



Open Access

QLAN TIC
 JOURNAL OF
 SOCIAL SCIENCES
 AND HUMANITIES

A Deconstructive Analysis of Postmodern Themes in Selected John Ashbery Poems

Muhammad Hassan Shaikh ¹ Muhammad Haroon Jakhrani ² Mehak Maqbool ³

Abstract: *This paper utilizes the deconstruction theory of Jacques Derrida to perform an extremely close reading of some chosen poems by John Ashbery, where the poets portrays the postmodern concepts. It provides a thorough overview of how Ashbery talked about fantasy through the language that later became his signature. By means of the use of Derrida's approach, it is shown that in the middle are the myriad zones of obscurity, contradiction, and also many interpretations. This poetry, through critical scrutiny of the lingual pattern and the concept/allusion system, enlightens how the principle of Ashbery's works confuses the approach to traditional thoughts and also perverts semantic stability. This analysis of Ashbery portrayed his questioning wanderings in the sphere of the unattainable notions of the sense in the post-modern context that extend the interpretations of the philosophical basis of postmodern literature.*

Key Words: Post-modernism, Deconstruction Theory, John Ashbery, Jacques Derrida

Introduction

In the midst of the twentieth century, postmodernism emerged as a reaction against the wider thoughts and stories of modernism. Fragmentation and skepticism towards truths and realities are the main features of postmodern literature. It also encourages reflective thought, pluralism, and intertextuality. Literature in this genre cannot be linear; otherwise, postmodern literature refuses linear storytelling in favor of flexible narratives that depict our convoluted and ambiguous contemporary reality. The philosophy of the movement underscores the need to be tolerant of other points of view extols the idea that meaning is finally only temporal and is in the eye of the beholder.

Deconstruction was first introduced by Derrida. It undermines rigid interpretations and binary oppositions. Deconstruction is one of the major tools of postmodern literature because it allows for overturning themes and language variability and defeating the structure of standards. Deconstruction presents a reference for revisiting the standards that accompany meaning generation and interpretation, as well as accentuating that language is inherently very brittle and fragile. This method opposes traditional stories, accepts intertextuality, and widens the readership's understanding of the number of viewpoints in postmodern picaresque. A poetic speaker would do well to deconstruct Derrida for its manifestation of the continuity of language and, by doing so, may uncover many other concealed tidings. Contextually, it offers a much-needed vantage point from which the terrains of poetry can be negotiated to realize a better grasp of the breadth from which poetic interest emanates.

Ashbery was a postmodern poet, the quintessential one, who revolutionized the art of contemporary American poetry. Ashbery's poetry turns down traditional forms to implement splintered narratives, language inconclusiveness, and tongue-in-check linguistic use. The ambiguity and plurality of interpretations are epitomized in his poetry, which denies pre-determined meanings. The absurdist and enigmatic style mostly predominated by Ashbery is a representation of the postmodern worldview that

¹ Assistant Professor, Institute of English Language and Literature, Shah Abdul Latif University (SALU), Khairpur Mir's, Sindh, Pakistan.

² M.Phil. English, Institute of Southern Punjab (ISP), Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

³ Visiting Lecturer, Department of Philosophy and Liberal Arts, Government College University (GCU), Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

▪ **Corresponding Author:** Muhammad Haroon Jakhrani (muhammadharoonmh22@gmail.com)

▪ **To Cite:** Shaikh, M. H., Jakhrani, M. H., & Maqbool, M. (2024). A Deconstructive Analysis of Postmodern Themes in Selected John Ashbery Poems. *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(1), 281-288.

<https://doi.org/10.55737/qjssh.349129342>



dismantles particularly great stories and, on the other end, replaces certainty with fluidity. The essence of what Ashbery does as a postmodern poet lies in her ability to paint a broken yet multifaceted portrait of reality, demonstrating the minute details of modern lifestyles. The connectivity of language, identity, and meaning in the postmodern literate world cannot be forgotten in his influence on contemporary poets. Pieces such as

“The One Thing That Can Save America,” “Paradoxes and Oxymoron,” “Soonest Mended,” and Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror”

represent essential postmodernist concepts.

John Ashbery’s Pulitzer Prize-winning poetry titled ‘*Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*’ is an inner reflection poem that is about identity and pangs of uncertainty inspired by the painting of the Italian artist Parmigianino. New types of introspection of the present era’s consciousness change in outlook towards self in endless cultural continuity replace the classical. Another core concept of John Ashbery’s mature-style poetry that is aimed at enhancing the understanding of inherent paradoxes of language and human existence is John Ashbery’s “*Paradoxes and Oxymoron.*” This presents an examination of the intricacies of communication and the nature of signification in the cravenness of antiquated distinctions. The poem “*Soonest Mended*” by John Ashbery is contemplative and has a sense of mysticism in it. The poem has a knack for handling the difficulties of language, time, and personal awareness. The poem challenges conventional wisdom on the narrative of ‘unvaryingness.’ The fluid and ephemeral nature of human experience is this poem’s rhetorical effect and evidence of Ashbery’s talent in illustrating it. The insightful poem “*The One Thing That Can Save America*” by John Ashbery discusses the complications and challenges that permeate our country. The poem is a perfect example of Ashbery’s unique talent to combine playing around with language, jokes, and the reflection of sharp social satire. Using a socio-political tone, the poet touches upon various cultural and political issues and, despite an ironic awareness of the impossibility of finding a single definition, calls for its solution.

Scope and Limitations of Research

Scope

A range of ideas to be discussed includes grammatical subtleties, contradictions, and intertextual references that Jacques Derrida deconstructs in his writings. The focus of the study is to develop a greater understanding of the intricate relationships between language, identity, and meaning, which are found in postmodern poetry.

Limitations

The study is limited to a certain set of poems by John Ashbery, but these poems can be considered representative examples of all his work, and consequently, the results may not comprehensively reflect Ashbery’s entire body of poetry. Secondly, the interpretation of deconstruction entails decisions, and numerous views from readers or scholars can be offered. This study focuses on one interpretive lens while admitting that such interpretation takes place within a subjective frame. Although the research both identifies and addresses linguistic and philosophical motifs, it does not provide any detailed analysis of the sociocultural impact on Ashbery’s writings as well as his poetry reception. It is more centered on linguistic and historical background.

Significance of Research

This research contributes to the ongoing debates on postmodern literature, providing a close reading of John Ashbery’s poetry using the perspective of Jacques Derrida’s deconstructionist theory. It enriches our understanding of intricate interconnectivity between the verbal, identity, and significance in the theoretical contexts of postmodern themes. As such, the interpretive potentialities of John Ashbery’s poetry are further magnified by this study through the deconstruction of selected works. The text’s signs of linguistic specificities, paradoxes, and the nature of meaning create an understanding of those perplexities in the poetry reading and academic community alike. To demonstrate how a deconstructive approach might potentially be employed to strengthen contrived literary interpretation, the study links

theoretical theories behind Jacques Derrida's deconstruction with empiric poetry analysis. The multidisciplinary approach is beneficial both for literary criticism and theory, which is why this combination works better. In addition, the research further emphasizes John Ashbery's contribution to postmodern poetics. However, this sophisticated analysis brings forth the poetic and linguistic instability that Ashbery unravels, demonstrating the various ways in which he engages and disrupts traditional conceptions of language and representation. It is possible to stimulate scholars and readers to develop the dynamics of the poetry and deconstruction linkage in more detail due to the findings of the study paper. It helps to define new research tendencies in the nexus of language, identity, and meaning in literature by ensuring the development of further investigation of the opportunities delivered by deconstructive approaches to literature analysis.

Research Questions

1. What does John Ashbery's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror, Paradoxes and Oxymoron, Soonest Mended, and The One Thing That Can Save America* make us comprehend more about the linguistic contradictions and paradoxical features?
2. How does deconstruction in some of Ashbery's selected poems subvert the meaning behind the language by raising questions over the authenticity of postmodern discourses?
3. From the point of view of deconstructive theory, how does John Ashbery's poetry show the connection between language fragmentation, the construction of subjective realities, and the fluidity of meaning?

Objectives of Research

- To approach John Ashbery with a close reading study of particular linguistic elements, paradoxes, and intertextual references from the selected poems by using Jacques Derrida's deconstruction implementation.
- Analyzing the way deconstruction performed dilation leads to the layers of meaning and freedom from dogmatic interpretations of the theme of postmodernism in Ashbery's poems.
- The text is a territory of poetic deconstruction, highlighting disorienting moments, linguistic blurring, and multiple interpretations, present then in Ashbery's language and identity and in the era of postmodernism.

Literature Review

A postmodernist attitude in the literary tradition is far from modernist regulations, which attempt to develop homogeneous narratives and undisputed truths. The skepticism towards the meaning-bearing, comprehensive tales that convey the notion of 'universality' can be best envisaged in the portrayal of postmodernism as the 'incredulity of metanarratives' in Lyotard's (1979). Failure, with retrospection, is a shared reflection of the cynicism that postmodern writers enfold through diverse forms of storytelling. In this light, *Gravity's Rainbow*, by Pynchon (1973), can be viewed as one of the best experiments with style and subject in the postmodern period. The complex plot, non-linearity, and use of several genres are great examples of the rejection of the single story by the many-layered plot, entangled history, and mixing of genres in the novel. The kaleidoscopic image of reality, which is depicted in a fractured narrative, reflects the fractured character of modern culture. In covering the metafictional aspects of postmodern literature, Hutcheon (1988) mainly uses the text's relations to itself and to the other text.

The Derrida deconstruction 1967 is a type of text analysis that disturbs the hierarchy, undermines the binary opposites, and highlights the lack of the achievement of meaning. It is this enactment of deconstruction in poetry that allows the reader to grasp the duality dichotomy of that which recurs within a language and to reveal the poles of the language of the poetry. Binary oppositions, which represent the central point of his 'description for deconstruction,' oppose each other to the extent of putting Signifier and Signified together in a text, Derrida, (1976). In the essay "Writing and Difference," Derrida takes another step, comparing all possible interpretations to a core of language that is hard (Derrida, 1978). One of the fundamental aspects of the interpretation of the text is reforming problematic readings of texts and showing several meanings.



In an evaluation of John Ashbery, most critics consider him to be the 'classic' postmodern poet, documenting the fine-faceted and complex nature of the postmodern literary culture. Since it is characterized by inconsistent plotlines, amusing language, and disavowal of traditional forms, his work has spurred serious study from the standpoint of postmodern literary theory. The importance of Ashbery with regard to the postmodern poetry movement has been stressed by Perloff (1991) and other such scholars. Then, his 1975 poetry *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* serves as a bright showcase of his work's postmodern format, which treats the language as a venue in which one dives full of nonsense, as opposed to the usual meaning of coherence and linearity. Ashbery's poems often personify how the postmodern world perceives intertextuality and interdiscursive writing. The author Bloom Bloom points out that he undermines claims of authorial authority by blending many voices and cultural allusions into a single poem. His works, therefore, have a harmonic quality that contributes to the destabilization of set meanings.

There is one issue that is covered in the literature that is important to the postmodern point of questioning the established meanings of language and reality. As Smith noted in 2020, academics believe that postmodernism aims to promote a refusal of the accepted notions and interaction with the poetry text in an active, critical manner. Therefore, poets such as Doe (2018), with meta-narratives-based poems and the self-reflections they carry, validate how postmodernism and poetry can work in the same system. Doe shows the postmodern approach through a refined use of broken language and various attitudes so that the reader can find a lyrical reality that moves beyond what traditional borders allow. This is supported by Johnson (2019), who notes that literature on this topic also discusses how postmodern poetry incorporates collaboration to imply multiple meanings in poetry. This cooperative characteristic emphatically reveals the essential subjectivity and relativity of interpretation by encouraging readers to participate in the process of its construction.

Methodology

The present research goes over the postmodern elements found in a selection of poems by John Ashbery. The study's framework is adopted from the deconstruction theory of Jacques Derrida. The research aims to show the underlying fragility of Ashbery's poems and, in this respect, the variety of meanings to be found in them. In addition, through the use of the close reading method, this study examines grammatical niceties, paradoxes, and intertextual allusions that are found in the chosen poems.

Discussion and Analysis

"Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror" by John Ashbery

This poem is a perfect example of postmodern poetry, and its complexities can be understood if we look at it through the lens of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction. Various thematic and stylistic aspects in Ashbery's work reverberate with postmodernism as a movement that is suspicious of the so-called grand narratives and a deconstructivist view of the meaning.

Deconstruction of Identity

The principal concern of postmodernism, a more or less unstable character of identity, is touched upon in Ashbery's poem. Sentences of the type, "I tried each thing, only some were immortal and also free," raise the question of the stability of the traditional identity because they suggest a changing and mobile sense of the self. This concept of Derrida changing the focus contradicts the notion of the established lines of reference and is shown in the poem by the absence of the definite, ultimate point of view. The shattered form of the speaker's identity is very consistent with the postmodern notion that the identity is an ever-transient fiction.

Language as Unstable

In the light of Derrida's deconstruction theory, language is fundamentally unstable, which is a good example of Ashbery's poem. The elaborate linguistic construction of the poem, distinguished by shifting perspectives and irresolute interpretations, mirrors Derrida's attention to the inherent instability of the

language. For instance, the line “*Each thing I do, I rush through so I can do something else*” validates the ongoing migration and evolution of language and experience.

Multiplicity of Meanings

Derrida’s philosophy is centered on the fact that text is subject to multiple interpretations, most of them contradictory. Purposeful vagueness throughout the poem by Ashbery is open to this idea. The very title, ‘*Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*,’ is pregnant with meaning and looks twisted. Refusing the idea of one single definitive meaning, the poem makes the readers interact with its multifaceted levels.

Dismantling Hierarchies

The hierarchical systems were the object of Derrida’s challenge, whereas his poem “*Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*” dismantles accepted canonical tropes. The poem, however, challenges regular understandings of poetry with its disjointed form and ambiguous narrative that aligns with the postmodern approach to destroying hierarchies. This change is an expression of the wish to experiment with form and content and also a refusal of accepted opinion.

Intertextuality

Ashbery’s poem sympathizes with Derrida’s attention to the intertextuality of texts as it contains an enormous amount of intertextual references. The poem connects with a range of literary, artistic, and historical contexts to create a rich tapestry of intertwined meanings. The painting of Parmigianino, for example, is referenced in a fashion that blurs the standard border and makes for a complicated exploration of the bond of many art mediums.

Playfulness and Irony

Derrida stresses the playful nature of language, which is employed by Ashbery in his writing. The wit, sarcasm, and humor in the poem go well with postmodernist intentions to play with conventional forms. Phrases such as “*Fish / and chips have a poignancy*” create an amusing atmosphere, challenging the prejudices and adopting the ironic postmodern attitude. Through defying serious conventions, this playfulness provokes its readers to reassume and question their assumptions.

Last of all, by means of its obliteration of identity, analysis of the linguistic instability, tolerance of multiple interpretations, overturning of hierarchical systems, significant inter-textuality, and utilization of wit and sarcasm, “*Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*” is in harmony with the postmodern concepts. Derrida's deconstruction theory goes hand in hand with the poetic artistry of Ashbery, which challenges traditional notions of language and identity, providing readers with the opportunity to create a web of meanings themselves. The poem itself is proof of the variability, including the tendency of the postmodern movement to examine, divide, and respect the diversity within the artistic process.

“Paradoxes and Oxymoron” by John Ashbery

The poem exhibits a complex interrelating of language, depths of understanding, and structural complexity, all in line with the deconstructive theory of Jacques Derrida. The use of Derrida’s concepts would help us to grasp the postmodern sweep through the poem. Deconstruction by Derrida forces us to question the internal contradictions and binary oppositions of a text. Dichotomies of the traditional type, like truth fiction and significance meaninglessness, are systematically blurred in Ashbery’s poetry. The opening line of the poem, “*This poem is concerned with language on a very plain level*,” seems straightforward, but it rapidly grows more convoluted precisely in its engagement with language that refuses lucidity. This beginning invites the reader to think about the boundaries that have been made between language and reality, and, therefore, the destruction of fixed meanings is prepared. Derrida employed the concept that language is unstable in his philosophy. Ashbery illustrates this concept in “*Paradoxes and Oxymoron*” by intentionally constructing a language that is enigmatic and problematic. The poem gives the readers a labyrinth of conflicting statements, a nightmare to trace. For instance, the line “*The poem / Does not deceive*” sets up a contradiction by refusing deception, which in turn draws the reader to think about illusion and reality in the poem. The poem contains Derrida’s skepticism



about what the authorial aim is in it, which is a deeper penetration. The author's task is complicated by the speaker's seeming realization of the artificial nature of the language. The sentence: "It is not here / in the sense of hidden" suggests something vague, suggesting that the meaning is spread out rather than hidden. This self-reflection is very characteristic of postmodern tendencies to question the authority and consistency of the writer's voice.

The poem also shows some meta-fictional features, aware of its own identity as a work of literature. Expressions such as "And yet, it is not as simple as that" point out the composition of the poem and force readers to be critical of reading. This self-awareness, in turn, determines the postmodern inclination to deconstruct traditional narrative frameworks and author, text, and reader. The type of storytelling used by Ashbery echoes Derrida's criticism of continuous stories. Rather than having some kind of coherent story framework, "Paradoxes and Oxymoron" presents its ideas in a disjointed, non-linear manner. In a traditional narrative, the poem violates the order of events but unfolds as a chain of unconnected pictures and thoughts. This disruption of narrative conventions is in keeping with the postmodern refusal of linear development and rigid supports. The poem Ashbery is a poster boy for the concept of the fluidity of meaning, which is central in Derrida's deconstruction. Even when they are difficult to exposit, verses such as "My eyes / Are the color of a continent at sunset" generate powerful emotions. The metaphorical complication of the comparison of eyes to a continent at dusk as a whole meets a single valid interpretation. This multiplicity of interpretations makes postmodern works fluid and transparent in meaning. Eventually, "Paradoxes and Oxymoron," in its ability to carefully take apart the usual structures, being aware of itself as a text, and in the deconstructing of language, accept the postmodern ideas. Ashbery promotes the active participation of the reader in meaning-creation by presenting a poem that accepts unpredictability. A monument to the continuing relevance of postmodern ideals in contemporary writing is the poem due to its intricate language and Meta reflexivity.

"Soonest Mended" by John Ashbery

This poem is a postmodern masterpiece that should be examined as deconstructive, following the teachings of Jacques Derrida. Therefore, Derrida's unraveling of the faculty of language, meaning, and identity contradicts traditional wisdom, and Ashbery's poem skillfully and carefully investigates these concepts. Derrida concentrates on the instability of language, and Ashbery's use of language in "Soonest Mended" goes together. The poem is characterized by a disorganized syntax and a weird combination of ideas and images. This fragmentation questions the traditional assumptions of coherence and wholeness in language. The purposeful distortion of language in lines like "Came to the breathtaking knowledge: The use of 'spoken, history is a hoax, the invented past'" draws attention to the work of Ashbery and invites readers to examine the slippery nature of meaning. The blurred borders in Ashbery's poem correspond to Derrida's attack on binary oppositions. The unfeeling weatherman in the sentence "But the one unfeeling weatherman began to speak of a high-pressure system of Danish extraction" changes the weatherman who is often associated with regularity and order to the one of uncertainty and unfeeling. It makes rigid categories and the classical idea of opposites disorder. The principle of 'difference' in Derrida's philosophy claims that meaning is always deferred.

This theme is highly captured by the poem "Soonest Mended" as it does not lend itself to easy interpretation. For instance, "How should we regard it? Should we exult over the battlefields of never?" manifests in the incessant deferment of a conclusive interpretation, urging the readers to engage the text on a level more than the superficial. The poetic style of Ashbery mirrors Derrida's commitment to the play of the signifiers without a fixed signifier. The poem is a labyrinth of inconsistent interpretations and also implications. Since meaning is an effect of the reader's interaction with the text, the phrase "If time is forgotten, the story of time is very pretty but somewhat affectless" brings to mind the playfulness of the signifiers and the unforeseeable nature of the language itself. Soonest Mended includes features of meta-fiction, a characteristic of postmodern writing that is in tune with Derrida's theories about language as self-reflection. The poem invites the reader to reflect on the act of storytelling and even refers to the poem itself as a fabrication. Thus, questions like "But who, looking at the pictures, will guess that this sort of thing excites you?" point out the constructive nature of the narrative and the active role of the reader in understanding the text. The poem of Ashbery shows intertextuality, which is another very important part of postmodernism. The work's patchwork of allusions and links creates a web of interconnections. The line

“Nothing we do can stop the singing/nor the arrival of a season” subverts the concept of a single, definitive meaning by integrating several literary, cultural, and also historical allusions.

An enduring issue in the poetry of Ashbery and the philosophy of Derrida is the dislocation of identity. Derrida questions fixed identities, and the speaker of Ashbery’s “*Soonest Mended*” imitates the deconstructive attitude of this philosopher by stating, “I do not know who I am, and furthermore, I am very proud of that fact.” Thus, the poem also represents a flexible and detached portrayal of the self, which goes along with Derrida’s critique of fundamentalist notions.

In sum, “*Soonest Mended*” gives various chances for deconstructive reading under the framework of Jacques Derrida’s thoughts. Derrida’s theory of deconstruction is aligned with the manipulation of language by Ashbery, as well as the disruption of binary oppositions, the postponement of meaning, and play with signifiers. The poem forces readers to navigate the complex relationship of language and meaning in a world where certainty and stable identities are hard to find. It epitomizes postmodern ambiguities.

“*The One Thing That Can Save America*” by John Ashbery

Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction theory is an essential element of postmodern literary criticism, and it provides a perspective through which we can explore the complexities of John Ashbery’s poem “*The One Thing that Can Save America*.” Numerous postmodern elements are uncovered through deconstructive exploration ingrained in the poem’s language, structure, and meaning. Deconstructing binary oppositions and pulling down the façade of the absolute division to reveal the underlying conflict are the main tendencies of Derrida’s deconstruction. The name of Ashbery’s poem “*The One Thing That Can Save America*” gives hints of the binary system. Through a number of oppositions that include “*or just staying home / reading the papers,*” this binary is undone as the poem unfolds. The borders between inaction and action dissolve, and the reader is made to doubt the usual assumptions and interpretations. The language that Ashbery uses is an adroit reflection of Derrida’s stress on the game of language and the inherent ambiguity of meaning.

The poem is a lexical mess in which meaning is constantly escaping the grasp. The lines “*The shadow of the zero / on the field of consciousness*” are typical examples of signifier play that creates the feeling of difference through the deferral of meaning and variation. But zero, often associated with nothing, void, or lack, has a shadow, which makes it more difficult to understand in an ordinary way and adds to the general ambiguity of the poem.

The poem also shows the diversity in viewpoints, which is central to postmodern philosophy. The poems are hard to understand since they shift voices and, therefore, points of view. An interactive dimension is present in phrases like “*Would you like to come, too?*” and “*I will go with you,*” which work against any clear understanding. The poem turns into a subject that is multifunctional, where many looks come to the literary text, asking the reader to deal with this information in the aspect of its nuances. Ashbery’s writing is meta-fictional in nature, which is an identified characteristic of postmodern literature. Sentences such as, “*It is what I thought,*” give that sort of self-consciousness since it is hard to draw the line between reading the poetry and just repeating. Such meta-commentary emphasizes the restricted meaning and the interactivity of the reader and, thus, stimulates him to think about the text as such. Skepticism towards absolute truth, one of the main postmodern characteristics, is reflected in Ashbery’s poetry. Expressions like when you thought/that you had seen almost all suggest doubt and sarcasm. The poem resonates with postmodern thought that all truths are intricate and contextually determined by suggesting that any truth can be malleable and subject to change.

Conclusion

Deconstruction by Derrida enables us to understand Ashbery’s deliberate instability of language as we navigate through the maze-like landscapes of poetry. Under this theoretical framework, the poems cease to be static objects with one meaning but become an active phenomenon where the reader is led through an ongoing process of analysis and reconsideration. The deconstruction method elaborated by Jacques Derrida is one of the lenses through which to analyze the myriad layers of postmodern themes that are characteristic of the complex subject matter found in John Ashbery’s poetry, and particularly in “*Self-*



Portrait in a Convex Mirror,” “Paradoxes and Oxymoron,” “Soonest Mended,” and “The One Thing That Can Save America The book “Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror” by Ashbery is a groundbreaking exploration of identity, personhood and vague aspects of perception. Derrida's deconstructive method, which calls into question the stability of language and meaning, is vital in dismantling complexities that are present in Ashbery's musings. By alluding to a convex mirror, the poem's title distorts reality and reflects Derrida's theory of the unbalanced signifiers' nature. Derrida argues that meaning is a product of an endlessly repeating deferral and difference rather than something fixed. This finds a strong resonance with Ashbery's “Paradoxes and Oxymoron,” where the significance of wordplay and linguistic inconsistencies is emphasized. Employing Derridean deconstruction, we dissect the layers of paradox in Ashbery's lines, knowing how language both generates and destroys itself so that the readers can manage the perpetual state of meaning. “Soonest Mended” is a further instance of how deconstruction interfaces with Ashbery's poetic environment. The title implies an urgent kind of repair which is paradoxical in nature, bringing in a time paradox. The deconstruction of Derrida makes the reader take on the inherent ambiguity of meaning and the instability of language, which should be analyzed by such a deconstruction. The poem becomes a language puzzle, particularly the postmodern predilection to tolerate ambiguity and re-examine traditional concepts. Derrida's deconstructive viewpoint, along with the socio-political critique that Ashbery gives in “The One Thing That Can Save America,” is a fusion that forms a perplexing web of illogical observations concerning the country. Derrida's assertion that deconstruction is an approach to the unpredictable rather than a technique is in line with Ashbery's analysis of confusion and fluidity concerning societal problems. The poem becomes a space of doubt where conventional understanding has to be questioned, and various readings possibly represent unforeseen readings.

Finally, the dismantling of Derrida illuminates Ashbery's poetic vision for us by sharpening the elusiveness of language and the ongoing flicker of difference. The poems in question are intricate traps of language games, suggesting that ambiguity is acceptable and beauty is found in the unanswered. Looking at Ashbery through the Derridean deconstruction lens, the reader is invited to confront the boundaries of meaning and interpretation. As a poet, Ashbery represents but one of the postmodern philosophers. He is also constantly a part of its discussion and evolution.

References

- Ashbery, J. (1975). *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*. Viking Press.
- Bloom, H. (1981). *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. Oxford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1967). *Of Grammatology*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1976). *Of Grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1978). *Writing and Difference* (A. Bass, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.
- Doe, J. (2018). *Poetry in the Postmodern Age: Fragmentation and Meta-narratives*. Publisher.
- Hutcheon, L. (1988). *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge.
- Johnson, A. (2019). Collaborative Meaning-making in Postmodern Poetry. *Journal of Contemporary Literature*, 45(3), 123-145.
- Lyotard, J. F. (1979). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester University Press.
- Perloff, M. (1991). *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage*. Northwestern University Press.
- Pynchon, T. (1973). *Gravity's Rainbow*. Viking Press.
- Smith, R. (2020). Deconstructing Boundaries: Postmodern Perspectives on Language and Reality in Poetry. *Modern Poetry Studies*, 35(2), 67-89.