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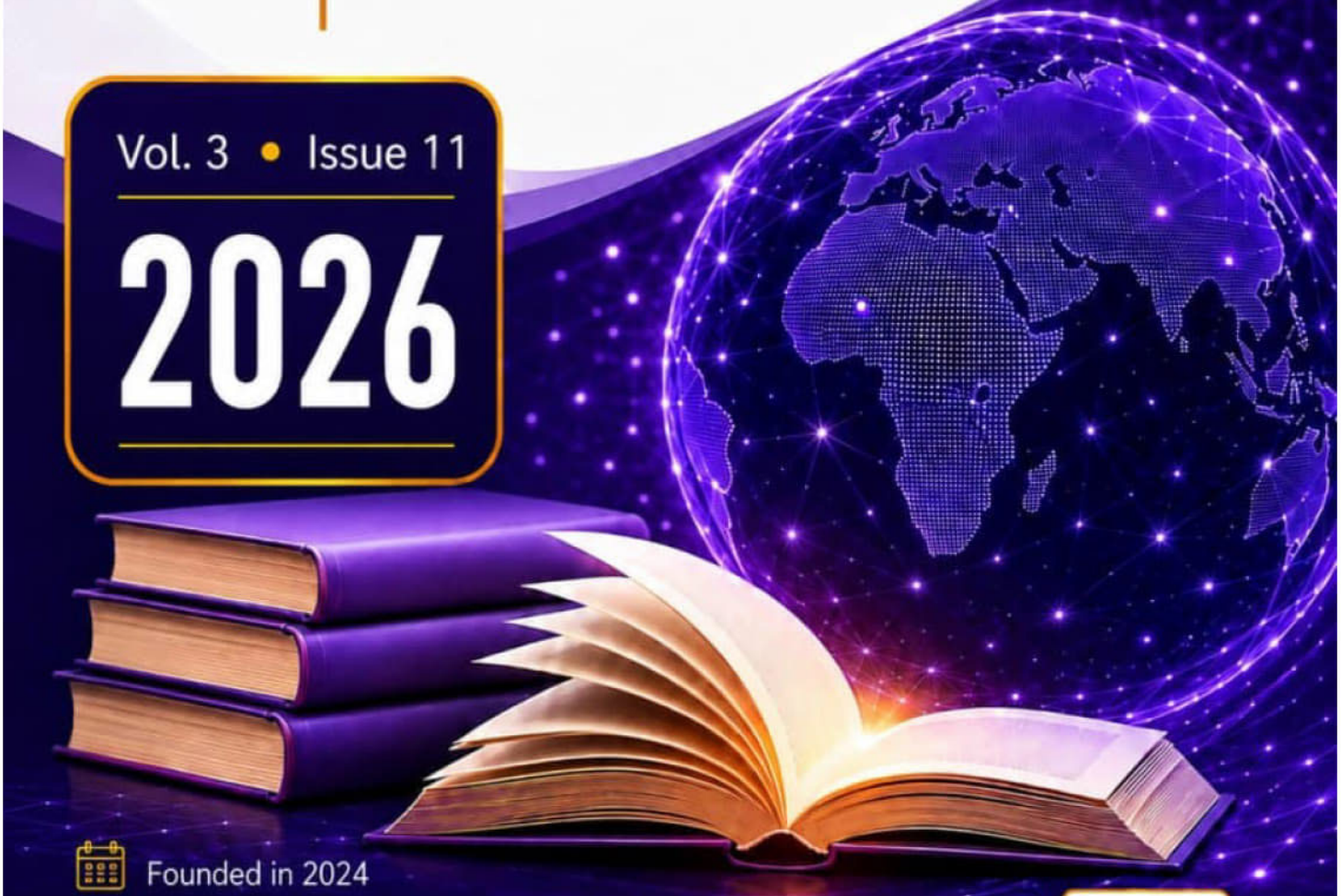
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JON ESHBERI SHE'RIYATIDA METAFIZIKANING NAMOYON BO'LISHI: XUSUSIYATLAR VA POETIK STRATEGIYALAR

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Annotatsiya.

Maqolada Jon Eshberi she'riyatida borliq, identiklik, ong, vaqt va tilga oid metafizik izlanishlarning namoyon bo'lishi tadqiq etiladi. Matnni sinchiklab o'qish va mavzuviy-falsafiy tahlil usullari asosida shoirning beshta she'ri — "The Instruction Manual", "The Skaters", "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror", "Paradoxes and Oxymorons" hamda "At North Farm" o'rganiladi. Tadqiqot davomida takrorlanuvchi beshta asosiy xususiyat aniqlanadi: ontologik noaniqlik, subyektivlikning fragmentarligi, tilning epistemik beqarorligi, vaqtning nochiziqli kechishi va yechimsiz qolgan transsendensiya. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, Eshberi metafizikani barqaror ta'limot sifatida emas, balki ong beqaror idrok va til vositasida ma'no yaratadigan jarayon sifatida tasvirlaydi. Paradoks, olmoshlarning almashinuvi, assotsiativ o'tishlar va o'z-o'ziga murojaat qilish kabi poetik strategiyalar falsafiy noaniqlikni o'qish jarayonida bevosita his etiladigan tajribaga aylantiradi.

Kalit so'zlar: Jon Eshberi, metafizika, ontologiya, ong, subyektivlik, postmodern she'riyat.

ПРОЯВЛЕНИЕ МЕТАФИЗИКИ В ПОЭЗИИ ДЖОНА ЭШБЕРИ: ОСОБЕННОСТИ И ПОЭТИЧЕСКИЕ СТРАТЕГИИ

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Аннотация.

В статье исследуется проявление метафизических размышлений о бытии, идентичности, сознании, времени и языке в поэзии Джона Эшбери. С применением методов пристального прочтения текста и тематико-философского анализа рассматриваются пять стихотворений поэта: «The Instruction Manual», «The Skaters», «Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror», «Paradoxes and Oxymorons» и «At North Farm». В ходе исследования выявляются пять повторяющихся особенностей: онтологическая неопределённость, фрагментарность субъективности, эпистемическая нестабильность языка, нелинейность времени и неразрешённая трансценденция. Результаты показывают, что Эшбери представляет метафизику не как устойчивую доктрину, а как процесс, в котором сознание конструирует смысл посредством изменчивого восприятия и языка. Такие поэтические стратегии, как парадокс, смена местоимений, ассоциативные переходы и самореференция, превращают философскую неопределённость в непосредственный читательский опыт.

Ключевые слова: Джон Эшбери, метафизика, онтология, сознание, субъективность, постмодернистская поэзия.

THE MANIFESTATION OF METAPHYSICS IN JOHN ASHBERY'S POETRY: FEATURES AND POETIC STRATEGIES

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Abstract.

The article examines how metaphysical inquiries into being, identity, consciousness, time, and language are manifested in John Ashbery's poetry. Employing close reading and thematic-philosophical analysis, the study explores five poems: "The Instruction Manual", "The Skaters", "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror", "Paradoxes and Oxymorons", and "At North Farm". Five recurring features are identified: ontological uncertainty, fragmented subjectivity, the epistemic instability of language, nonlinear temporality, and unresolved transcendence. The findings demonstrate that Ashbery presents metaphysics not as a stable doctrine but as a process through which consciousness constructs meaning by means of unstable perception and language. Poetic strategies such as paradox, pronoun shifts, associative transitions, and self-reference transform philosophical uncertainty into an immediate experience of reading.

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Keywords: John Ashbery, metaphysics, ontology, consciousness, subjectivity, postmodern poetry.

Introduction. John Ashbery (1927–2017) is widely regarded as one of the most influential American poets of the second half of the twentieth century. His collection Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror (1975) received the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and the National Book Critics Circle Award. His poems repeatedly position readers at the boundary between ordinary experience and fundamental metaphysical questions: offices, urban scenes, paintings, and conversations become occasions for exploring what constitutes the self, how reality is perceived, and whether language can stabilize experience.

The term metaphysics is used here in a literary-philosophical rather than a doctrinal sense, referring to recurring questions concerning being, identity, reality, temporality, consciousness, and the limits of knowledge. Ashbery rarely advocates a fixed philosophical system; instead, his poems dramatize the process of thinking when its objects cannot be definitively established. This distinguishes him from seventeenth-century English "metaphysical poetry." Although both traditions employ paradox and intellectual tension, Ashbery resists the argumentative closure associated with the metaphysical conceit.

Although Ashbery's indeterminacy has been widely discussed, the metaphysical dimension of his poetics has rarely been examined as a coherent set of features across different periods of his work. The aim of this study is to determine how metaphysical concerns manifest themselves in Ashbery's poetry and which poetic strategies make uncertainty about being, identity, time, and reality perceptible to readers. The working hypothesis is that Ashbery develops a metaphysics of mediation, in which reality is never simply given but is encountered through perception, memory, imagination, language, and artistic representation.

To achieve this aim, the study establishes the following objectives: to define the literary-philosophical meaning of metaphysics as applicable to Ashbery's poetry; to identify recurring metaphysical features in a corpus of poems from different periods; to describe the formal devices through which these features are realized; and to evaluate how the findings refine existing critical interpretations of Ashbery's indeterminacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Critical scholarship provides several theoretical frameworks for this study. M. Perloff interprets Ashbery's indeterminacy not as an absence of meaning but as a condition in which multiple interpretive possibilities remain simultaneously active [7]. J. Shoptaw analyzes the procedures through which Ashbery's poems construct and displace frames of reference [8], while D. Herd situates the poet's formal inventiveness within changing aesthetic and historical contexts [6]. H. Vendler emphasizes the role of the implied listener and lyric address in shaping Ashbery's poetic consciousness [11] and, in her review of A Wave, identifies mortality as a central concern of the collection [10]. M. Snyder-Camp highlights the active, co-creative role assigned to readers in "Paradoxes and Oxymorons" [9]. However, these studies focus primarily on indeterminacy, address, or poetic occasion. The present article integrates these perspectives to examine metaphysics as a systematic feature of Ashbery's poetics.

The study employs a qualitative interpretive approach combining close reading, thematic coding, comparative textual analysis, and philosophical interpretation. Close reading identified recurring formal features, including paradox, deixis, pronoun shifts, syntactic qualification, associative transitions, metapoetic statements, and changes in temporal perspective. Thematic coding organized these observations into five categories: selfhood and ontology; language and knowledge; time and memory; reality and representation; and transcendence.

The corpus was purposively selected to represent Ashbery's early, middle, and later creative periods: "The Instruction Manual" from Some Trees [1], "The Skaters" from Rivers and Mountains [2], "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror" [3], "Paradoxes and Oxymorons" from Shadow Train [4], and "At North Farm" from A Wave [5]. Each poem was examined individually and then comparatively, with interpretations evaluated against the critical studies cited above [6–11].

RESULTS

Ontological Uncertainty and the Divided Self

"Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror" provides the clearest example of Ashbery's concern with the ontological status of the self [3]. The convex mirror produces an image that is simultaneously recognizable as a portrait and distorted by its reflective surface. If self-knowledge depends on representation, the self that appears to consciousness is already mediated. The poem declares that "The soul establishes itself" and subsequently suggests "That the soul is not a soul, / Has no secret, is small, and it fits / Its hollow perfectly" [3]. This contradiction functions less as a theological proposition than as a performative effect: the category of the "soul" is introduced only to be subjected to the uncertainty governing the painted surface. Selfhood becomes relational, emerging through the interaction among painter, image, speaker, and viewer.

Language and Epistemic Instability

"Paradoxes and Oxymorons" reflects on the poem itself while it is being read [4]. The line "You have it but you don't have it" encapsulates the central epistemological dilemma: readers possess the words, yet the complete object referred to as "meaning" remains unstable. The concluding statement, "The poem is you," dissolves the conventional distinction between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge [4]. Meaning is neither permanently contained within the text nor freely invented by the reader; rather, it emerges through their interaction.

Time, Memory, and Imagined Experience

In "The Instruction Manual," the speaker, bored with writing a manual, imagines a journey to Guadalajara [1]. Although the journey is fictional as a physical event, it is real as an experience of consciousness. The speaker's return to

the desk demonstrates that imagination can reorganize experienced time without eliminating material circumstances. "The Skaters" develops this process on a broader scale [2]. Its discontinuous movement through perceptions, memories, and self-reflexive statements imitates not chronological time but the temporal dynamics of thought, in which an image may disappear and subsequently return in an altered form.

"At North Farm" begins with the line "Somewhere someone is traveling furiously toward you" and juxtaposes scarcity ("Hardly anything grows here") with abundance ("Yet the granaries are bursting with meal") [5]. The absence of an explanatory context transforms the scene into an existential structure: someone is approaching, but the significance of the arrival remains unknowable in advance. In light of Vendler's interpretation of A Wave [10], death represents a persuasive reading. Nevertheless, the poem's power depends on its refusal to provide explicit identification; the anticipated arrival becomes an image of futurity itself.

Ashbery preserves the desire to move beyond appearances toward a more fundamental reality while questioning whether mediation can ever be transcended. The mirror cannot be removed from the portrait without destroying the image [3]; language cannot be discarded to obtain pure meaning [4]; and memory cannot return the subject to an untouched past [2]. Transcendence therefore emerges as an unfinished orientation rather than an achieved state.

DISCUSSION

Across the five poems, the same philosophical pattern emerges at different levels: daydreaming in "The Instruction Manual," associative movement in "The Skaters," representation in "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror," reading in "Paradoxes and Oxymorons," and futurity in "At North Farm." Ashbery's metaphysics is therefore procedural: it resides in the transitions through which consciousness moves from one provisional construction of reality to another. Being is encountered as represented being, the self as a reflected or addressed self, and time as remembered or anticipated time.These findings extend Perloff's concept of indeterminacy [7] by demonstrating that Ashbery's openness possesses a specific philosophical dimension. They also support Herd's view that the poems resist fixed systems because their occasions continually change [6]. Furthermore, the findings explain why formal fragmentation carries philosophical significance: discontinuity allows readers to experience a limited version of the uncertainty investigated within the poem. Ashbery's difficulty is therefore structured rather than merely obscure, as recurring oppositions—self and image, presence and absence, arrival and delay—provide conceptual orientation even when narrative continuity becomes fragmented.The findings also clarify the reader's role in Ashbery's metaphysics. Because pronouns such as you and we continually shift their apparent referents, readers cannot remain external observers. Each interpretive adjustment reproduces the broader problem of human knowledge, in which provisional understanding must be constructed from incomplete and changing evidence. In this respect, Ashbery's poetic practice supports Vendler's observation that his lyric consciousness is shaped by an implied listener [11], while adding a philosophical dimension: the listener becomes an active participant in the construction of reality itself.

CONCLUSION

Metaphysics in John Ashbery's poetry manifests itself through uncertainty concerning the self, the reliability of language, the structure of time, the relationship between imagination and actuality, and the possibility of transcendence. These concerns are expressed through paradox, self-reference, pronoun shifts, associative transitions, and unstable frames of representation.Ashbery develops a metaphysics of mediation rather than one grounded in final foundations: a mirror provides access to the self while simultaneously distorting it; language enables meaning while preventing its absolute possession; and memory sustains continuity while transforming the past.The study is limited to five poems. Further research may apply the proposed analytical framework to Ashbery's later collections or compare his treatment of consciousness with that found in other poetic traditions, including Uzbek poetry of the late twentieth century.

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