

**The Scope of Repertoire: A Study in  
John Ashbery's Selected Poems  
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**Abstract:**

The current critical appreciations of the American poet John Ashbery (1927- ) have proved to be ambivalent to consider him as a later Romantic poet or a postmodern avant-garde, whose essential role is to achieve the postmodern project. Many of his major poems include a kind of repertoire that demonstrates a clear treatment of Romantic themes and implications tackled carefully by the poet. His later poems, however, are concerned with postmodern themes like the bewilderment of the American individual due to the unprecedented changes and watersheds the society witnessed. The main aim of this research is to critically examine selected poems of Ashbery to judge whether he is Romantic or postmodern, consulting cues from critics like Bloom, Miller and Longenbach . It is one of the fruitful conclusions that Ashbery adheres to the Romantic spirit but for unromantic intentions. Thus, he conveys confessional themes on one hand and tackles postmodern realistic themes related to the core of the American society in which he lives and writes on the other.

**Key words:** Ashbery, avant-garde, postmodern poetry, romantic poetry, greater romantic lyric.

In recent times, the poetry of John Ashbery (1927- ) has attracted the attention of the critics and literary scholars for its delightfulness, allusiveness and its concern with current social and cultural issues, embodying the thought of the postmodern era especially in its earlier stages. It accrues a sense of indeterminacy and self awareness against the given certainties in man's life. He is the winner of Pulitzer Prize, the Yale Younger Poets Prize and the Griffin International Award. The poetry of that era is characterized by a playful and delightful language and intellectual allusiveness as reflected in the New York School of Poetry in general and in Ashbery's poetry in particular.<sup>1</sup> Ashery's poetry is appreciated as a vivid embodiment of a controversial period of time that spreads from modernism, reflecting the drastic changes which hover the reality of modern American individuals and are reflected in their thoughts. In addition, his poetry continues to incorporate the postmodern thought which is asserted as a continuation to modernism, revealing the sequitur of the additional watersheds and their negative impact on the postmodern man. In this context, Stephen Paul Miller ratifies that Ashbery's poems are not only realistic, but also cultural products of his times:

I am thus not arguing that Ashbery's poetry is rawly realistic. More significantly, I contend that a typical Ashbery poem is effective as a

poem and cultural product because it clarifies the workings of that poem's historical period and our present understanding of that period.<sup>2</sup>

As clearly indicated, Ashbery's poems are, at least, cultural products that provide a ruminative understanding of its time in which the poet uncovers his thoughts to readers, employing his poetic creativity to accomplish his intention. Through examining Ashbery's poetic creativity, it is obvious that, as the critical efforts conclude, he is essentially influenced by the Romantic creed as he is classified by Harold Bloom as a belated Romantic poet in the line of Wordsworth, Emerson, Whitman and Stevens;<sup>3</sup> and tagged as "an undeniably original poet"<sup>4</sup> by Helen Vendler .

To critically examine the scope of the thematic repertoire in Ashbery's poetry, it is required to have an adequate background about his literary career and the circumstances behind his poetic genuine. Thus, James Longenbach considers acquainting Ashbery's surrounding as intrinsic as that of T. S. Eliot's to the modern age; otherwise, judging Ashbery's poetry would be unjust:

...the most complete treatment of Ashbery's career to date, is that Ashbery's poetry can hardly be discussed without almost constant reference to an extraordinarily wide range of precursors (among whom Eliot looms prominently): any effort to limit strategically our sense of Ashbery's openness to his modernist past is bound to do the poetry an injustice. And even if the poems [of Ashbery] seem (to those who accept postmodernism's progressive narratives) more "advanced" than Eliot's — more open to the demotic language, more accommodating to popular culture, more suspicious of the lyric's unified voice — the poems are nonetheless unthinkable without Eliot's example.<sup>5</sup>

Overtly, Ashbery wields all the "advanced" characteristics of his poetry to reflect the perennial ruefulness of his time which is distinctive in his poems and stems from life's complexity itself.<sup>6</sup> His main vision is to disclose man's awareness, so he is "a poet of consciousness who registers or reflects the meanderings of a mind moving in a world unrealized ... ."<sup>7</sup> As he treats these volatile thoughts of mind, his poetry seems allusive, ambiguous and syntactically incoherent.

However, these characteristics could not be weighted as noteworthy because Ashbery is mainly concerned with the consciousness of the postmodern man whose era, as indicated earlier, manifests the modern zeitgeist. It is the main concern of the present paper to examine the pre-eminent thematic repertoire in selected notable poems of Ashbery and how

he harnesses the Romantic traditions and the personal experiences to inspire his poetic talent.

As a poet composing notable poems of multi-faceted layers of meaning, Ashbery has been appreciated as the last American Romantic poet; "an inheritor of the visionary tradition of Romantic poetry from Wordsworth and Whitman to Stevens... ." <sup>8</sup> This appreciation is, no doubt, based on Ashbery's employment of the common Romantic characteristics, designating them in a postmodern frame to enhance his poetic sensibility. Thus, it is one of the eminent Romantic characteristics harnessed by Ashbery in many of his great poems is the chief characteristic of the Greater Romantic lyric <sup>9</sup>. In his distinctive essay "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric", M. H. Abrams identifies the essential standards of this purely Romantic kind of poetry by stating:

They [lyrics] present a determinate speaker in a particularized, and usually a localized, outdoor setting, whom we overhear as he carries on, in a fluent vernacular which rises easily to a more formal speech... . The speaker begins with a description of the landscape; an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape evokes a varied but integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely involved with the outer scene. In the course of this meditation, the lyric speaker achieves an insight, faces up to a tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem. <sup>10</sup>

Through examining Ashbery's major poem, it can covertly be recognized that his poem entitled "The Instruction Manual" embodies the essential characteristics of what Abrams calls "Greater Romantic Lyric" and conforms greatly with the traditions of such memorable poems as "Tintern Abbey" and "Frost at Midnight." <sup>11</sup> In addition to notable characteristics with which it is appreciated as a Greater Romantic Lyric, the poem, furthermore, has received a great deal of critical studies that mainly concentrate on the other component aspects of the poem which relate its major themes to tackling the postmodern reality with all its quandary and chaos, harnessing Abram's characteristics of the Greater Romantic Lyric. Being concerned with the poem's theme and convention, Mutlu Konuk Blasing praises Ashbery's "The Instruction Manual" as:

"The Instruction Manual" is his [Ashbery's] most "readerly" poem. Its very readability – a performance not to be repeated – is part of the specific, "archaic" aesthetic model that the poem reenacts and parodies. This pleasant model, which observes sequential development, positions the imagination as a force antithetical to "our technological society." This is a Romantic-modernist figuration of imagination and reality as opposites to be "reconciled" in the

narrative of the poem, which represents imaginary activity as an escape to spaces exempt from the pressures of reality.<sup>12</sup>

The poem, then, does not only involve the characteristics of the Greater Romantic Lyric, but also employs the Romantic imagination as antithetical to the postmodern technological society. He follows Coleridge's theory of Romantic imagination with both of its levels, primary and secondary. First, he resorts to the primary imagination with which he perceives sensations from the external world unconsciously. He continues to the secondary imagination to achieve his poetic creativity by re-producing what is received by the primary imagination to extraordinary objects. Ashbery differs from Coleridge in viewing imagination in that he uses it as a force not synthesizing but antithetical to the purely technological society. It is also employed as an outlet, in the narrative of the poem, from the monotonous reality through which no any faculty of human soul takes part. It is forcefully engaged to reflect the poem's theme that is the true reality of postmodern man living in a purely mechanized society. The poem opens with lines drawing a general description of a landscape in which the speaker wishes not to write the instruction manual, what associates his sense of frustration that is increased with the speaker's recounting of what he gets through from the window;

As I sit looking out of a window of the building  
I wish I did not have to write the instruction manual on the uses of a  
new metal.  
I look down into the street and see people, each walking with an  
inner peace,  
And envy them—they are so far away from me!

(NA,387,1-4)<sup>13</sup>

The quoted lines associate the unsettling state that is consecutive in the speaker's mind. While speculating the urbanized city landscape from the window, he uncovers his refusal of the scientific and technological progresses in his society, wishing not to write that manual. These opening lines detail the inner thought of a man feeling detached from the milieu in which he lives and even the people around him. . They, once more, sum up what the poem is mainly about and purport Ashbery's poetic experiment;

Instead of referring to abstract ideas, he deals with lived situations and the open-ended verses are more compatible to express the individual mind. His familiar and textureless language reflects the changing moods of the persona. For Ashbery writing is an event, a praxis that aims at dismantling an established ideology and broadens the horizons of meaning, to return to the world of human beings from the specific domains of the abstract and the conventional.<sup>14</sup>

In this respect, Ashbery is considered a bridge between the modern poetic tradition and the postmodern one, for his major themes that stem from those coined by Pound and Eliot and his continuation to construct his own poetic forte, tackling the themes of the consciousness of the postmodern man and the state of his thought. He is not preoccupied with the incidental situations he lives or imagines, instead, he intends to document the immediate situation he lives through which reflecting not only that quotidian situation, but also an ideological and cultural matters that, obviously initiate new layers of meaning and become more concerned with man's plights in his postmodern era.

Moreover, these lines prepare the reader's mind to share the speaker's worry and take part in the poem's narrative that seems inconsistent, digressive, and localized. Through this unique kind of narrative, the speaker casts the experiences he gets through while he carries on in his way and daydreaming:

And, as my way is, I begin to dream, resting my elbows on the desk  
and leaning out of the window a little,  
Of dim Guadalajara! City of rose-colored flowers!  
City I wanted most to see, and most did not see, in Mexico!  
But I fancy I see, under the press of having to write the instruction  
manual,

(NA, 387,6-9)

While the speaker is in a state of obliviousness, the poem's narrative reaches its climax when he gives a minute description of the urbanized city landscape in which he enables the reader to be present, facing up his loss of spontaneity. He evokes the city of Guadalajara, which is the city of beauty in his imagined setting of the narrative to drag the reader's attention to a scope beyond the humdrum atmosphere of the poem. This poetic imagination puts the reader in an indeterminate zone with which he is neither able to forget reality nor stand constantly within it. He keeps looking knowingly at Guadalajara.<sup>15</sup> He also gives the reader a moment of speculation by looking out of the window to have a look at the people outside who are still bewildered despite their living "with an inner peace." (NA, 387, 3) The poet continues to image what he has recognized in the city where every object looks pale and dreary; humans are spiritually empty as they get through the tedious pressure of reality.

Soon we have reached the top, and the whole network of the city  
extends before us.

There is the rich quarter, with its houses of pink and white, and its  
crumbling, leafy terraces.

There is the poorer quarter, its homes a deep blue.  
 There is the market, where men are selling hats and swatting flies  
 And there is the public library, painted several shades of pale green  
 and beige.  
 Look! There is the square we just came from, with the  
 promenaders.

(NA, 388, 59-64)

The poet's rendering of the city landscape in these lines implies an intermingled theme of both the merciless increasing technological development that hovers almost every aspect of a society dominated by social forces, lacking the simplicity that man is longing for and, at once, its unique Romantic mood that involves the characteristics of the Greater Romantic Lyric and, even not similarly, Coleridge's imagination. In the very last lines, the speaker, after inspiring an insight of man's thought under the impact of urbanization; hints for a solution for the reality of writing the instruction manual by his longing for the Romantic nature to which he adheres to through wielding the Romantic spirit in this poem:

And as a last breeze freshens the top of the weathered old tower, I  
 turn my gaze  
 Back to the instruction manual which has made me dream of  
 Guadalajara.

(NA,389, 73-4)

The speaker is now in reality thinking of accomplishing the instruction manual after journeying with the reader in an alternative imaginary world he fabricates to take him from the current unbearable reality. Ashbery is, no doubt, a profoundly postmodern Romantic poet as he harnesses the preeminent Romantic vehicles to convey his themes and intentions.

In the late sixties, Ashbery decides to write a type of poetry that tackles such themes as time, the past, and the portrayal of the American society in its cultural context. Thus, his seminal poem "Soonest Mended" is one of these poems as it "synthesizes motifs and tropes that are particularly strong in the mid and late sixties. ... The more the poem accepts its affinities to the wider text, the freer and more unique it seems."<sup>16</sup> The poem takes its title from the proverb *least said, soonest mended*. It is, as Ashbery says, "my One-size-fits-all confessional poem which is about my youth."<sup>17</sup> The poem draws the true reality of the American society which is hovered by the increasing power and technological development. Ashbery succeeds to inspire the reader with the state of life in the American society and how it is impaired by this desperate development that relegates the American culture and increases the suffering and bewilderment of individuals. It is written to reflect the poet's first impression as world-weary nostalgist when an ineluctable possibility stands at the edge of consciousness.<sup>18</sup> The

possibility that stands at the poet's end of consciousness is that the drastic changes and the technological development which result in the deterioration of the society, changing it to one dominated by all these forces:

Barely tolerated, living on the margin  
 In our technological society, we were always having to be rescued  
 On the brink of destruction, like heroines in *Orlando Furioso*  
 (NA, 391, 1-3)

The poet's reference to the Italian epic of *Orlando Furioso* reinforces the poem's cultural content. It was written by the Italian author Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533). In this epic, the heroine Angelica, whom Orlando falls in love with, gets through many controversial circumstances and is rescued from monsters, ogres, and other perils (NA, 391, 3). It serves to display the plight of the American individual who becomes a part of it. It also associates the increase of the technological progress aggravates his/her suffering. Also, it helps the poet to create a sense of indeterminacy in the reader's mind by modifying the standardized formula of the Greater Romantic Lyric as coined by Abrams:

"Soonest Mended" announces an aesthetic of being constantly stuck in the middle of the quest for knowledge, identity, and more generally resolutions to the crises that result from that quest, returning repeatedly to objects and images, but finding those objects and images strangely inadequate to the quest. Such an aesthetic dramatizes the meeting of Romantic and indeterminate modes, as it invokes the narrative of the Romantic quest while using objects which do not yield the symbolic depth necessary for their meaningful integration into a symbolic network that could aid the lyrical subject in fulfilling the quest.<sup>19</sup>

According to this statement, Ashbery modifies the structure of the Greater Romantic Lyric, as identified by Bloom, and presents a form that coincides with the poem's implication and reflects his poetic innovation through which he considers the quest for a solution for the dilemma of the American society as perverting the psyche of the individual. The poet, then, wields a kind of poetic imagery that is inadequate, as it seems, for the poem's thematic repertoire. In this way, a coincidence between the Romantic lyrical mode and a sense of indeterminacy has been created; it is appreciated as Ashbery's intrinsic poetic creativity. He intends to drag the reader's attention to the truth of America and to reveal the drastic watersheds it witnessed and their negative impact on individuals.

In "Soonest Mended," Ashbery's main concern is to treat the internal thought of the American individual who becomes a victim of the advantage

of technology the American society has witnessed. This concern leads the reader to contemplate T. S. Eliot's image of the modern man which heralds the emergence of the modern age, mostly the image of Prufrock, as a weak, day-dreamer, frustrated, detached and even without will. But Ashbery renders this image with a postmodern appeal as man has undergone harsher circumstances thinking of "Our daily quandary about food and the rent and bills to be paid?" (NA, 391, 16). He manages to invoke the Romantic narrative which suits the lyrical frame of the poem.

In his later long poems, Ashbery's main concern is with the themes of time and nostalgia for childhood. As far as the theme of time is concerned, Ashbery once said "As I have gotten older, it seems to me that time is what I have been writing about all these years during which I thought I wasn't writing about anything."<sup>20</sup> The reason behind his interest in such themes is the death of his family members which makes him more attached to the house and landscape he lived in and associates with them. Furthermore, the continuing decline of his mother's health and the sudden death of his father stimulate the remoteness of his innocent childhood as he keeps visiting Pultneville.<sup>21</sup> It can also be asserted that ashbery's interest in such themes is because of the huge technological development and the abusive American politics which has forced the society and the individual by an open-ended recession.

In 1982, Ashbery wrote his long title poem " A Wave" after coming close to death when "he suffered an epidural abscess in the spine which is usually fatal."<sup>22</sup> In this poem, he reveals his thought towards the hasty passage of time when he is getting through the aging process. He employs many devices and images to tackle these themes. In the opening of the poem, the speaker images the landscape in which he spent his early childhood:

And through this the mesmerizing plan of the landscape becomes,  
At last, apparent. It is no more a landscape than a golf course is,  
Though sensibly a few natural bonuses have been left in. and as it  
Focuses itself, it is the backward part of a life that is  
Partially coming into view. It's there, like a limb. And the issue  
Of making sense becomes such a far-off one. Isn't this "sense" —  
This title of my life that I can see — that answers me

(SP, 324, 68-74)<sup>23</sup>

In these lines, the speaker is contemplating the landscape where he had spent his childhood and early youth. By recalling his past memory, he confesses that this spent time represents a part of his life. He tries to make a sense of the present, looking for an answer from the whole landscape. Ashbery, then, resorts to the past memory, specifically to childhood and



youth, because he considers their recall as a source of alleviation and an escape from the burden of aging which is unavoidable. He also intends to express the painful passage of time as the future, for Ashbery, is no more than a continuation of suffering and an inevitable way to his death. In the rest of the poem, Ashbery wields Romantic images from nature for unromantic demands. This serves to attract the reader's attention to his conscious awareness of time with an authentic postmodern appeal. It is one of the essential characteristics of Ashbery's poetics is that his deep concern with confusion and chaos in the postmodern man's mind. In the seventh stanza, the speaker employs a vivid image from nature and a highly associative metaphor to reflect the unsettling state of thought in his mind:

As with rocks at low tide, a mixed surface is revealed,  
 More detritus. Still, it is better this way  
 Than to have to live through a sequence of events acknowledged  
 In advance in order to get to a primitive statement. And the mind  
 Is the beach on which the rocks pop up, just a neutral  
 Support for them in their indignity. They explain  
 The trials of our age, cleansing it of toxic  
 Side-effects as it passes through their system.  
 Reality. Explained. And for seconds  
 We live in the same body, are a sibling again.

(SP, 324, 84-93)

Being haunted by the harsh reality, the speaker visualizes the chaotic state of life by referring to the images of 'rocks' and 'detritus' scattered on the surface, accomplishing the image with the metaphor of mind as a beach upon which 'the rocks pop up'. Despite its simplicity and plainness, this metaphor is carefully rendered to envision the speaker's internal thought of mind as he gets conscious of many obsessions and pressures. In this stanza, Ashbery deals with two major ideas central to the whole poem: he reveals his frustration and gloom since he remembers his late family members and the houses in which he spent his loveliest periods of time, confessing the remoteness of childhood and judging that time is passing in a way of no return. Once again, the use of the pronouns 'them', 'our', and 'we' assert that Ashbery can obviously be considered as the spokesman of his lifetime. He recounts the heavy experience subjugating the American individual who becomes a victim and a part of almost every crisis in the purely technological society. In the last four lines, the speaker is looking for a purification from the deterioration of the advances of technology, as a continuation to industrialization, by stating 'cleansing' to exaggerate its negative impact on man like a pollution destructing lives of generations. He intentionally satirizes the increasing advancement of technology for hovering the whole American civilization. The message behind this image

and metaphor sums up the whole poem. He wants to tell that the private dreary past memory is harmful for man when getting through the aging process, driving him to nothingness and death. Also, he treats man's awareness about the corrupted American policies and the flourishing technology which becomes a weapon in its hand against the individual.

The poet continues enhancing the poem's thematic repertoire with images and symbols. Most of them are employed to treat the same major themes in the poem from many different perspectives:

To something one didn't quite admit feeling uneasy about, but  
 now  
 That it's all out in the open, like a successful fire  
 Burning in a fireplace, really there's no cause for alarm.  
 For even when hours and days go by in silence...

(SP, 332, 347-50)

In the second line of the quote, the poet renders the symbol of fire in a simile. The thematic significance of the fire as a symbol lies in that time, according to Ashbery, becomes a source of awareness. Its fleeting passage makes him predict that the future carries no more than sorrow and hopelessness. He realizes that even the past memory with all its beauty and innocence could not aid man as he has been undergoing senility. It heralds of death as its hours pass silently without any alarm. Ashbery's main intention is to image the difficult surroundings embodied in the life-process since the poem's language is woven through a complicated combination of interactions between the elements and effects of its poetic diction.<sup>24</sup> It is apparent that, as a long representative title poem, "A Wave" is written in a poetic diction in which the poet's surroundings and his inner thoughts are both addressed to convey its themes. Thus, it would be illogical to judge that Ashbery's poetry is devoid of ideas,<sup>25</sup> instead, it is written to treat serious themes and realistic issues. The poem, then, is of multi-layers meaning that can be appreciated from different perspectives. It coincides between specific private experiences, from one hand, and other shared realistic issues relating controversially to the American individual whose uttermost is only to survive:

... To live and be lived by  
 And in this way bring all things to the sensible conclusion  
 Dreamed into their beginnings, and so arrive at the end.

.....  
 The old man had removed his hat and was gazing at the grass  
 As though in sorrow, sorrow for what I had done.  
 Realizing it was now or never, I lurched  
 With one supreme last effort out of the dream

(SP, 339, 553-55 and 568-71)

In these lines, both the realistic issues and the private experience of the poet, like the impact of the past memory and ageing, are intermingled. In the first three lines, he represents life from the beginning to the end in a dream intentionally in order to escape from the harsh reality man gets through in a society full of developments and changes that oblige him to the wretched death-in-life state. In the rest of the quote, the speaker is an aged one who moves elsewhere sorrowfully getting back to the reality with a lurch. He keeps reflecting his fluctuated state of mind between his past memory and his present state until he has finalized that "I'm old enough. Exactly." (SP, 343, 700) As Jennifer Ashton concludes, studying Ashbery's poetry requires exploring its meaning as an experience and understanding its repertoire with reaction. The poem represents a sequence of reactions with many experiences the poet gets through and intends to dedicate "A Wave" and many other poems to treat them. The poem reflects ashbery's awareness of talking about his experience which is handled by the themes of time and childhood and his intention by tackling the theme of the image of later twentieth century American man who suffers the changes that impair his life as well as the society in which he lives. Ashbery's ambiguity and incoherence, apparently, serve to enhance his poetry and suit the postmodern condition of which he is considered the representative poet.

To conclude, studying Ashbery's poetry is not an easy task as it deals with many various themes and adheres to more than one essential tenet. His employment of slightly modified form of the Greater Romantic Lyric occupies the wider area in his poetry. He employs this type by modifying its structure and style in order to be made congruous enough to communicate his postmodern allusive and complicated themes and intentions. He also writes such brilliant lyrics of indeterminate modes with fundamental symbolic network to give the poem its lyrical form and conveniently achieve its purpose.

Moreover, the other aspect of the scope of repertoire in Ashbery's poems is that he is concerned with the true reality of the American society and the many radical changes it has witnessed and its negative impact on individuals who become a victim of these changes. He dedicates notable poems to envision the inner thought of mind of the American individual who suffers the pressures of his surroundings. The advanced technological developments and the abusive American policies are among those changes which stimulate their awareness and make their lives lack spontaneity and serenity. In his realistic poems, Ashbery presents the American individual as a victim calling to rescue him from the hardships of life and the government's oppressive policies.

The private experiences of the poet have their echoes in his poetry. He writes about his sad memory with his late family by expressing his

nostalgia for childhood and the theme of time. They are treated for postmodern demand rather than the Romantic one. He is influenced by the early British Romantics to develop his own poetic craft. It is logical to classify Ashbery as a late Romantic poet but in a tendency he defends to achieve the postmodern project of writing poetry for experience and reaction rather than for meaning and understanding; this message is held by his contemporaries and distinguishes him to be a unique postmodern American poet.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Edward Quinn, *A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Facts on File Publishing, 2006), 331.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Paul Miller, "Periodizing Ashbery and His Influence" in *Contemporary Poets* ed., Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 35.

<sup>3</sup>John Lennox, "Poetic Attention: The Impressionist Sensibility and the Poetry of John Ashbery" (Master's Thesis, McGill University, 2003), 12.

<sup>4</sup>As quoted in Terence Diggory, *Encyclopedia of the New York School Poets* (New York: Facts on File Publishing, 2009), 32.

<sup>5</sup>James Longenbach, *Modern Poetry After Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 88.

<sup>6</sup>See Lennox, 24.

<sup>7</sup>Willard Spiegelman, *How Poets See the World: The Art of Description in Contemporary Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 168.

<sup>8</sup>Andrew Epstein, *Beautiful Enemies: Friendship and Postwar American Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 131.

<sup>9</sup>Marjorie Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 265.

<sup>10</sup>M. H. Abrams, "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric" in *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism* ed., Harold Bloom (New York: W W Norton & Company, 1970), 201.

<sup>11</sup>Lennox, 38.

<sup>12</sup>Mutlu Konuk Blasing, *Politics and Form in Postmodern Poetry: O'Hara, Bishop, Ashbery & Merrill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 124.

<sup>13</sup>Jahan Ramazani, Richard Ellman and Robert O'Clair, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003) Vol.2. All subsequent references and citations are to this edition and are parenthetically given, in the text, with the abbreviation NA followed by the page number(s) and line number(s), unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>14</sup>Gargi Bhattacharya, "The Poetics of John Ashbery" *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 3.2(2011): 309.

<sup>15</sup>Lennox, 45.

<sup>16</sup>Miller, 38.

<sup>17</sup>Marit J. MacArthur, *The American Landscape in the Poetry of Frost, Bishop, and Ashbery* (New York: Palgrave & Macmillan, 2008), 178.

<sup>18</sup>Gilbert Roger, "Ludic Eloquence: On John Ashbery's Recent Poetry," *Contemporary Literature* 48, no.2 (Summer 2007): 198.

<sup>19</sup>Lennox, 65.

<sup>20</sup>Harold Bloom ed., *John Ashbery: Comprehensive Research and Study Guide* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 132.

<sup>21</sup>MacArthur, 201.

<sup>22</sup>As quoted in ibid, 205.

<sup>23</sup>John Ashbery, Selected Poems (New York: Penguin Books, 1985). All subsequent references and citations are to this edition and are parenthetically given, in the text, with the abbreviation SP followed by the page number(s) and line number(s).

<sup>24</sup>Jennifer Ashton discusses that no one, even Ashbery himself, should assert that his poetry is "devoid of ideas." He endeavors to conclude what he considers the postmodern project by treating his meaning as an experience but not the poet's intention. Also, any attempt to interpret a postmodern text is supposed to involve a reaction rather than an understanding.

## قصائد مختارة لـ(جون آشبري)

### دراسة موسعة

المدرس: خالد قيس عبيد

جامعة الانبار/ كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية

الملخص:

أظهرت الدراسات النقدية الحديثة عن الشاعر الأمريكي جون اشبري (١٩٢٧) تضارباً ممنهجاً تمحور حول ماهية شعره أكان بحلة الرومانتيكية المتأخرة أم توشح بجذوة الشعر الطبيعي لما بعد الحداثة قد انبرى لأداء دورا جوهريا في انجاز مشروع لحقبة ما بعد الحداثة. وتضم العديد من أعماله الشعرية الرائدة خزينا واضحا من الأفكار و المضامين الرومانتيكية التي عالجهما الشاعر بدرية في حين تترنم قصائده المتأخرة بأنسام حقبة لما بعد الحداثة كتيه الفرد الأمريكي في خضم التحولات الطارئة التي شهدتها المجتمع. والهدف من هذا البحث هو محاولة نقدية لقصائد مختارة لأشبري باعتباره شاعرا رومانتيكيا تارة او شاعرا لما بعد الحداثة تارة اخرى ووفقا لما خلصت اليه بعض الآراء النقدية لنقاد مثل بلوم و ملر و لونجباك. و لعل من ابرز الاستنتاجات التي اجمع عليها الرهط تأصل الروح الرومانتيكية في نتاجات اشبري مسخرة لأغراض غير رومانتيكية . مما يسر للشاعر نقل أفكاره البوحية تارة واستقدام اطر اندرجت في خبايا ما بعد الحداثة بواقعية المجتمع الأمريكي الذي يعيش فيه و يخاطبه في مقامات أخرى.