thematic level. Moreover, binary patterning operates throughout the poem, where we see such odd pairings at the close as "disease blossoms" and "slight bronze," both of which bespeak a kind of resolution Also conspicuous are the sexual references (tits, cock and balls, lovely skin, dong, palpitation and passion) which perhaps function as icons of desire and satisfaction, paralleling the thematic expectations established in the opening lines. Movement in the poem is clearly principled, then, and the progression thematic.

The poem has a formal level of development as well, for while it doesn't exactly resemble a sestina, in its recombinations, the poem does obey the four part movement of a sonata, a form Haydn excelled in. The first section through to "wind?" establishes the exposition and states Whalen's theme. From that statement, the poet works down through three other movements. The poem's most pronounced sense of progress occurs in the third section, beginning "Blue eye gin blond London," with all its tight rimes and phrasal rotations. Importantly, this third section enacts a struggle to turn the speaker's problem over by extending the semantic and melodic play of the poem. As mentioned above, the poem also operates by a series of phonemic displacements, for instance when "Jack London" becomes "Jack Lion" with the "l-o-n-d" of "London" reemerging in "blond," a sound perhaps suggested by the prior "bronze." This process is augmented by the semantic associations, for the poet recombines associational clusters, for instance, the association of Haydn with blue-eyed blond Germans and the fact that he lived in London, which in turn "rimes" with Jack London's "great blue eye." This phonemic and semantic play—the recombinations—brings up one further point, for when the speaker cites evidence of the changes he hopes are in store, he states that he *hears* several things, but only one of those items is potentially aural, the "Pages turning Haydn." The others are images. The point is that the agrammatical or collapsed line at this point allows Whalen to switch strategies from images to an

auditory mode, with the focus more closely on phonemic contrasts. That is to say, an impasse is discussed at the level of content, but then a procedural shift occurs; the focus switches to the structural possibilities of sound. Clearly, then, the poem is structured at several levels. I see this overt use of textural levels as part of Whalen's dimensional use of voice.

To put these strands together and speak explicitly to thematic concerns, the plot involves a metaphysical phone call and a metaphysical sense of disconnection, which the poem enacts. The disconnection is deepened by use of "I hear" in line four, which invokes the Marvellian "Time's winged chariot" and Eliot's Sweeney. The poem then shifts to the interior, and the sentence structure crumbles into noun phrases. The allusions, of course, are related to the notion of temporary change and to the figures of Haydn and London. But in fact, time itself becomes thematic inasmuch as our temporary confusion and scrambled grammar are something we play our way out of, transform by way of the aural and imagistic recombinations, much like a music, wherein Denmark becomes Danish (doubling as food and as a nationality) and temporary confusion transforms into "Lovely temporary Jack pause." As noted above, the recombinations do produce a sense of thematic balance; "blossom" balances with "disease" and "slight" balances with "bronze." But as we know from the ironic tone, the situation is not really resolved; this will not be a slight pause while we get redirected; we're in this for life.

This reading is supported by another key factor, for while the poem's progress toward resolution may be a principled, the speaker's conclusion is merely to "quit it" once the auditory and visual elements have been reordered and the interrogatives begin to appear. The most obvious theme in the poem—his alleged despair and confusion—operates as pastiche, then. But reading the poem as pastiche doesn't do it justice; the ironies here are largely self-directed and apparently related to the self-instruction to "slide back" at the close, which in effect enacts sliding back. What Whalen quits by sliding back is of course the poem, but that is to say, this self-directed commentary is also a signal of sorts and indicates yet another level of play. That level of play involves the dual role Whalen occupies as both speaker and auditor.[18] More narrowly, the comment to "slide back" is evidence of an internal dialogue in the poem taking place between the two roles Whalen occupies, as part of a larger conversation between speaker and author, for the poem importantly operates as a self-parody, and it is particularly effective at this level because of the distance Whalen develops between his roles as author and as lyric subject.[19] That larger

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[18] Scalapino makes a similar point: "The poetry is ventriloquism which by being sensitive self scrutiny of himself is actual conversation" (1999, xviii).

[19] For anyone interested, I have a companion essay which also discusses the play between these two roles in Whalen's verse, forthcoming.

conversation between roles is also part of my argument, for it is an important component of Whalen's dimensional use of voice, all the more so because it's an aspect of Whalen's methodology. Overall, then, the poem exemplifies my statement about Whalen's multi-linear, nonreferential uses of voice and provides a good example of his move beyond a statement-based poetics. While the poem has an obvious linear sequence, it's dynamic is better explained in terms of a grid, in that both horizontal and vertical motions (as well as reverse sequences) are made possible. Moreover, I think the poem remarkable for its multiple modes of progress, its shifting use of tone, its varying levels of play, and its combined use of disparity and formal patterning.

7.

Moving towards a conclusion, I'd like to discuss tone as an aspect of voice in Whalen's poetry by using one final poem. I. A. Richard's speaks of tone as both an attitude towards the listener and a recognition of relations between the speaker and addressee (175, 197-8). Reuben Brower formalizes that relationship, defining tone first as "the implied social relationship of the speaker to his audience," and second as "the manner he adopts in addressing his auditor" (1, 22; see also Halliday on 'tenor,' 144 and *passim*). One can think of other possibilities, but this notion of tone, as indicative of relations between the speaker (or writer) and an addressee, fits well with Benvensite's distinction between the speaking subject and the subject of speech, including as it does an additional subject position occupied by "you" (224). And as narrative theory makes clear, a text not only involves distinctions like implied and actual author, a text also situates the reader, creates subject positions for those addressed, on at least two levels: within the text (the addressee) and by the text itself (the readers) (Roberts 2; Perry 59). Thus defined, tone provides us with a way to speak of a relationship between implied author and implied reader as a linguistic construction, as well as of the more obvious relationship between speaker and addressee.

To start with, it's clear that certain features in the tenor of Whalen's poetry can be characterized as having a sense of inclusiveness and candor—as an attitude towards experience— inasmuch as Whalen incorporates everyday cognitive processes as part of the text and doesn't set up an heroic persona. These aren't literary values per se, but the descriptors do relate to the lack of positioning in the text and to shifting points of view. This sense of inclusiveness is also built into the texts by acts of flexibility and contingency and by the open sense of progression, the acts of innovation. Broadly speaking, the work is playful, the tone often comic and casual, and those factors, combined with the above, lead to a sense of intimacy. A focus on present tense, the actual time of writing, lends to that intimacy, as opposed say to constructions of narrative distance. Sensual details and ease of access further add to what might be termed a "generosity," so

that one could speak of the overall warmth of Whalen's work, or of a generosity of spirit which approaches thematic levels, although again, there is a welcome distinction between literary value and personal virtue. That said, another element in establishing tone in Whalen's work, one related to this sense of immediacy and intimacy, resides in the way Whalen situates the implied reader, and this relationship can be approached by (coincidentally) focusing on Whalen's use of the second person, the addressee. Whalen uses the second person in a variety of ways, for instance when addressing a muse figure or in acts of self-admonition. He also uses the pronoun as a means to focus on the constructed self, the subject in the writing, addressing himself as "you." But as often he uses "you" to address an implied reader.

With the following poem, I'd like to show how both tone and voice become critical to an interpretation of Whalen's work, as well as how that intimacy and generosity play out at a thematic level. Consider then "How To Be Successful & Happy Without Anybody Else Finding Out About It."

> I was falling asleep in my chair
> Now I lie on the floor, ruminating ideas of life's brevity
> The feeble intensity of enormous ambition
> Hasleton Brasler said he'd be over
> He had to pick up his car and take a haircut
> You understand what I'm talking about . . .
>   "including the power tools"
> There's no excuse for an imitation of Billie Holiday.
>
> Think of grass, a half acre of weeds, lawn, eucalyptus trees
> Pink lilies on leafless thick red stems, all in a row
> Appearing "spontaneously" (not from a regular bed or trench
> Of specially cultivated earth. You remember what I'm talking
> About, you've been there, but maybe not in lily season)
>
> A freezing cold morning, throat and sinuses "burning"
> Hasleton Brasler was uncertain: Thursday or Saturday.
> He didn't want tea or whiskey. He had forgotten why he
>   wanted to see me.

My sleep wrecked with difficult dreams,
Managing crowds of friends, trying to organize them
Interrupted (wakened) by scene with (who?) again
Persuade, explain, hopeless
The lilies shove right up out of the grass
Where one expects flat ground, these big
Vegetable telephone rockets, their irregular line
Fat rutabaga bulbs clearing the surface of the ground
Swelling and subdividing

Probably listening to Hasleton Brasler last night
Trying to come up with helpful suggestions for "coping" with
   his difficulties.
With so little rain the lilies will be late this year.
Why don't I go home to Oregon?
Seventy or eighty feet of "naked ladies" all in a row: Amaryllis

   "... brought the apples you wanted ...
         ... more tomorrow," Theocritus says.
                                                    6:IX:74
                          (*Heavy Breathing* 160-1; *Overtime* 261-2)

The opening lines border on cliché, and the poem offers easy access, to a point. It proceeds by sweeping back and forth between an obscure interior state and a likewise indistinct household situation, the speaker sounding much like someone half-asleep. The mood is decidedly comic, even though that mood dissipates towards the close, and the tone overall is casual. That said, the speaker's tone also conveys a beguiling sense of intimacy, one which troubles an easy reading. And while the poet presents us with the comic figure of an almost incoherent poet half-asleep ("ruminating ideas"), on the other hand there is a level of craft here which undermines that image. The speaker moreover assumes an intimacy which is far from straightforward, and I think we're now at some distance from notions of "graphing" the mind. That is, the poem feels intimate, and the tone overall warm and humorous, but we're simultaneously being kept at arm's length, and there is a level of ambiguity that is almost palpable.

   As said above, I want to discuss how readers are situated by this poem, but first I'd like to open it up thematically. The title states two topics, the first of which is about achieving success

and happiness, and that topic develops by posing congested city life against an image of lilies, as in the Biblical injunction: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin." One obvious implication is that we can achieve happiness in a rural setting, and, as the title suggests, nobody will steal it from us there, an event which apparently happened to the city-bound author as a consequence of helping his friend, Hasleton. On a second level, however, the title is a joke, playing off the How-To genre of best-selling books. So on that level, there is an ironic distance posited, and the suggestive link between spontaneous lilies and happiness is thwarted, for the poem idealizes an image it likewise undercuts, reminiscent of "17:III:67." The ambiguity can be further specified by the second topic in the title, posing as it does a binary of private versus public, i.e. "without anybody else finding out about it." This locates the poem between the public and private, which is where the second person "you" comes in, much like the comical figure of Hasleton. That is, the poem proposes *other people* as an obstacle to happiness, hence the pastoral close, yet the speaker offers his secret to us in a How To Succeed format, and tells us his dreams are wrecked by the attempt to *manage* others, tell them what to do, a hopeless project. That is to say, the speaker implicates his own involvement in his distress as he is drawn back and forth between the private and public, I and other. Moreover, when this speaker pulls close in those disarming asides (ll 6, 12-13), he grants us a noticeably false sense of intimacy.

This level of ambiguity (e.g. between I and other) attains the status of a motif for me, one related to voice and tone. In that opening stanza, for instance, we're given comical images of ineptitude, but as well indications of an underlying tension. The ineptitude is obvious enough. The speaker drops to the floor to ruminate "ideas of life's brevity," as in "to muse," but with the unmistakable sense of "chewing the cud," a reading reinforced by the later imperative to "think of grass" and the bucolic close. Whalen's acts of lyric deflation, falling asleep in the chair, ruminating like a cow, invoking the cliché of life's brevity, are both funny and charming—not the material of heroic verse. To "muse" on life's "brevity," however, yokes two contrary senses of time, and a similar opposition occurs in modifying "intensity" with "feeble," meaning lacking in intensity, especially when linked to enormous ambition (ambitions impossible to fulfill given life's brevity). To be sure, that's comical, but it's also part of the tension. A shift occurs with mention of Hasleton's visit, but it's an unobtrusive one, an act of ruminating. And that's where the reader comes in, for then the poet turns to address us—a particularly rich moment—and grants us the status of being intimates: "You understand what I'm talking about." That is, we're identified with the speaker *by* the speaker at this point, pulled into an authorial circle, wherein we become knowledgeable insiders. But the gesture is also something of a joke, because the author knows that we don't know what the speaker's talking about. And there's more, for one way to read this line is as reflecting back on the character of the speaker, for example, as someone presenting us

with a false sense of acquaintance, maybe someone half-asleep, not fully focused, or—more promising, given the level of uncertainty here—perhaps as someone who needs to reassure himself, someone insecure, a characteristic reminiscent of the speaker in "17:III:67." The aside is followed by a suggestive ellipsis, then the line "including the power tools" (in quotes), perhaps a sleepy moment that has something to do with Hasleton's visit. But even that reading is troubled by the abrupt turn downward in the stanza's last line, "There's no excuse for an imitation of Billie Holiday," where the tension is most evident. That judgment is one we supposedly share, linked as it is to the topic, but the tragic figure of Billie Holiday is never decoded and we're never quite told what situation that judgment refers to. Moreover, this comment is given additional prominence as a pivot, for the next stanza operates as an exemplification. The consequence is that, if we don't know what he's talking about now, we can't fully know what he's about to exemplify, and the text later reinforces that uncertainty. This "unreliability," if you will, is clearly part of the tone and so part of the relationship with the reader.

　　　　The ambiguity is of course deliberate. We're kept at the surface the same way we were in "St. Francis Lobbies Allen G." We might simply stay on that surface, supposing the poem asks us to do that, for the casual tone and ambiguity seem linked to ambition and its antithesis. But as obviously, there is thematic progression here, and this progression contributes to how the reader is positioned. Further, I don't see this speaker as *representing* Whalen. The implied author and speaker are distinct, even though given as the same. Let me restate the problem: We don't know who Hasleton Brasler is, we don't know why Billie Holiday is invoked (we only know we can't imitate her), and we don't exactly know what topic the speaker is referring to, a situation which would be mildly embarrassing in a social setting. Because the speaker suspects we're unclear about his topic, the imperative to "Think of grass" provides an exemplifying instance. The most likely referent is "the feeble intensity of enormous ambition," such that the sudden appearance of lilies stands in contrast to his own failure to succeed (recall the "How To" title). That's one plausible way to recover the topic. But that's instantly troubled by his second use of the same intimate gesture, which telescopes: "You remember what I'm talking / About, you've been there, but maybe not in lily season." For this second invocation (of our insider status) assumes more than just an ability to infer the speaker's topic; it assumes familiarity, shared experience, even our complicity. And I think what we experience here is a kind of dialogic role reversal, wherein "I" switches position with "you." I'll explain in a moment. What I'd propose now is that this "joke"—composed as it is of a false statement—is an importantly empty or transparent gesture, contributing to the poem in three ways, most obviously to our sense of the speaker's character. That is, we take it as reflecting back on an underlying context, as revealing something important about the speaker, say his insecurity. But secondly, it contributes to our role

as readers, for while the gesture portends to be an inclusive act, pulling us into the poem (likewise allowing the speaker into our confidence), its effect is exactly the opposite, holding us at arm's length and arousing our suspicion, the distance I mentioned, for we really *don't know* these lilies and obviously have never been "there." That said, the assumption that we do know the lilies was never really made by the implied author, and we also know that he knows better, hence there is an inside joke between implied author and implied reader. Consequently, there is textual layering between the implied author and the lyric subject, creating a hiatus between the two. Further, by a subtle reversal, the ignorance (of lilies) by which we now come to see through the speaker to the implied author also allows us a real insider's view, although decidedly not the view proposed by the speaker. Rather, the reader is now invited to view the speaker from behind the ears, so to speak, the way that the implied author sees the speaker, the speaker which is himself (much like what occurs when someone is making fun of themselves, and indeed there is an important element of self-parody here). To that extent the speaker which is "I" becomes "other," and we share that speaker with the author as our subject, inhabit that voice both as another's voice and as our own. This is, I submit, a very rich sense of intimacy.

As I mentioned above, I see in this recognition an identity or dialogic role reversal between "I" and "you," one which occurs by proxy in the following stanzas. The image in the second stanza of lilies rising "spontaneously" from earth, exemplary of strength, contrasts with the confusion in the third stanza, where we lose—as does the speaker himself—all certainty about whether or not Hasleton will visit. The uncertainty is endemic; it's not only the speaker's, it's Hasleton's and it's ours; and it links back to the uncertainty we have about just what it is the speaker thinks that we should know, for clearly we're being deliberately confused. The poem's external focus becomes more and more opaque with stanza three, and we reach a climax in stanza four, where the speaker's dream suggests a parallel between "the feeble intensity of enormous ambition" and the topic of trying to manage your friends, "Persuade, explain, hopeless." (This ineffectiveness is similar to how ineffective he's been at reassuring us.) Managing friends then is parallel to cultivation and control; the lilies are not cultivated lilies. The image of lilies recurs as a contrast, for they burst out "Vegetable telephone rockets," the rutabagas "Swelling and subdividing." This contrast confirms that the initial topic was in fact "the feeble intensity of enormous ambition," and, although his ambition is unspecified and parodied, it further allows us to state one theme as involving strength and weakness, or more explicitly, a truncated sense of direction, growth, purpose.

This theme of growth and purpose helps with the conclusion, where four different stitches of thought weave together: the speaker's reference to actual lilies (versus imaginary), perhaps coming out in the spring (it's now winter); the plaintive unanswered question about why

he doesn't go home to Oregon (as opposed to San Francisco where he now lives); that vivid memory of a row of lilies or amaryllis somewhere; and, finally, with the name "Amaryllis," the shepherdess from the *Idylls*, an imaginary quote from Theocritus, who not only left a message of his visit, but who delivered apples as well (in contrast to Hasleton) and who promises more apples tomorrow. This idealized, pastoral close, then, while pointing back to the oppositions of wild and irregular versus straight and tame, adds several other contrasts, such as that of current city life with a country home in Oregon (where the poet was raised), hence reference to apples and the visitation from Theocritus. I've already mentioned that, although the poem opens on a comical note, there is an underlying tension, which is perhaps why it closes in this wistful way. Despite the appealing lilies, the speaker won't go home to Oregon, and to that extent, the indecisiveness of Hasleton, as comical as it is, becomes a figure for the speaker. But that speaker in turn figures for the reader, for recall that there is a dialogic role reversal which occurs when the implied author shares that speaker as a subject, I as other, with the reader. Consequently, when laughing at Hasleton or at the speaker, we're in fact laughing at ourselves, for they become vehicles by which to laugh at our own ineptitude. I think that's part of the intimacy and part of the largesse of tone, part of the voice in Whalen's poems, and I think that's part of the message.

8.

I opened my discussion by citing the speed, range and flexibility of Whalen's work and have argued that these attributes are related to his nonreferential, multi-linear uses of voice, traceable in his development beyond a Modernist subject/object paradigm. I suggested that this use of voice was achieved in several ways, for example, by undercutting the speaker's credibility, or by juxtaposition, freeing the speaker from rhetorical connectives, but importantly also by widening the dimension between the implied author and the lyric subject, establishing a self-reflective distance that allows Whalen freedom beyond a statement-based poetic. That is to say, when Whalen gives voice other than propositional functions (e.g. reference back to the author), it's more conspicuously methodical, a means of constructing the poem, as well as a site for innovation. Whalen's emphasis on innovation, as with others of his generation, typically locates the self-reflective act of composition in present tense. Because Whalen's use of voice is deliberately innovative, one function of the poetry—one thinks here of Ginsberg and Kerouac as well—is to *hear that voice,* often in the act of composition, often improvising. Consequently, that use of voice, that split between author and speaker, I as other, approaches thematic levels and becomes emblematic. As we've seen, tone likewise can have such dimensional effects, inasmuch as it can specify relations between the implied author and implied reader. While "How To Be Successful

& Happy" is an obvious instance of the way Whalen deflates the lyric subject, the poem has the added dimension of situating the reader intimately inside the text, even as part of the construction of the text. In more general terms, then, when Whalen suspends the speaker's voice from referential status (back to the author) it becomes, to an extent, emblematic of the self as other, and to that extent a shared voice, one largely inventive in nature, at times the voice of possibility itself. That is how "we" get situated.

Earlier I said I'd return to Whalen's conflation of "I" and "it" in his statement about how he discovered that a poem "could be what I was going to be or what it was going to be itself, and it started making itself . . ." (Allen 1972, 22-3). I'd like to relate that comment to his use of "takes," and as I also said, "takes" are interspersed throughout poems in the Fifties as moments of connection or insight. When such connection is made, generally something larger emerges. In a 1972 interview with Aram Saroyan, Whalen discussed a moment of what he termed "absolute connection" between himself, a rescued horse swimming beside his raft at night and the surrounding mountains as a "kind of satori" or "big take." When Saroyan changed the topic, however, Whalen interrupted him to talk about being a poet:

> I think you really have to be into some—capable of some funny—what Timothy Leary or somebody calls "trans-personative" conditions or states—you have to get out of yourself, some way or another, to get in, to operate, as a poet, or a painter, or a musician. (Allen 1972, 45)

On further questioning, Whalen spoke of the trans-personative as "a state of freedom actually, of being untied from all of your usual paranoias . . . that you can suddenly move, or decide, or see something . . ." (46). This freedom can obviously be related to the flexibility I've mentioned and to his stated concern with the mind constructing the poem. In terms of Whalen's trajectory, his "takes" were initially treated as subject matter, something to graph, but over time, "takes" became transpersonal moments. In *The Diamond Noodle*, for instance, the poet encounters an event relating to his thoughts in surprising ways and so he posits that one is liberated from the ego by these alignments or "takes." In contrast, in this later statement (above), liberation from ego doesn't require an outside correspondence; it requires a capacity to get outside oneself. Recall also that one of Whalen's key insights was to follow the poem. The conflation between the "it" and the "I," cited in the 1971 interview, speaks to an identity between the poem and poet, one made especially interesting by the fact that the poem is not understood as an expressive artifact. The poem has an agency that takes one out of ordinary states of mind into trans-personative states, transforming self in that act of following the poem. Consequently, the writing is not

simply self-expression, nor a recording process, but more like a way to eclipse the ego or "ordinary mind," to adopt Zen terminology. When Whalen speaks to that process in his preface to *Decompressions* in 1978, he explains that "the poem is going to precede the thinking; it is going to think itself, in addition to ripping the poet out of his head . . . ." As he goes on to explain, mind is both the source of the words and "the pattern of their intensities" (vii-viii).[20] Mind is not ego; ego is a construct, habitual modes of thought, something to be left behind.

In a related way, Gabriele Schwab in *Subjects Without Selves* argues for a "transitional space" between the "I" and "Not-I," between self and other, inner and outer reality, a space whose boundaries can be shaped and reshaped by aesthetic experience. She postulates that "transgression of the boundaries between I and Not-I or self and Other is already part of the process of literary production" (38) and talks of Virginia Woolf as using "her own speech to give voice to imaginary characters or utterances, thus derealizing herself in an 'alien speech' that is nevertheless her own" (38). Schwab further speaks of "transitional texts" which propose "alternative notions of order," one aspect of which is a shift from "linear to multidimensional" forms of writing (245). The case has been made here that, in Whalen's poetry, the lyric subject functions in precisely this way. Recall that poetry for Whalen is a force one participates in, a force that has the capacity to take one outside of the ego, into the Not-I. This "trans-personative" event involves widening the hiatus between the implied author and the lyric voice, hearing that voice as Not-I.[21]

Schwab further writes that "Just as the author of poetic language derealizes him or herself in order to speak voices that are neither wholly I nor Not-I, so the reader, too, has to temporarily suspend his or her own boundaries during the reception process in order to slip into the imaginary world made of alien thoughts, voices, and characters" (40-1). That is exactly what occurs, I've argued, in the poem "How To Be Successful & Happy Without Anybody Else Finding Out About It," where a dialogic role reversal takes place between speaker and reader. At a practical level, this doubling effect (between implied author and lyric subject) allows Whalen to widen his range of options, his ideas, attitudes and emotions, all of which are understood as artifacts, as elements that emerge between I and Not-I. This widening domain in turn allows his readers to

[20] It's worthwhile citing this entire section. Whalen writes that "the poem is going to precede the thinking; it is going to think itself, in addition to ripping the poet out of his head—think of light wave/particle/bundles being slowly emitted in a pattern from the surface of somebody's face and traveling very slowly through space to mingle with the chemicals of a photographic film and slowly change them so that they in their turn remember the pattern and can reproduce it whenever called upon. Those wave/particle/bundles and their combinations are words for a poet and his mind is at once their source and the pattern of their intensities" (*Decompressions* vii-viii).

[21] Whalen speaks of this voice when he talks of how some poems are "'heard,' quite as if I were hearing a real voice speaking the words," in his statement "'Goldberry Is Waiting'; or, P.W., His Magical Education as a Poet" in Allen and Tallman (1973, 456-7).

experience that range as a measure of their own freedom, conspicuously freedom from one's thoughts, as with the Buddhist notion of non-attachment. Further, I suspect that this moment becomes "trans-personative" when flexibility of thought is given priority over propositional coherence and when attention to thinking processes has priority over the content of thought, when, in fact, attention to thinking processes has priority over representational acts; for one aspect of Whalen's general practice is that the author is not trying to ground the mind's processes in outside events or locations—even though particularized—or in statements about reality, nor even trying to ground the mind in its own productions, in thoughts which represent mind. Said a different way, there is nothing here that reflects back as a representation of self or world, yet there's nothing also that doesn't reflect back. Those thinking processes, then, taken as a world body (to use Whalen's earlier phrasing), are what the poet "graphs" or follows as the given or ground of the actual. But the actual is neither I nor Not-I, neither subject not object, unity nor disparity; the actual incorporates and is beyond both. I is not I. Obviously, this sense of identity/nonidentity gives Whalen greater range and direction, gives his poetry what I've termed its multi-linear effects, room to innovate. Beyond even that, however, Whalen's real trademark is movement, rapidity, the achievement of wings, if you will, and I believe that to be the measure of his freedom.

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