

*Self-Portrait, From Another Direction* (1959)

The fact that Whalen designed this particular piece to unfold toward the reader suggests a self-awareness inherent in much of Whalen's works. Additionally, this poem unfolds so that only a portion of Whalen's life may be read at a time. Essentially, Whalen's *Self-Portrait* demonstrates his understanding that life must be experienced in stages, typified by his life transformation from drifter to Buddhist monk.

*Like I Say: Poems* (1960)

Although Whalen's earlier collections of poems, like these, are well written and certainly contributive to the Beat era, critics often point to their inherent limitations, illustrated by unnecessary, factual detail and wandering prose. "Plus Ça Change," which Whalen read at the Six Gallery reading, gained him sudden notoriety. The poem is one of many that demonstrates his continued pursuit of increased self-knowledge which was, initially, derived from a sedentary life-style.

*On Bear's Head: Poems* (1969)

In what may be considered Whalen's greatest shift in form, "If You're So Smart, Why Ain't You Rich" demonstrates his departure from structurally-confined poetry to a freer mode of composition. Whalen notes how his first experience with peyote "acted...on my spirit and mind and everything else as a great cure so that I began almost immediately afterwards, or not too long afterwards [to write] the first poem...of any length at all." The poem to which Whalen refers is displayed here, and, although it appears in this 1969 volume, was written in 1955.

Excerpt from *Monday in the Evening* (1963)

*Monday in the Evening* consists of poems written in the form of calligraphy, wherein Whalen is able to write in a way that captures the notion of the body and the soul existing in unison, both allowing for a fulfilling life.