

Postmodernism: Poetic Chaos and Self-Fulfillment in Philip Whalen's Selected Works

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Abstract

Through an overlook of postmodern American literature, it becomes clear that the most prominent feature of the era is to change the literary view of works, and poetry was the first to be tackled differently during postmodernism. Postmodern poetry is known for breaking verse in order to speak in the speech of the American idioms which Philip Whalen mastered after a long time of experiment and revision. The poet set himself on the task to break the barriers between readers and their being via fragmented language. He benefited from his experience in traditional forms of verse when he was working with high school's literary magazines. Hence, the current paper claims that this poetic chaos is deliberate to imitate a rather new society, totally inclusive in opinions and perspectives.

Key words: American Postmodernism, Postmodern American poetry, Philip Whalen.

Philip Whalen was born in 1923 in Portland, Oregon, and begun his poetic career at the age of sixteen. The poet was, at that point, following the same career as the double life of the poet William Carols who followed a poetic education by his medical practice. Whalen's drafting into the American Army in 1943 allowed him to take training in radio operation and maintenance; a chance that offered him enough time and money to read and write. His experience was widened, particularly with Asian literature and philosophy. These steps helped him to expand the use of notebooks into which he squeezed his impressions and experiences with the first seeds of poetry. (1)

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Another experience, Whalen had, was his drafting into the West Coast. There, he stayed with some friends and supported himself with different sorts of jobs. The solitude he enjoyed offered him enough time to motivate for writing. Shortly after that, he travelled to San Francisco, where he became among the poets, who had the opportunity to read at the historic Six Gallery, holding an acceptable poetic notice and acceptance. Then, the poet was motivated and encouraged to write poetry for more than one year. The company with friends turned into that of literary scholars who left Whalen hung out with more poetic experiences. They read each other's works and were highly interested in mutual opinions. After that, Whalen launched his way ahead to compose twenty collections of verse, two novels, and a number of autobiographical literary journals.(2)

The majority of his poetic work is concerned with the use of image and various subject-matters. In his earlier writings, he tried to diverse the surrounding events throughout time and space, holding this as a future strategy for his poetic career. The language he used is very fresh and active, allowing him to establish eloquent phrases and wordings. Thematically speaking, Whalen tried to set the individual's mind alert to the rising changings of the post-war era. He explores the "speed of thought itself as it races through its labyrinth of channels". (3)

Whalen tried much to incorporate mind, nature and biology to follow the example of certain literary figures such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. His purpose was to voice out the American literature with the rising spirit of postmodern era. He even expressed keenness to Asian traditions, riding himself from the reckless life of the past. There is, the poet believes, a way of living in the new America without having money or being rich. This attitude is well viewed in his poems where he found welfare and happiness in his life work, without the need for publicity. He kept on noting that the world he imagined in the past was deceptive. Thus, Whalen's poetry is considered intelligent and funny at the same time, divulging what was hidden for years, and producing his higher inner powers. (4)

Whalen's *Crowded by Beauty*, a narrative biographical work, illustrates the position of the poet's literary career during the American postmodern era. The poet, here, recurs his conception of "the graph of the mind" throughout what he remembers at present to sum up with intentional attentiveness and glorification. He becomes an artist who gathers the sense of musing and amusement to be involved in the world of lyricism and the world of people at the end of the day. Poetry for him turns into a bright and brilliant

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expression of personal awareness. In his poem "Scenes from Life at the Capital"(1970), written during his stay at Kyoto, the poet's concept of the movable mind becomes clearer:

"Whalen's poetry is phenomenological rather than visionary- it's not about something - rather, the writing is the mind's operations, not image-based, but sound schemes, frequently the leaps and omissions of conversational exchange whose space and processes are active mind phenomena- the mind creating self, the inside and outside together". (5)

It is clear that Whalen's poetry points the importance of language to achieve this graph (a moving picture of incidents) in a loose and open form of verse that was unique among his past and present likes in poetry.

In light of his intention to devote himself to his poetics and hold them in favor of self-fulfillment, Whalen created poetry due to his own perceptive surrounding world, and his intelligence in grasping and capturing meaning, even if the subjects are unimportant. His poetic vision is considered unique, having the power to "espouse the religious principles without renouncing the world around him" (6). He mixes the delights of his home country life with that poetic rumination in such ways as to convince readers to the necessity of joining the flesh and spirit to achieve one's life fulfillment.

Whalen composed his poems in notebooks, including some color drawings and maps. These drawings are form a different space, and could be involved within the text of the poem as a translation of it or rather related to. These "doodles" with the text may have different levels of perception. The possibilities, which are considered as reading orders, are open and free, both in form and content. These drawings form a space that cannot be translated, but suppressed from the hand drawn text, which yet keeps being a shadow in the text. The poet believes that such a process of color insertions indicate no originality or privilege of one view over another. (7)

Whalen wrote a non-hierarchal poetic structure to let activities occur everywhere in each line, on one hand, and in the relation between two lines, on the other. His text brought outside and inside incidents together and at an immediate occurrence. This structure revels its difficulties and implications, but incorporates, at the same time, an imprint of it throughout the poem. The poet's structure is non-hierarchal in the sense that all actions, narrations and principles become authoritarian. The actions of Whalen's texts seemed to be everywhere, not only operating by the conversation, but also operating on "the activity of reading in the same way as the author writes down. By undergoing the same mind movements" in accordance with what the poet

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does, the reader is situated on same level in the text as a participant other than a reader. (8) The poet brings readers closely to the events of his poems until they become part of the story in terms of themes and personal issues.

The structure, Whalen used, views reading as a means of constructing history that occurs by oneself, and that the reader occurs outside of oneself. It also implies that the use of such constructs creates another history; the poet stresses that he wouldn't write for the sake of teaching or performing, rather, he writes for delightedness and curiosity. Whalen views that if there is no delightedness, there will be no reason to write a poem. His poems are full of playfulness, and appears as excursions in history. (9)

In this way, the reader can no longer be separated from his new present, namely the postmodern era. Such picturing, "in the conceptual space of poetry", can also work on dissolving social structuring. Whalen made use of this new rising spirit, opening for him a possibility of freedom from an academic notion of poetry. He realizes that a process of remaking can take place in verse lines and sound structures of language itself. It is through breaking down the cultural traditions, language can bear as physically as mind phenomena itself. Such freedom is applied to the mind itself and its movement in the concrete sense of the word. (10)

Along with the above, Whalen perceived writing process as merely writing, and poetic mediation as merely mediation. The poet held the fact that language is always ordering, but doesn't depend on any device to create entity. Language within this context plays its natural and ordinary role as language without modifications. For example, if the topic of writing is only a disjunctive present, writing becomes merely a re-production of that topic and division from it. Whalen uses language to make humans outside what language is, "let alone its conventional usage". His poetry depends on the daily common use (the pragmatic use of language) as parts of speech, thought, and fantasy. He celebrates this type of use as the process of language itself. (11)

Whalen's poems imitate mind phenomena "akin to speaking to others-to him". He writes in a way that seems to resemble his own imitation, syntax, and vocabulary and conversation. The poet also believes that "speaking is also akin to one speaking to oneself as if rehearsing and making-up senses that create the future and past". However, such traits in writing have existence in reading and speaking. He writes as he reads, meaning that an act goes inside one's mind process to bring up a transformative reading by the mingling of the outside and the inside. The poet describes the above result as

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a "continuous fabric", precisely as these "lines-continuous within a time-limit to move smoothly past the readers' eyes, across his brain: the moving sheet has shaped holes in it". (12)

The language the poet uses breaks the illusion of causation to show the relationship between the inside and the outside, holding their separation broken down. Causation and illusion would create a comparison of all times, producing them into one throughout a poem. However, the poet keeps "each historical time and reference as distinct, dropping the consecutive steps of mind to form connections and simulations". Such a concept of time and space inside the text creates a series of leaps that are not subjects, connections, or even sensations. (13)

Whalen believed in the importance of space liberty, holding that his texts broach "the possibility of being free-fall, and not bound by pre-boundaries of ordering and sound comparison of narrative assurance". That is to say, poems are not bound or determined by sound scheme to bring up cohesion. The poet does not manufacture resonance or means of applying unification as if a force from the outside. The text is permitted to move as a waterfall, the poem would be attentive by virtue of its working. Whalen's poems are considered as a mind experiment which conceptualizes "all supposition, perception and phenomena as having no occurrence" except that forced by the mind as its own content:" What are doing right this minute? What shall you do one second from now? Feather spins as it falls, even if you did it better, who would care?" Whalen proposes that all orders, constructs and fabrics could be dropped. For that he was the first to suggest that stream of free-fall of wordings as labels, and that language is a way to investigate through. (14)

In his "The Martyrdom of Two Pagans", Whalen compares ancient religions to blame the organized Christianity, arguing for the sacredness of "plant, animal, human, and good realms". The poem makes use of allusion, and the poet writes his lines to confect Greek myth with biblical quotation: "All rights, until the perfumes of Arabia", "Grow cold, Ah! Sunflower seeds!"(L.1 17-18) Part of this meaning is clear enough when the poem processes and moves. Lines are moving quickly through rhyme and sound schemes, ending in a ditty:

Love is better than hate,
Love is better than hate
Love is better than hate
For we took our shoes off

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As we fell. (LI.31-35)

In the above poem, the poet tries to reverse the mixture to sketch themes with sudden talk and nursery rhyme-scheme. (15) The repetitions here is deliberate to serve the poets sense of incorporation to all types of talk and individuality.

Whalen's poem "If You are So Smart, Why Ain't You Rich" views the outside relation to religion, depending on the basis that religion is the source of spiritual practice. The poet would slow down the rhythm of the poem to stress that: "the effect of this, taken internally, the effect of beauty on the mind". The poet sees that the break of lines and their situation throughout the text is created via direct address and pure imagery. In this sense, the poem's title is significant, for the poet uses common language to indicate the use of direct wordings. However, the external body of the poem lies in proceeds of formal language, depending on the act of perceiving urgent bids to situate himself, especially his mind, amid the flux of thought and external experience. (16)

Thus, in the above poem, Whalen seems to be breakthrough; he lets a speaker to express a sublime beauty, which is far-reached to objects and surroundings rather, living outside the universe. The poet seeks to philosophize and establish a comic tone through the opening, and this tone reflects back on the speaker:

I need everything else
Anything else desperately
But I have nothing
Shall have nothing
But this Immediate,
inescapable and invaluable
No one can afford (LI.1-7)

The poem, thus, opens with paradoxical statements, which the speaker aims at resolving. The poet develops a fallible speaker, not fully in control and forceless to resolve such a paradox. For example, the speaker asserts that he needs "everything else", to re-assert at the same time "no one can afford this". Solving this problem, the poet resolves to detach himself from the immediate surroundings. However, the speaker cannot run away from his present presence; he speaks in poverty, and readers know about his needs to concentrate on something inescapable. The poem is, hence, playful in the sense that the poet cannot afford the reverse of his case. Such uses of language contribute to the overall tone of the poem. The paradoxes used in

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the opening indicate that the speaker understands his current situation rather than he should live in. it becomes clear that "the speaker's "mind" is said to spontaneously locate an experience of value independent of the speaker being uncontrollable". The poem establishes a "fallible voice" distinct from what the poet likes to create via language, despite the fact that there is no indication that readers should comprehend that voice. Whalen also uses rhetorical gestures, particularly, when he comes back to address himself:

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 (Ll.14-19)

Whalen's achievement throughout 1950s was in the way he understood who to construct poetics. He thinks that he should be aware the prepositional foundation of the poem before he expresses his ideas. The poem involves some statements initiated by the speaker, and this fact brings up the centrality of the speaker in his poem. Whalen, hence, understands poetry as being a transpersonal motive that takes him beyond what might be called an expressive world with a consequence. The poetry, Whalen writes, cannot be grounded in some certain stable acts in any simple way.

During 1950s, Whalen's poetry had a shift in focus. He suggests the importance of both topic and ideological base 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". This way of writing was possible during the above year; such notions of expressing the poetic self was also commonplace. The prepositional base thus returns back to the poet and then forward to the objectivity of the surrounding universe. This fact is true to matters of subject-object of poems. Added to that Whalen's poems are often set for some philosophical examination in terms of themes and self-identity. The poet employs this construction of poetry in his "The Same Old Jazz" (1957) and is made explicit within the opening:

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

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the cat outside the window
A one-to-one relationship
While I imagine whatever I imagine
On Bear's Head (LI.1-9)

The first pronoun here is unquestionable, and personal references are there to create some philosophical points of view about subject-object relations. However, Whalen relies such an order as he moves beyond it to reach a common reference of poetry. He seeks to develop the emotional range of his poetry in matters of themes and identity.

Within the same span particularly in 1960, Whalen published his two poems, "Like I say" and "Memories of an Interglacial Age". In both, he seeks to be more amusing in order to set his verse free. The freedom in form is coupled with that in thought and intellect. In the first poem, the poet travels into a unique American voice in addressing burning issues and matters of society, producing this feeling of happiness in mingling intellect and reflection. During the above year, Whalen focused more on a personal subject-matter, "resurrecting the trivial as the essential substance of daily life". The poet is turned new in role and mission, trying to make his poems about what he is thinking or eating and doing in his life. He tries to live the moment about what poetry could do to his people and society in general:

"his work shows the freedom to include any reality from one's daily life into the poem one happens to be writing at the moment. This is the core of his "ars poetica" and it accounts for the veneration he arouses in some of the younger poets". (17)

In his poem which is titled "17:III:67", the poet provides another aspect of fragmented language through the power of voice:

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 (LI.1-6)

The poet asserts the power of language throughout the incarnation of voice. The poem operates normative references, including the use of referential voice; voice here is not stable to view. This transfer in opinion is coincided with a reflection of poetic emotions. This fluctuation in tone is obvious when the poet moves from supplications to his claim to listen to "Pages turning Haydn" and the second person "you". There is this irony

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exemplified in the parenthetical "Did you remember to bring the gin?" (L.8.), where shifts in tone cuts the supplications in the opening.

Other lines are said with irony as in "Did you remember to bring the gin?" (L.12), which is parenthetical, with shifts in tone and references that cut supplications. The poem, then, takes a grammatical shift when the poet structures the lines in noun phrases. That is to say that the poem fluctuates in tone from a "high-pitched" opening to a transparent voice to bring up the use of noun phrase.

The poet, deliberately, tends to such changes in tone to provide proof of his use of voice and musical phrases. Prepositions would thus break into parts of the poem. The voice of the poem would be various in operations, flexibility and turning. The poem seems to be stripped of statements, yet "some kind of thematic development occurs, if only in terms of the speaker's supposed confusion". The poem addresses the reader in the opening to provide a thematic struggle concerning the bad situation the poet feels:

"moreover, binary patterning operates throughout the poem, where such odd pairings at the close as disease blossoms and slight bronze, both of which bespeak a kind of resolution. 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". (18)

Conclusion

It is worth noting that during the middle of twentieth century, Whalen's poems got huge respect and importance on a historic level; the man has become a respectable voice and word in American literature, with such a keen to voice out the world in its new dimensions and attitudes. He never acclaimed a region or a space to move within, devoting himself to with the common life of every day mouth and speech. He kept on to represent significant presence over the next five decades; his poetic achievement covered all areas of religion and culture, abandoning the formal style and diction of his predecessors such as Tomas Stearns Eliot. Whalen did realize that a poem was to form its own shape and size, and to be written apart from any self-consciousness. He worked on what he called "the graph of mind movement", holding shifts in attitudes and directions of ideas and themes.

Whalen's poetry continues seeking to speak with an open time and fabric, especially when writing was done with attention and happiness. This is done to meet the reader's aim and soothe their mind-needs. His poetry

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moves graphically, embodying a new world totally different from his present one. Readers are prone to a new stream of consciousness which one can trace in steps. His poetry becomes preoccupied with social practice reaching individual's acceptance. Poetry for Whalen seems like a holy ritual, and that the world should provide him with what holy men are provided.

Whalen is seen as a Beat poet due to the fact that most of his writing were achieved during the Beat Literature. Certainly, Whalen is a Beat writer in the sense that he followed their concerns and the concerns of religion in terms of the environment, freedom and poetic variety. His purpose is to go beyond the present limits, holding himself as a new voice in American literature and society as well. Whalen's purpose is also to show ambition outside the circle he and his people live in. The poet thinks of art as a tool to get personal happiness and consolation.

It is in light with his intentions to devote himself to his poetics, holding them in favor of self-fulfillment. Whalen creates poetry due to his own perception of the surrounding world, and his intelligence in grasping and capturing meaning even if the subjects are unimportant. His poetic vision is considered unique, mixing the delights of his home country life with that poetic, and rumination in such ways as to convince readers to the necessity of joining the flesh and spirit to achieve one's life fulfillment and self-confidence.

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ما بعد الحداثة: الفوضى الشعرية وتحقق الذات في اعمال مختارة لفليب وولن

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المستخلص

يبدو جليا، والى حد كبير، ان السمة الغالبة في الأدب الأمريكي ما بعد الحديث، تذهب باتجاه تغيير المسار الفكري للأعمال الناتجة، والشعر كان من أوائل الآداب التي طرا عليها هذا التغيير، حتى بدأ يبرز باتجاهه لتجزئة البيت الشعري وصولا الى لغة حرة تتصدر المفردات العامة على السنة الأمريكيين. ومن هنا يسعى البحث الأكاديمي القائم الى بيان هذا الأسلوب في التجزئة باعتباره منهجا متعمدا لشعراء ما بعد الحداثة ومنهم الشاعر فليب وولن الذي بدأ بانتهاجه بعد سلسلة تجارب عديدة تهدف لإزالة القيود اللغوية المفروضة على القارئ. وقد استفاد الشاعر من تجربته في الكتابة التقليدية عندما كان يعمل في مجالات الدراسة الثانوية. ولذلك فأن البحث القائم يسعى للإجابة عن الفرضية القائلة بان الفوضى الشعرية في صياغة البيت الشعري دون الرجوع الى التقاليد السابقة تهدف لمحاكاة المجتمع الجديد الذي نشأ على مبدأ شمولية الأفكار والآراء، سيما في حقبة ما بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية.