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**The Urban Pastoral Aspects
of The New York School of Poetry**

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ABSTRACT

THE URBAN PASTORAL ASPECTS OF THE NEW YORK SCHOOL OF POETRY

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This study examines the presence of pastoral elements in the works of two leading figures of the New York School Poetry, Frank O'Hara and John Ashbery, who have been exclusively defined as city poets who represent in their works different aspects of post war urban reality. This thesis foregrounds the pastoral elements buried in the characteristic city landscapes in their poems profiting from the theoretical discourse on the pastoral-urban opposition developed by scholars like Leo Marx, Timothy Gray, and Andrew V. Ettin. The study asserts that O'Hara and Ashbery use the urban-pastoral amalgam as a method of dealing with the sense of urban anxiety caused by the atmosphere of artistic and social restraint governing America in the 1950s. The urban pastoral elements in Ashbery's poems are conceptualized as "a middle landscape," an ambiguous poetic terrain that blends nostalgic pastoral images from the past with present urban experiences as a strategy of dealing with the state of urban restlessness. The study of O'Hara's poetry demonstrates that despite its ostensibly urban characteristics, he tends to define his favorite local, New York, with pastoral images that turn him ultimately to a "semiotic shepherd."

KEYWORDS: Pastoral, Urban, Nostalgia, O'Hara, Ashbery

ÖZ

THE URBAN PASTORAL ASPECTS OF THE NEW YORK SCHOOL OF POETRY

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Bu çalışma, eserlerinde savaş sonrası kentsel gerçekliğin farklı yönlerini temsil eden şehir şairleri olarak tanımlanan New York Okulu Şiiri'nin önde gelen iki şairinin, Frank O'Hara ve John Ashbery'nin, eserlerinde kırsal öğelerin varlığını incelemektedir. Tezde, Leo Marx, Timothy Gray ve Andrew V. Ettin gibi akademisyenler tarafından geliştirilen kırsal-kentsel karşıtlığına ilişkin teorik söylemden yararlanılarak, bu iki şairin eserlerine özgü şehir manzaralarında gömülü pastoral unsurlar ön plana çıkartılmaktadır. Çalışma, O'Hara ve Ashbery'nin, kentsel-kırsal bileşenini 1950'lerde Amerika'da hüküm süren sanatsal ve sosyal kısıtlama ortamının neden olduğu kentsel kaygı duygusuyla baş etme yöntemi olarak kullandığı tezini savunmaktadır. Ashbery'nin şiirlerindeki kentsel-kırsal unsurlar, kentsel huzursuzluk durumuyla başa çıkma yöntemi olarak geçmişe ait nostaljik kırsal imgeleri mevcut kentsel deneyimlerle harmanlar ve muğlak bir şiirsel alan yaratan "orta tabiat" kavramına odaklanır. O'Hara'nın şiirlerinin incelenmesi, görünüşteki belirgin kentsel özelliklerine rağmen, şairin gözde mekanı olan New York'u kırsal imgelerle tanımlama eğiliminde olduğunu ve nihayetinde bir "semiyotik çoban" olarak tanımlanabileceğini göstermekte.

ANAHTAR KELİMELEER: Pastoral, Şehir, Nostalji, O'Hara, Ashbery

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INTRODUCTION

Originated in ancient Greece with Theocritus's poems on life in the country, pastoral poetry is acknowledged for romanticizing the tranquility of rural life and for examining the interaction between nature and humanity. The interaction of the social and the natural explains the ongoing appeal of this early genre with a history of more than two thousand years. Pastoral poems mostly provide an illusory rural experience through either traditional or sophisticated shepherd characterization in which the city constitutes an anti-space outside the imagined bucolic dream. Till the 18th century, the western literary tradition rests on the clash of the ominous nature of urban settings with the peacefulness of pastoral spaces. With the Romantic movement, the city turns into a source of "modern disgust" and "horror" since writers such as Dickens, Auden, Wordsworth, and Melville reveal their obvious intent to escape from this hostile urban space where the conventional harmony between the individual and nature is invaded (Howe, 41). While cities rapidly evolve into metropolitans, the concept of the city as a non-pastoral space is altered by the hasty expansion of urban over rural. Correspondingly, this geographical expansion affects the urban-pastoral dichotomy in the modern era. While the city continues to be a place of misery and estrangement for many writers and poets, figures like Baudelaire, Crane, and Whitman choose to celebrate the richness of their metropolitans. Baudelaire presents his fascination with these transformed urban spaces through the eyes of a "flaneur," an urban character whose particular aim is to appreciate the city's beauties. Crane's fascination with the urban in **The Bridge** is reflected through the image of The Brooklyn Bridge, a true marvel of industrial beauty. Likewise, Whitman's metropolis thrives in harmony with nature, without feeling overwhelmed or repressed by the industrial structure of the city. Yet even in these works that celebrate the city, the pastoral mode is not totally dismissed, it is only elevated to the level of the imagination as Irving Howe suggests: "As urban men who can no more retreat to the country than could shepherds read the poems celebrating their virtues, we are invited by pastoral to a game of the imagination in which every move is serious" (39). What is suggested here is quite dramatic since

modern writers cannot escape from their urban reality to the country as there is no pastoral space to run away to; therefore, they retreat to the shelter of "pastoral imagination." This imaginative approach to the pastoral mode has been adopted by subsequent generations of poets too, yet the study of distinctly urban works such as the products of the New York School of Poetry have generally dismissed their immersion in bucolic dreams.

This thesis aims to explore the usage of the pastoral mode in the urban poems of two leading figures of the New York School of Poetry, namely, Frank O'Hara and John Ashbery. Although the works of other members of the New York School such as Barbara Guest, Kenneth Koch and James Schuyler have also been examined from a similar perspective, my study will focus specifically on the urban poetics of O'Hara and Ashbery as the most relevant figures who are closely associated with New York City. By analyzing the poetry of O'Hara and Ashbery, I argue that the poets use pastoral images within an urban framework as an attempt to escape from their current conditions with a sense of longing for nostalgic memories. In contrast to the previous works of scholars who look at the New York School from an urban-pastoral perspective, I suggest that both O'Hara and Ashbery do not celebrate an urban-pastoral cohesion; on the contrary, they seek liberation from the restraints of urban reality and strive for retreat in nature. This thesis foregrounds the pastoral elements buried in the characteristic city landscapes of the two poets profiting from the theoretical discourse on the pastoral-urban opposition developed by scholars like Leo Marx, Timothy Gray, and Andrew V. Ettin. The study asserts that O'Hara and Ashbery use the urban-pastoral amalgam as a method of dealing with the sense of urban anxiety caused by the atmosphere of artistic and social restraint governing America in the 1950s. The urban pastoral elements in Ashbery's poems are conceptualized as "a middle landscape," an ambiguous poetic terrain that blends nostalgic pastoral images from the past with present urban experiences as a strategy of dealing with the state of urban restlessness. The study of O'Hara's poetry demonstrates that despite its ostensibly urban characteristics, he tends to define his favorite local, New York, with pastoral images that turn him ultimately to a "semiotic shepherd."

Undoubtedly the New York School of Poets have inspired many researches with both their unconventional lifestyle and their free-spirited, formless poetic style. There is a considerable number of studies that discuss their contribution to American Poetry marking group features or characteristics that differentiate them from their contemporary poets. In **Statues of Liberty** (1993), for example, Geoff Ward establishes the tangible cultural framework of New York City to discuss the urban perspective in poems of different members of the School. David Lehman's **The Last Avant-Garde: The Making of the New York School of Poets** (1998) is another seminal work that mostly concentrates on real-life anecdotes and interviews to explore the formation of the group and the poetic principles that unite them. In her comprehensive research **Frank O'Hara: Poet Among Painters** (1977), Marjorie Perloff provides an insightful perspective to the works O'Hara and other members of the School situating them among the larger formation of the New York School of Art. Jeremy Eisenberg's "An Urban Pastoral Wedding: The Influence and Development of Coterie Poetics" and Yasmine Shamma's "Poetry of Inner Space: Dimensions of The New York Schools" are two more extensive works that mostly concentrate on the Second Generation of the School.

Timothy Gray's **Urban Pastoral: Natural Currents in the New York School** (2011) deserves special attention as the most recent and unique source that had particular impact on my thesis. Gray examines the poets of New York School from an urban-pastoral perspective, an approach no other scholar had suggested before. In addition to the listed works, a detailed collection of the studies of the childhood memories of the poets is a significant resource that constitutes the backbone of my thesis as such works provide significant clues about the pastoral impulse within their distinctly urban poetics.

Considering that the New York School of Poetry had been examined from an urban-pastoral perspective before, one may ask what makes this thesis prominent. Many scholars assert geographic closeness, their location in New York, as their main unifying force. In addition to their urbanism, Gray points out they form "a school of fish: creatures coming together to explore currents outside the mainstream" (1). However, I argue that along with their reaction to mainstream culture it is the pastoral

impulse within their urban environment that merges the poets of the School. In addition, some scholars like Gray suggest an intermingled urban-pastoral space while examining the School as a whole. I assume a similar perspective focusing specifically on two of the most prominent leaders of the school, Frank O'Hara, and John Ashbery, to explore their connection to the urban from a pastoral perspective, especially within the context of New York City. While Gray introduces the idea of urban-pastoral celebration in the poems of the School of Poets, I argue that the chaotic urban life in New York City is not something that both O'Hara and Ashbery appreciate as suggested. With a detailed analysis of representative urban poems, I demonstrate how they employ the pastoral mode and turn bucolic images to a shelter in the poet's/speaker's escape from the restrictiveness of postwar urban reality.

This thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter provides a theoretical framework of urban-pastoral studies starting from the earliest pastoral examples. In this section, I trace the birth and development of the pastoral tradition turning back to the ancient Greek and Roman poets' first collections of bucolic poetry. Taking into account these first literary examples of pastoralism, I explore the reasons for the emergence of pastoral poetry as a distinct social and literary discourse. I argue that the distinction between the city and the country has been established still in the works of ancient poets long time before the socio-political aftermath of the industrial age. After listing the first most prominent examples of pastoral poetry in the ancient literary world, I trail the bucolic tradition in Medieval Europe. Tracing its development from the 16th century to the 18th century, I show how European writers employ pastoral images to criticize the impurity of city life. I mark the satirical tone used by European writers in their pastoral poems in which bucolic images are contrasted to scenes from urban reality. I attempt to identify the conditions that gave birth to the urban-pastoral co-existence in the relatively early pastoral works to understand the social and literary motives of modern pastoralism. Upon discovering that pastoralism was used by 8th century European writers and poets to criticize the urban form of existence, I narrow down my focus on the American pastoral discourse initiated by the first settlers of the continent. I highlight Leo Marx's metaphor of "the machine" in the pastoral American wilderness introduced in his famous **The Machine in the Garden**, one of the most

comprehensive analyses of the urban-pastoral mode written from a literary perspective. Marx's viewpoint is highly crucial for my analysis since he traces all the stages of emergence and maturation of the pastoral ideal in American Literature starting from the travel writings of the first settlers. Then, I pinpoint similar examples from Philip Freneau's poems as he is one of the first American poets who establishes an urban-pastoral perspective during the Revolutionary Period. Freneau's poems are significant in understanding how the 18th-century American socio-political mentality merges the urban and the pastoral to create a balance between industrial improvement and ethical awareness.

The thesis goes on with a survey of the literary implications of the shift from the rural to the urban in American society in the 19th century. In this part of the study, I am greatly indebted to M.A.R. Habib's views on the Romantic and Transcendentalist movements in American Literature formulated in his **Modern Literary Criticism and Theory**. Habib argues that the density of the industrialization process in the 19th century creates a need to cope with the expansion of modern resources and this need results in a unique formation: the existence of the pastoral within the new urban society. To illustrate this, I examine three important Romantic American poets who produce the best "pastoral" poems that present urban conditions in the form of social criticism. First, I analyze the famous American Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson's representation of the urban and pastoral forces. In "Nature," Emerson points out that the new continent's improvement depends on the balance between the spiritual power of nature and the physical potential of the machine. Then, I draw upon the most famous urban pastoral poet in American Literature, Walt Whitman. It would be a futile attempt to explain Whitman's pastoral depiction, I thus exclusively focus on his political aim to create a bucolic environment in an urban space. Mostly considered as an important inspiration for the New York School of Poets, Whitman's main contribution for the consolidation of the urban-pastoral mode is his masterpiece **Leaves of Grass** where he creates the notions of authentic self and the independent nature of American society. Before I move on to 20th-century American poetry, my thesis would be deficient if I did not mention the poetry of Emily Dickinson. In her unique and unconventional poetic form and content, Dickinson is another leading

figure who uses the American landscape to express her confinement in an urban social circle. The same urge to escape from the urban through pastoral forces is observed also in the New York School of poetry in the 20th century.

Before I dwell on the literary positions of New York Poets, I establish the literary perspectives that prevail in the 20th century US. Christopher Beach's **The Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Poetry** is an especially significant anthology for observing the changes of the literary traditions between the 19th and 20th centuries. Beach argues that in the early 19th century the spirit of Realism inflates the popularity of the novel as a genre, while events such as the Civil War and WWI increase the advances in technology and modernization which enables poetry to gain prominence. The shift to the urban creates its antithesis in the 20th century American literary world as many important poets produce exclusively urban works while searching for their authentic voices. This era witnesses prominent works that reflect the effects of modernization upon American society: T.S. Eliot's "Waste Land," Ezra Pound's **Cantos**, William Carlos Williams's **Paterson**, and Hart Crane's **The Bridge**.

Although these social upheavals empower 20th-century American poetry, the emanation of the Cold War influences the poetic style throughout that era. Corresponding to postwar social and political strictness, American poets develop rigid literary patterns corresponding to the norms of the Russian Formalist movement. As Howe marks, American poets such as Richard Howard, Richard Wilbur, and James Merrill apply traditional poetic techniques.

As Newton indicates in his Third Law of Motion, every action has a reaction and this prevalent tendency for formalist poetic structure results in a new, non-conformist group of poets in the 1950s. Donald Allen's anthology **The New American Poetry 1945–1960** lists some of the major experimental groups of the time. Allen asserts that he classifies the poets according to their geographical connection rather than the similarity of their poetic style, as their names suggest: Black Mountain, New York School, San Francisco Renaissance, California Beat Poets. What distinguishes these unconventional groups from their precedents is their belief in the spontaneous

nature of the poetic process and their rejection of academic versification. As a young researcher, I was passionately intrigued by this sense of freedom and their search for novelty both in terms of content and poetic expression. Despite the wide range of their innovativeness, my interest is limited to their unique mode of interspersing the scenes of city life with pastoral images.

The second chapter examines many facets of the pastoral ideal in the modern setting of John Ashbery's verse to reveal that, despite his reputation as a city poet, his works pervade with nostalgia for the pastoral, an incentive that surpasses an intense feeling of urban anxiety caused by the modern city's inexorable restrictions. The poet constructs a "middle landscape" where pastoral aspects trespass on the urban site to disperse the sense of confinement generated by the metropolitan haste, depicting the modern individual under the intense pressure of urban realities. Accordingly, the first section explores the poem "These Lacustrine Cities" and applies Leo Marx's term of "middle landscape" to the work's equivocal and fragmented urban context. **The Poetics of Indeterminacy** by Marjorie Perloff was an essential resource for me while studying Ashbery's middle ground, which the poet develops as a haven free from postwar metropolitan constraints. I highlight how, in response to the destructive power of industrialism, Ashbery establishes his own distinctive approach of merging urban and rural components. The chapter continues with an examination of the poem "The Instruction Manual" in view of Paul Alpers' concept of "pastoral retreat." I claim that the poet/speaker in the poem seeks to reinvent himself as a modern shepherd by escaping from the tumultuous urban world and observing it from a pastoralist aspect. The poem blurs the distinction of time and place by focusing solely on the speaker's evocative perceptions, while Ashbery develops a feeling of escape as a rural solution for his urban imprisonment in a visionary moment of reverie. The poem "The Skaters" is examined in the latter half of the chapter from a theoretical view molded by James McCorkle's "nostalgia and immediacy" dichotomy. This section claims that the connection between Ashbery's use of various voices and the poem's patchwork construction to depict an urban-pastoral landscape maintains a balance between the call of the past and the impulse of the present. From a pastoral standpoint, "The Skaters" demonstrates how naturalistic aspects primarily influenced by the poet's

childhood recollections not only merge past and present moments but also cure the poet's anxiousness in his urban setting, just like the skaters the speaker sees. Ashbery confesses that he constructs "an illusion to deal with the way" by moving in circles in numerous identities and ambiguous surroundings (631). Although Ashbery has several other poems that meld urban and rural elements (such as "For John Clare" and "Soonest Mended"), these three poems are the best examples that illustrate the poet/ speaker's anxiousness and need for pastoral escape by blending the urban setting with bucolic fantasies. Consequently, the poet/speaker achieves inventing an imagined place that helps him overcome his urban anxieties.

The third chapter focuses on the pastoral inclinations in the urban setting of Frank O'Hara's poetry, proving that, despite the poet's close affiliation with New York City, his poems feature pastoral patterns on a broad scale at the semiotic level. O'Hara's iconic lunch walks around the streets of Manhattan in the 1950s socio-spatial setting of postwar New York designate him as a city poet due to his dynamism and anti-formalist literary perspective. Nonetheless, he is afflicted by the chaos that the city requires him to live in, which he feels forced to do. To alleviate his urban anxiety, O'Hara reconstructs New York City using pastoral motifs and his own time and space capsulation to create his ultimate metropolitan atmosphere. I examined some of his urban poems, such as "In Memory of My Feelings" and "Personal Poem," to demonstrate how New York becomes a source of anxiety for O'Hara by emphasizing his personal ties to the city. From Gray's conceptualization of the "semiotic shepherd," a phrase he coined to define O'Hara's urban-pastoral goals, I analyzed various other O'Hara poems, including "October," "Walking," "Poem (It was snowing and now)," and "Music." Although the term "shepherd" connotes a disguise in traditional pastoral verse, I have studied this language from an urban-pastoral perspective, claiming that O'Hara uses this method to define the urban environment by adopting pastoral terms to cure his anxiety.

CHAPTER ONE

THE URBAN PASTORAL TRADITION AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

1.1. The Birth, Development and Definition of the Pastoral

For more than two thousand years, pastoral literature, regarded as a mode, genre, or tradition, has been linked to the poet's emotional and intellectual reaction to the elements of nature that he/she scrutinizes. Even the first known literary works disclose the poet's intellectual engagement with nature. Originated from the Latin word "pastor", which means shepherd, it is no wonder that the term pastoral poetry refers to the literary works that glorify the life of shepherds, in other words, human interaction with the rustic world. Pastoral poetry can be traced back to the time of Hesiod (750-650 BCE), whose didactic poem, **Works and Days** (700 BCE), is recognized as one of the first examples of a *farmer's almanac*, in which Hesiod gives information about rural and agricultural advances. Even though the poem has certain discrepancies related to its message, it is significant for combining gods, human beings, and natural components within the same narrative. However, Theocritus is considered as the first pastoral poet with **The Idylls**, written in the 3rd century BCE, which includes thirty poems mainly about the life of shepherds and peasants. While the poems primarily present the pastoral life in ancient Greece, they treat universal themes such as love, the pain of loss, as well as the difference between city and country lives. Theocritus is followed by Virgil, whose ballads honor the relationship between the pastoral life of rural people and their engagement with the surrounding landscapes.

Since the oral and written poetic traditions of the ancient Greeks and Romans, pastoral poetry has combined the physical beauty of nature and the lyrical beauty of the poem. In contrast to the general belief that pastoral poetry only deals with nature, its significance is expressed in the close connection it establishes between the human being and nature. Thus, pastoral poetry represents human existence in nature, first from the perspective of the shepherd and then the human interaction with the landscape is

presented from the poet's point of view. The decline of the pastoral mode in the era following the ancient Greek and Roman writers is followed by a revival in the age of Renaissance when European artists restart to focus on the pastoral mode driving inspiration from famous Greek poets such as Hesiod and Homer, as well as Roman poets such as Virgil, Ovid and Theocritus. Initiated in Italy with Francesco Petrarch's "Letters of Old Age" and "Letters of Familiar Matters", written for his idols Cicero and Virgil, the ancient pastoral mode becomes influential in other parts of Europe. Along with Petrarch's works, Garcilaso de la Vega's pastoral eclogues in Spain and Pierre de Ronsard's eclogues (such as **Ode à Cassandre**) in France contribute to the solidification of the pastoral mode in Europe.

The first examples of pastoral poetry in English literature can be found in the late 16th century in Alexander Barclay's **Eclogues**, in which Barclay criticizes in a satirical tone the extravagant life in the royal household as well as the indecent aspects of urban existence. However, Edmund Spenser's **The Shepheardes Calender** is regarded as the most significant example of pastoral poetry in this era. Inspired by the eclogues of the ancient Roman poet Virgil and the Italian Renaissance poet Mantuanus, Spenser illustrates one year of a shepherd's life. Until the late 19th century, the pastoral tradition maintains its significance in the works of European poets, while the effects of industrialization and modernization considerably change its scope and tone.

The 18th century witnesses the first socio-political transitions, especially in European societies where the feudal system is replaced by urban social formations. This finds reflection in the literary works of that period too. In "Urban Signs and Urban Literature: Literary Form and Historical Process", Richard Lehan comments on the relationship between the urban and pastoral modes referring to Daniel Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe**. Lehan remarks: "while this novel seems to have little or no connection to the city, it is, I believe, one of our most important urban novels because it explains the cultural and historical process by which the commercial (that is, the modern) city came into being" (101). This novel, written in the 18th century, is regarded as an important urban critique with its emphasis on the absence of urban institutions. In addition to being an early urban critique, **Robinson Crusoe** is also one

of the first examples of the urban-pastoral mode in Western literature as a work that criticizes the urbanization movement through a pastoral setting. As an oxymoronic phrase by nature, the urban-pastoral ideal is highly visible in many satirical works of 18th century English Literature. Jonathan Swift's famous poem "Description of a City Shower" (1710) in which there are clear imitations or inspirations from Virgil's **Georgics** (29 BCE), and John Gay's **Beggar's Opera** (1728) are some well-known satiric examples of the urban pastoral mode in the 18th century. The city is mostly represented as the opposite of nature by being the source of pollution and decay both in the physical and metaphorical sense. Hence, the 18th-century writers use the pastoral elements mostly to underline the spiritual beauty within the polluted urban reality.

What is more significant about the urban pastoral elements in the 18th century is the change of the speaker's perspective and the point of view in the narrative. In "Some Versions of Urban Pastoral", Kevin R. McNamara and Timothy Gray explain this change as "the shift in the pastoral's focus from 'the working countryman' to 'the scientist or the tourist' (246). This close aesthetic interaction between the human narrator/observer and the nature around him/her adjusts itself into the new landscape of the modern human being reflected through a pastoral frame of mind in the urban city spaces.

American Literature has profound literary examples inspired by the pastoral mode that originated in ancient Greek and Roman culture with the works of Theocritus and Virgil. As the travel writing of the Elizabethan era coincides with the first literary reports about the American continent, applied from a new perspective in a new continent, the European explorers' image of pastoralism in the Virgilian sense acquires new significance. Commemorated with numerous titles such as 'the promised land', 'the garden of the Earth' or 'the virgin continent' since its discovery, the American soil becomes a symbol of abundance by resurrecting the ancient pastoral motifs. Being a promised land providing an unlimited space for the American Dream ideal, the new continent has offered fresh opportunities for numerous generations.

In **The Machine in the Garden**, Leo Marx explains the pastoral effect upon the literary modes of this relatively novel country: "Literary and political aims for America's being a pastoral site is to apply 'the poetic fantasy' on a 'virgin country', and 'various Utopian schemes for making America the site of a new beginning for Western society'" (3). This new beginning is initiated by the travel narratives starting with the 16th century seamen, whose effect is so immense on the European society that it can clearly be traced in the literary works of well-known writers such as Sir Thomas More's **Utopia** (1516) and William Shakespeare's **The Tempest** (1610-11). In his article "Utopia and Arcadia: An Approach to More's 'Utopia'", Warren W. Wooden emphasizes the connection between the ancient pastoral tradition and More's **Utopia** in the following statement: " [I]n spirit, rhythm, and form, the closest analog to Book II is to be found in the pastoral tradition of the Golden Age, a tradition which shares with Utopia the steady comparison of two worlds, real and ideal" (31). By reviving the archaic ideals in the Western mind, More's **Utopia** reflects the European perspective of the New World as an opportunity to build a non-primitive pastoral utopia. However, Shakespeare's **The Tempest** illustrates a more urban-pastoral image of the new continent despite the lack of information about the setting throughout the play. The play presents civilized Western characters in a primitive island where the Golden Age garden-image and the dark side of nature are both mirrored. The existence of the urban human in a not-civilized pastoral environment is envisioned as the motif for the migration to this New World.

The first stable English settlement in America at Jamestown in 1607 is followed up by the Old World thanks to the travel writings of the colonizers, especially from the writings of Captain John Smith (1580-1631) in the New World, where the pastoral perspective of this Edenic continent is highly advertised to improve the colonization. As a part of the Governance Council of Jamestown, Smith writes about his experiences in the first settlement in America in numerous works: **A True Relation of Virginia** (1608), **A map of Virginia** (1612), **A description of New England** (1616), **New England's trials** (1620), **An accidence or the pathway to experience** (1626), and **Advertisements for the unexperienced planters of New-England** (1631). Even though his narrative is regarded as ambiguous at some point by the critics, his book **A**

True Relation of Virginia (1608) is considered to be the first English book that is written in America. Smith's narratives in his books mostly consist of his observations about life in the New World. He describes the settlements, the geographical features of the new continent, as well as the characteristics and habits of Native Americans. Although the incidents that he has experienced with the Native American tribes are doubted by many scholars, Smith's autobiographical narratives illustrate the first examples of the combination of the urban and pastoral modes in New England, where Western civilization and primitive societies face each other in a prehistoric landscape for the first time. In addition to Smith, William Strachey's (1572-1621) narrative about a shipwreck in 1609 on his way to Virginia is famously known as the main inspiration of Shakespeare's **The Tempest** as well as many other contemporary Western authors. These primary American narratives of the 16th and 17th century change the Golden Age pastoral ideal by merging the civilization and harsh wilderness together with a more objective point of view and construct a new pastoral mode that does not limited to a utopian perspective.

These first examples of the narratives about New England reflect two different aspects of the continent for the Western audience. Starting from Columbus's own journal "Epistola" (1493), many narratives such as William Strachey's **True Reportory** (1610), and several narratives and translations of George Sandys (1578-1644), frequently mention the horrifying landscape of the continent with the cannibalistic traits of the 'monstrous' native Indians. In contrast to these primitivist perspective of these narratives, most of the travelers, namely, Arthur Barlowe (1550-1620), Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618), and Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616), present the new continent from a positive pastoral perspective. Leo Marx emphasizes that this two-faceted representation envisions New England for European society as a mysterious and ambiguous place. Marx remarks: "The age was fascinated by the idea that the New World was or might become Arcadia, and we hardly need to itemize the similarities between the "gentle, loving, and faithful" Indians of Virginia and the shepherds of the pastoral" (39). Marx mentions the travel narrative of the British Captain Barlowe about Virginia, written in 1584, indicating the fact that for Barlowe is America a "paradise regained" (36), Raleigh likewise uses 'the garden' metaphor for

his description of this fertile and Edenic new world. Besides, in his well-known narrative about the new continent **The Principall Navigations, Voiages, Traffiques and Discoueries of the English Nation** (1589–1600), Richard Hakluyt uses the pastoral mode of Virgil and Theocritus to advertise the glamour of life in the new colonies. By attaching pastoral qualities to New England, Hakluyt aims to encourage the early urbanization process in the new settlements. However, as seen in the first examples of the late 16th-century travel narratives and the literary works inspired by them, he also displays the dilemma of the civilized Western man. Focusing on Shakespeare's **The Tempest**, Marx generalizes this dilemma in the following statement: "The island, like America, could be Eden *or* a hellish desert" (66). Even though the social and political status of this new continent is not clearly formulated in the eyes of the Old World, the 16th and 17th-century European writers, travelers, and explorers tend to create a bucolic Utopia where they believe that the second Golden Age, inspired from the ancient Greek ideal, would be repeated.

The 18th century is a turning point in the development of the European pastoral ideal. The wide range of financial prosperity and political benefits offered to Europeans in the New Land prompt the writers to present the new continent as an idyllic Utopia to the Western audience. The usage of the pastoral mode in the literary works about America ignites the "pursuit of happiness" impulse to augment the process of colonization. These colonial narratives are extremely valuable also for establishing a new mode of pastoral that revives the ancient Greek and Virgilian bucolic ideals with "a new vitality" (Marx, 74-75).

With his nationalist ideas and his full support for Jeffersonian democratic values, Philip Freneau (1752–1832) is one of the most prominent figures of the 18th century American literary world. Freneau's poetry and prose present not only the relationship between settlers and Indians but also many of his poems contain themes related to freedom and equality, as well as to Jefferson's belief that the rural farmer has a stronger moral foundation than the merchant or manufacturer. The representation of nature in many of Freneau's works present his beliefs in the ideals of the Enlightenment. In "On the Religion of Nature," he uses a satirical tone to express his understanding of religion and nature as he explains that faith is not needed to

comprehend the distinction between good and bad. He believes that natural reason is sufficient to make the distinction. The message is that if one follows the teachings of nature, the need for religious mediation is completely unnecessary. Also, in "The Wild Honeysuckle," Freneau presents the honeysuckle as anything precious that is missed in life and death, growing, and disappearing in the wild, dismissed and ignored. In "Freneau's Literary Indian Creating a Noble Past: Philip Freneau's Literary Image of the Indian," S. Halldorson explains the urban pastoral perspective of this poem in the following statement: "Freneau imagines nature as primitive and essentially good yet doomed to die in the natural course of life and progress. Similarly, Freneau sees the Indian as a human manifestation of nature and thus benevolent but doomed to disappear under the power of a progressive civilization." This poem is widely regarded as Freneau's best contribution to American poetry written during the Revolutionary Period exemplifying the first attempts of the urban pastoral mode in American poetry. Freneau believes that the ultimate success of America will be expressed in the combination of nature and industry, a belief he clearly formulates in poems such as "The Rising Glory of America," and "Ode to the Americans."

"Ode to the Americans" invokes the urban pastoral ideal by presenting the virgin continent as a demonstration of Nature's perfection:

They who survey the human stage,
In reason's view; through time's past age,
Will find, whatever nature plann'd
Came, first, imperfect from her hand,
Or what ourselves imperfect call;
In nature's eye, though perfect all— (1-6)

Freneau defines the landscape and spirit of the US as a product of the reconciliation of the industrial force supplied by the European settlers and the power of nature provided by the American continent and its native inhabitants. Freneau believes in the perfect harmony of the urban and pastoral elements forming the American identity emphasizing that the purity of "primitive" nature should be balanced with the forces of

mechanization. Thus, Freneau's poetry discloses the first attempts of the urban pastoral ideal in 18th-century American poetry.

Another important aspect of the pastoral-utopian elements of 18th century narratives is stated in Michael Kraus's article "America and the Utopian Ideal in the Eighteenth Century" where the scholar emphasizes the fact that, not only the aristocratic community but also the "simple folk" of European society is targeted by these texts to encourage the migration to America. Kraus suggests that the bucolic qualities of the new continent's landscape are narrated in detail to provoke especially the non-aristocratic layers of the Western society to believe that the colonization and urbanization movements need a labor force more than anything. He quotes from a "Swiss Gentleman's" letter from South Carolina written in the 18th century:

This Country, perhaps, may not abound so much with those gay and noisy amusements which generally the great and rich affect; but . . . for those who affect Solitude, Contemplation, Gardening, Groves, Woods, and the like innocent Delights of plain simple Nature, and who, with a small Fortune, would provide some competent fix'd Settlement for themselves and children; there can scarce any Place in the British Dominions be found, that will better answer their Expectation. (490)

This image of an agrarian America depicted as a refined garden is closely related to the Virgilian pastoral mode. Before the 18th century, the bucolic quality of the new continent is presented through the image of wild nature with primitive qualities whereas the refined garden metaphor used in this era envisions a more civilized environment. While advertising the financial and political opportunities in this new soil, many writers like the "Swiss Gentleman" compare the dark, gloomy air of the heavily industrialized European cities with the "plain simple Nature" of New England. This comparison creates the lure of an urban-pastoral setting for the reader.

By making a connection between Virgil's eclogues and Washington Irving's well-known "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow", Marx indicates that the word "asylum" is used in the works of both ancient Greek and American writers to define the landscape as a sanctuary: "many colonists described the new land as a retreat, a place to retire to away from the complexity, anxiety, and oppression of European society"

(87). This political, social, and financial-based pastoral propaganda of the New World affected, inevitably, the literary world of the era too. Numerous European literary products of the period, such as James Thomson's **The Four Seasons & Other Poems** (1735), William Cowper's "The Snail" (1730), Oliver Goldsmith's **The Deserted Village** (1770), and Thomas Gray's **Ode on the Spring** (1742) reflect the bucolic images of the American landscape.

However, the description of the landscape of America is not the only connection between the ancient Greek pastoral mode and the 18th century literary world. There is also an apparent similarity between the depiction of Arcadians in ancient works and the representation of native Americans in 18th century literature. Many writers and philosophers glorify the Indians of North America referring to their "noble savage" characteristics just in the way Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Virgil depict Arcadians and Scythians as nomadic, primitive but dignified groups. Kraus emphasizes that attributing "noble savage" qualities to the native Indians as "the modern pagans", the 18th century writers aim to impress the "sophisticated societies" of Europe: "The Indians were portrayed as possessed of classical beauty and a common impulse attributed to them the moral qualities of their ancient prototypes" (490). Through the classification of the Indians as "noble savages" and labeling them with the characteristics of ancient, dignified societies, the European settlers manage to become "the Americans" while the native owners of the continent retain the status of "the Indians". This political intention is achieved also with the assistance literary works that create their own Utopia.

As Marx exemplifies, in Virgil's **Eclogue**, while Tityrus leaves Rome for the countryside, "he is not prey to the violent uncertainties of nature. His mind is cultivated, and his instincts are gratified. Living in an oasis of rural pleasure, he enjoys the best of both worlds — the sophisticated order of art and the simple spontaneity of nature." (22). It is obvious that, starting from the 18th century literary works, such as William Byrd's **A Journey to the Land of Eden** (1733), the pastoral mode in literature becomes a sophisticated escape from the urban, rather than a primitive lifestyle. The same pastoral characteristic will be frequently observed in the works of 19th century American writers, especially in Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman. Thanks

to the use of the pastoral mode side by side with the theme of urbanization, the Western colonizers/writers succeed to build a modern representation of Utopia.

In this part, I have focused on the first literary examples of the pastoral tradition tracing the development of the mode in American literature from the early colonial times to the end of the beginning of the 19th century. In the next sections I argue that that pastoral tradition remains a fundamental force even in the urban environment of 19th and 20th century American society.

1.2. The Transition from Pastoral to Urban

In this part, I analyze the transition of American society from a rural- agrarian to an industrial form of life in the 19th century. This shift with complex social, political, and financial consequences affects each segment of American society, including artists. One of the best visual representations of this major shift is "The Course of Empire", a five-part painting series by the famous American painter Thomas Cole (1801-1848). All five paintings reflect the same imaginative landscape presumably in the new continent, but in different periods. The first painting, "The Savage State" (1834), visualizes the life of North American Indians before the arrival of European colonizers. The stormy weather, the smoke of fire as well as the use of canoes envision a wild but unblemished state of human life, unviolated by the advanced human activities. The second painting, "The Arcadian, or Pastoral State" (1834), reflects the cultivated wilderness of the same landscape. The bucolic state of the first colonies in the 17th and 18th century in the New World, which is likened to the ancient Greek pastoral life, can be observed in the second painting of Cole. Marx's example of the dialogue between Tityrus and Meliboeus from Virgil's **Eclogues**, in which the ancient Roman writer presents the urban man's necessity to escape from the civilized center towards the peaceful nature is visualized by the American painter in this second painting. Besides, the initial period of colonization, when America is represented with

"the garden" metaphor, is also reflected through this domesticated wildness of the Arcadian painting.

While comparing the two different forms of the pastoral mode in America, Marx mentions the well-known 18th century writer Robert Beverley's **History and Present State of Virginia** (1705). Marx discusses the differences between two bucolic gardens from the 16th/17th and 18th century America:

Beverley was groping for the distinction between two garden metaphors: a wild, primitive, or pre-lapsarian Eden in which he thought to have found the Indians, and a cultivated garden embracing values not unlike those represented by the classic Virgilian pasture. At times, in *the History*, he seems on the point of saying as much. And as a matter of fact, the landscape of reconciliation, a mild, agricultural, semi-primitive terrain, was soon to become a commonplace in the rising flow of descriptive writing about America (87)

When the first two paintings of Cole's "The Course of Empire" series are analyzed through Marx's perspective of the American pastoral, the difference between the primitive pastoral and the cultivated pastoral of the New World in the two centuries can be understood. The rest of Cole's paintings ("The Consummation of Empire" (1836), "Destruction" (1836), and "Desolation" (1836)), envision the impacts of the industrial civilization on nature.

Cole's interpretation of the process of transition is significant while examining the clash between the pastoral ideal and the new urbanism movement on both sides of the Atlantic. The 19th-century witnesses more concrete and immense changes in both social and political life with the drastic shifts from rural to urban by creating adaptation problems in urban communities. In **The City in Literature**, Howe focuses on the new experiences created by this shift: "The modern city first appears full-face—as physical concreteness, emblem of excitement, social specter, and locus of myth – in Dickens and Gogol. Nostalgic archaism clashes with the shock of urban horror, and from this clash follows the myth of the modern city" (42). With the emergence of modern cities, the conventional pastoral harmony between human and the surrounding landscape is disturbed, which causes fear, or stated in Howe's terms, "the indeterminacy of urban

life, for Dostoevsky... for Dickens a frightening experience" (45). As an important aspect of the social order, this new modern city life is frequently depicted in the literary works of the contemporary era. However, this reflection is mostly embedded in the pastoral images within the narrative, as it is not easy to separate the human from his/her experience of his/her close engagement with the landscape.

Even though new literary genres emerge in the 19th-century literary world to monitor the growing urbanization in society, the wandering shepherds who find their muse in the pastoral landscape are transferred to the city streets to keeping the core veins of pastoral literature.

1.3. Urbanism in America

In this section, I explore the reasons behind the immense change in American society following the modifications in its landscape. I will also elucidate how the fast pace of urbanism destroys the bucolic ideal by creating an urban horror that can be visibly observed in the first authentic examples of American poetry. Two significant events are considered as influential factors for the socio-political, financial, and literary modifications in the New World. One of them is the French Revolution that changes the social structure of Europe giving rise to nationalist ideals that become highly effective for America's independence, and the second one is the Industrial Revolution that leads to the rapid mechanization. With the transition from an agriculture-based economy to the economy of machines, the transformation of American life gains speed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The mechanization in the industry and the improvements in the means of travel (such as the construction of the railroads and the production of the steamship) enhance the financial well-being of the American community. While these distinct mechanical transformations boost the capitalist ideal in the economy, they also enable the formation of the Romantic movement in the literary world. The expansion of railroads, the immigration to and within America, and the high population growth immensely broaden with the Industrialism. In **Modern Literary Criticism and Theory – A History**, M.A.R.

Habib indicates that in the 19th century, American industrial progress affects both the financial and social structure of the society due to its impact on urbanism across the nation: "There had arisen a vast urban industrial landscape linked by railroad and telegraph, a metallic and concrete world in which the rhythms of rural life, the seasonal work cycles, the links between successive generations, the sense of identity between individual and community, and the strength of family ties" (453).

This transformation causes socio-political dualities, such as the individual/communal workforce and the urban/rural form of life in different fields of American society. From a Marxist perspective, the new capitalist order leads to the division of labor which gives birth to the forces of liberalism and individualism in the social structure of the city in contrast to the unified, agrarian, and pastoral way of life. In addition, there is also a change in the perception of abstract notions, such as the value of time and money. Thus, the 19th century American Romantics view these ramifications as a direct consequence of the process of industrialization. The well-known American Romantics, namely, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, and Herman Melville, focus on the construction of American national identity in their literary works while raising their voices against the rapid forces of mechanization. Habib states: "What they perceived to be the mechanistic and utilitarian tenor of Enlightenment thinking and the industrial, urbanized world governed by the ethics and ideals of bourgeois commercialism. They sought to redeem the ideas of spirit, nature, and the richness of the human self within a specifically American context" (454). The clash of nationalistic aims and the necessity to escape from the chaotic industrial environment leads to the first examples of the urban-pastoral mode in the works of American Transcendentalists. Supporting American independence, they aim their autonomy in the field of literature too. Yet, in contrast to Transcendentalists' pastoral ideals, the forces of urbanization, mechanization, and industrialization are the key factors that enable America to be an independent country. Therefore, their writings, especially the works of Emerson and Whitman, clearly reflect the urban-pastoral oxymoron that inspires the New York School Poets in the next century.

1.4. The 19th Century and the Urban Pastoral Mode in American Poetry

In this section, I analyze the effects of 19th century social, cultural, and political changes on the works of three significant American poets: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Emily Dickinson. As a nationalist poet/author, Emerson supports the idea that mechanization is crucial for the development of society despite his sentimental approach towards nature. Whitman claims that pastoral and urban forces are required together for the unity and national harmony of American society. On the other hand, Dickinson places nature at the center of her works. By focusing on the works of these three distinguished American poets, I aim to unveil the very first dilemma of the urban pastoral mode in industrialized American society.

1.4.1 Ralph Waldo Emerson

Industrialization and mechanization are adopted in America faster than expected. This heavy socio-political alteration caused by the invasion of the "machine" is the fundamental crisis in 19th-century American literature. The contradiction between supporting the industrial progress and the disapproval of the desolation of the pastoral mode with the swift urbanization in the cities have been a major consideration of the first 19th century authors. Inspired by the Romantic ideals of Wordsworth and Carlyle, Emerson reflects the dilemma of his era by emphasizing the necessity of machinery for the development of American economy. While focusing on the potential that this new continent provides, Emerson also tries to concentrate on a truly American voice in a nationalist view through the pastoral beauty of the continent. This paradoxical situation discloses Emerson's dilemma expressed in the necessity for industrialization and the need to civilize the "primitive" New World without destroying the elements of nature.

Even though he is a well-known Transcendentalist with significant literary works in the pastoral mode, Emerson combines his nationalist-industrial ideals with

the American nature ideal to replace the image of the wild wilderness with the notion of a civilized garden. In his essay "The Young American" (1844), he explains the importance of the railroads for the virgin continent: "Railroad iron is a magician's rod, in its power to evoke the sleeping energies of land and water" (3). Emerson suggests that every American should be educated, as part of the government's responsibility to the country "with a view to the values of land." He also claims that combining the natural and the industrial forces are required to take advantage of nature's efficacy without spoiling it (1). Furthermore, Emerson is one of the first poets who reflects on the American pastoral ideal through a romantic perspective. In "Nature" (1836), he indicates the Romantic concept of the close relationship between the human mind/soul and nature: "In the wilderness, I find something dearer and more connate than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature" (4). Despite the fact Emerson states he prefers the pastoral space to the urban in "Nature", in "The American Scholar" he claims that America needs mechanization to become an independent nation. In his evaluation of Emerson's essays, Leo Marx underlines the duality in his perspective of nature and its relation to the romantic view of the American pastoral, he also argues that the new inventions of industrialism enhance the drive for independence on both political and financial levels. In addition, he evaluates the first examples of the urban-pastoral mode of the era underlying "Emerson's ability to join enthusiasm for technological progress with a 'romantic' love of nature and contempt for cities" (232). Thus, the balanced urban-pastoral mode of "Nature" depicts the ultimate Romantic ideal of unity both in nature and the human soul. Marx also contrasts Emerson's positive attitude towards industrialism with the hostile approach of British Romantics: "There are to be no satanic mills in America, no dark, begrimed cities, nothing like the squalid, inhuman world depicted by Blake, Dickens, and Carlyle" (234-235). This new *American* ideal of spatiality, which reshapes the pastoral ideals in a new nation and continent, signals an ultimate separation from the roots of European traditions. In the next section, I will analyze how this unique American voice is going to be shaped by the poetics of Walt Whitman.

1.4.2 Walt Whitman

19th-century American poetry expresses the urban and pastoral ideals from the fresh perspective of a new nation that tries to assert its authentic voice. In "Pastoralism and the American Urban Ideal: Hawthorne, Whitman, and the Literary Pattern", James L. Machor mentions Michael Cowan and Bernard Rosenthal's comments on the urban pastoral representation of 19th century American Romantics, for whom "the city was as important as the garden, not merely as a check against pastoral delusions but as a valuable factor in individual and national development" (1). In contrast to the Western conventions of dividing the urban and pastoral modes into two different categories, Machor argues that the 19th-century American literary world seeks to combine them to create "organic cities where the individual could reconcile his inclinations toward solitude and society, self-fulfillment and community involvement, nature and civilization" (2). However, their contemporary European writers tend to present the urban cities as the source of darkness and pollution. As opposed to the European literary tradition that separates urban and pastoral ideals from each other, the formation of the American nation, both in a socio-political and physical sense, has been based on an urban-pastoral attitude since the beginning of the 17th-century. The construction of "organic cities" or building an industrial nation in this untouched soil has been materialized with a balanced combination of the American wilderness and the industrial forces. Thus, Emerson believes that taming the wilderness is a national responsibility. Along with Emerson, Walt Whitman is another important figure who deserves attention in any discussion of urban-pastoral ideal in American literature because he is the one of the first poets that reports a typically American landscape using a typically American voice. Whitman's intentional use of American dialects, the choice of characters from different layers of the society, the instantaneous mirror-images of American society and landscape with both urban and pastoral components enable him to show the snapshots of the chaotic harmony of the 19th century US. Machor clarifies Whitman's urban-pastoral poetic texture by deconstructing the

poems' structural frameworks. He suggests that in most of his poems, such as "Song of Myself" or "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun", Whitman chooses the urban, specifically the New York City, as his main site or the central theme. Taking the urban as his focal point, Whitman "naturalizes the city by imaginatively dismantling it. No longer a city, it becomes a selection of urban sights and sounds gently interlaced" (333).

In the preface of **Leaves of Grass** (1885), Whitman defines his nation and country in the following terms: "The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States itself is essentially the greatest poem. In the history of the earth hitherto the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ampler largeness and stir" (4). This metaphoric representation of America as a poem that contains the most lyrical potential invokes a notion of poetry that brings together the urban and rural images of the American landscape to establish the individual and universal sought by Emerson. In "Song of Myself," Whitman claims to contain multitudes, indicating that the unity of the self as a national poet can be reached only by embracing the nature and customs of the country. The poet emphasizes the pastoral necessity for the all-inclusiveness of the embrace of "the nation's spirit": "His spirit [American poet's] responds to his country's spirit . . . he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes" (5). While he narrates the history of the country in "I Hear America Singing" he "start[s] from Paumanok", the native American name of Long Island thus reminding the pastoral origin of the contemporary urban setting. Embracing all layers of American community ranging from prostitutes to policemen and politicians, Whitman uses the organic metaphor of the grass as a common denominator. Thus, the relatively spiritual American unity ideal voiced by Emerson acquires a more political focus in Whitman's representation of the chaotic harmony of American society.

In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," probably Whitman's most urban pastoral poem, he acknowledges the necessity to furnish the American landscape with the forces of industrialism: "You furnish your parts toward eternity, /Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul." Like Emerson, Whitman stresses that the main aim of the American nation has always been civilizing the primitive wilderness and turning it into

an independent, "democratic" state. Here, nature is of cardinal importance to understand how these poets assert their national authenticity in a literary sense. The urban-pastoral reflection of the American landscape enables 19th-century American poets not only to create a unique form and content for their literature but also to break its ties from the Western literary traditions. Hence, the voice of Whitman is different from the diction of contemporary European poets thanks to his ability to mirror 'the red-faced girl' and 'the negro', the 'Thanksgiving dinner' in 'Chattahoochee or Altamahaw,' every detail in America as it is, rather than copying the setting, characters, or customs of the Old World ("Song of Myself"). By furnishing the American wilderness with the technological advances of the European settlers Emerson's and Whitman's works exemplify the first truly American depictions presented through a genuine American perspective.

1.4.3 Emily Dickinson

Besides Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson is one of the leading poets who puts nature at the heart of her poetic reflections. Like Emerson and Whitman, Dickinson values the components of nature as a method of speculation on cultural or mental practices or as a means of expressing her impressions about the surrounding environment. In **A Place for Humility: Whitman, Dickinson, and the Natural World**, Christine Gerhardt compares the content of her works with that of Whitman:

In Dickinson's lyric meditations, natural phenomena constitute key metaphors for life and death, for a new religion, and for the power of the creative imagination, while in Whitman's expansive vision, the grass, the sea, and a mockingbird's song resonate in terms of America's democratic inclusiveness, the presence of death, and the poet's evolving voice (1).

Although the two poets present social events and individual encounters from different perspectives, both use the American landscape to present the unique voice of their

homeland. Due to the highly symbolic nature of the pastoral elements in Dickinson's works, her poetic style has been regarded as secluded and isolated. Her poems usually establish a metaphorical relationship between the inner world of the speaker and the landscape around him/her. In "The Wind begun to knead the Grass" (824), for example, the speaker watches the storm from her "Father's house" (19), which creates a contrast between the inner safe world and the wild natural environment surrounding this inner safety. The personifications Dickinson uses for the pastoral images (such as the image of the wind kneading the grass like a "Woman do a Dough") prove that Dickinson's speakers not only observe and define nature, but also make metaphorical connections between human interaction with the pastoral surrounding (1-2). These abstract and symbolic connections are presented through the eyes of Dickinson's keen observers/speakers who envision a pastoral escape from the limits and confinements of urban society. This theme can be traced in works such as "Escape is such a thankful Word" (1875) or "I never hear the word 'escape'" (1896). Dickinson's unique method of presenting natural and pastoral components with abstract images has encouraged 20th-century American poets to create new techniques to express their own poetic voice.

1.5 The Urban Pastoral Elements of 20th Century American Poetry

The historical conflicts and revolutions of the 19th century continue to affect the literary world of the next century, and these socio-political changes find reflection in both the form and content of 20th-century American poetry. In **The Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Poetry**, Christopher Beach points out the chaotic socio-political situation of the USA at the beginning of the era and emphasizes that poetry is neglected by the society in the 'Age of Realism' (1870-1910) between the end of the Civil War and WWI, when the USA goes through an economic boom and rapid population growth (1). The important political changes and events, including wars, the immense improvement in the system of commerce and technology affect both social life and its reflection in art. In this section, I aim to examine this

transformation phase in order to analyze the birth of urban poetry in the modern period. I will explore how several poets come to prominence at this stage when the new rules of technology and the dictates of the urban lifestyle force fresh modernist poetic perspectives.

World War I has great impacts on seminal works such as T.S. Eliot's **Waste Land**, E.E. Cummings' **Tulips and Chimneys**, Ezra Pound's **Cantos I-XVI**, William Carlos Williams's **Paterson**, and Hart Crane's **The Bridge**. These works are hailed for representing the visible and invisible effects of the war on the new modern society. Beach also mentions that, even though American poetry does not have a traditional lineage like European poetry, American poets manage to establish a distinct voice with Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This lack of poetic conventions gives rise to the search for a local poetic genius by creating an American literary tradition based on local settings and diction. Beach remarks:

Whitman sought material for his poetry in popular oratory, journalism, and street slang. The modernists found sources in Egyptian mythology, the Hindu Upanishads, and Chinese ideograms. More recently, eclectic sources have become the norm rather than the exception, as poets have found inspiration for their work in various forms of music (jazz, blues, rap), in the visual arts (Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art), and in alternative philosophical and spiritual traditions (5).

Thus, the modernity and urbanity that prevail in American society between the two world wars enable the American poets to construct their own poetic vision based on components collected mostly from the city streets and different forms of urban art.

The socio-political events at the beginning of the 20th century impede the attempt of contemporary poets to find their genuine voice, especially in the Age of Realism between 1865 and 1914. Between the American Civil War and World War I, the population boom and financial development of American society give rise to the American novel, which is regarded as a more pragmatic genre than poetry. The 20th-century American novel evolves out of the modernization concepts by touching on the sharp edges of new industrial life, such as the brutality of the financial consequences of capitalism or the social calamities caused by mechanization. In the introduction of

20th Century American Literature, Warren French analyzes one of the first American modernist novels, **Sister Carrie** (1900) by Theodore Dreiser: "Dreiser brought to a reluctant United States a Modernist sensibility characterized by a feeling of isolation and alienation from an urbanized, mechanized society" (1). In addition to Dreiser's theme of alienation., one of the most important modernism critiques that also combines the pastoral escape component of the Golden Age, comes with Jack London's short stories and novels at the beginning of the 20th century. While in **Iron Heel** (1908) London reflects a dystopic representation of the US as a highly urbanized country, in **South Sea Tales**, he uses the pastoral escape ideal by creating island-oriented settings in his short stories. However, **the Valley of the Moon** (1913) is the most acclaimed example of London's pastoral escape representation, in which the American urban pastoral ambiguity in the early 20th century transition period is presented through the migration of a couple from a city to a farm. The most significant point of the novel is London's attempt to strike a balance between the urban and rural spatiality rather than impose the traditional image of escape from the contaminated urban reality to the purity of the rural. By combining the industrial working principle with the farm life of two protagonists, namely, Billy and Saxon Roberts, London constructs a contemporary utopia in modern society only by merging the natural and industrial powers together.

Thus, in the early 20th century, the urban pastoral mode finds life in the genre of the novel and American poetry remains mostly in the shadow of the powerful poets of the 19th-century while searching for its way of existence in the modern world. Beach defines this immobility as "lingered in the twilight of the late nineteenth century, unable to enter the modern world or break with the conventional formulas and sentimental diction of earlier decades" (1). However, after one placid decade, the 20th-century American poets start to reflect their reactions towards the fast and unique urbanization and industrialization changes in their country. This first generation of poets in modern American poetry, namely, Ezra Pound, E.E. Cummings, Robert Frost, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, and T. S. Eliot, succeed to break the 19th-century literary tradition and reveal their own poetic credo. By refusing to follow the old literary conventions, the American modernists

focus on art itself emphasizing that art, or poetry, does not have to limit itself within certain literary frames. Conventional symbols become old-fashioned, as William Carlos Williams indicates in "Spring and All" (1923): "The rose is obsolete" (1). By characterizing the most recognized symbol of beauty in literature throughout the centuries as an outmoded image, Williams manifests his perspective of modern art while refusing to pursue the conventions of prior traditions. In "The 'Newspaper Landscape' of Williams' 'Paterson,'" Margaret Lloyd Bollard points out Williams' understanding of a poet as "a type of reporter who gathers and then relays the news of his world" (319). Regarded as an epic masterpiece, "Paterson" distinctly displays the poet's aim to reflect the urban-pastoral ideal of the modern man. The urban pastoral identity of the modern man and the city is observed in the following stanza from Book I:

A man like a city and a woman like a flower
—who are in love. Two women. Three women.
Innumerable women, each like a flower.
But only one man—like a city. (33-36)

Most critics recognize the poem as "Ars Poetica" of modern America as Williams aims to mirror a scene from his contemporary society. This quotation implies that the urban and the pastoral have been united within a metaphorical marriage since the first interaction of the European settlers with the virgin continent. In his modern epic, Williams creates a new form and content to display the uniquely modern American identity as opposed to the traditional Europe-oriented poetry of the previous era.

Similar to Williams, Ezra Pound indicates that the use of traditional poetic forms has no place in modern American poetry. He starts his famous poem "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (1920) with an emphasis on the new perception of modern poetry:

For three years, out of key with his time,

He strove to resuscitate the dead art
Of poetry; to maintain "the sublime"
In the old sense. Wrong from the start—" (1-4)

As part of the Imagist movement, Pound believes that poetry should provide a balance between the poet's direct encounter and his reaction to an object out of the poetic limits. This disengagement from traditional literary rules and poetic expressions enables the modern poet to reflect the true emotions triggered by the physical entities around him. In that way, the 20th-century American poets reverse the habit of using old literary components, such as beauty or morals of social conduct by focusing on the representation of different art forms through poetry. In "Robert Frost's 'Modern Georgics,'" Matthew Parfitt mentions Ezra Pound's commentary on the pastoral poetry of the 20th-century American poet Robert Frost: "When Ezra Pound published an enthusiastic review of Frost's second book, **North of Boston**, under the title "Modern Georgics" (Poetry, December 1914), he was linking Frost's poems to a rich verse tradition given definitive form by Virgil but with antecedents as remote as Hesiod's **Works and Days**" (54). Even though Frost's poetry is considered as part of the pastoral tradition, he creates a modern perspective of the pastoral mode in his poems, which is closer to the urban-pastoral ideal. In many of his poems such as "Birches" (1916), "A Patch of Old Snow" (1916), and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1923), Frost uses a rural setting to emphasize the need for escape from the urban world. Rather than applying the pastoral escape metaphor, Frost creates his unique urban-pastoral representation of the modern rural retreat of 20th-century American society. The pastoral environment in his poetry is desolate and gloomy as opposed to the ancient green pastoral images. Instead of escaping from city life, Frost's speakers are mostly hesitant to settle in and hover between urban and pastoral worlds. He adapts the pastoral elements to the contemporary American social and political realities by mirroring the modern problems of labor ("After Apple-Picking" (1914)), property ("Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1923)) and the problems of democracy and belonging ("Mending Wall" (1914)).

Hart Crane's **The Bridge** is another work that illustrates the urban pastoral embodiment of the American imagination. This famous poem serves as the basis for Crane's time lapse critique of the American experience from the first settlements to the modern society of the twentieth century. In this eight-part long poem, Crane describes his aim as creating "a mystical synthesis of America" (Edelman, 179). Highly influenced by Whitman and Emerson, Crane writes his epic as a Whitmanesque response to Eliot's **The Wasteland**. The bridge metaphor is used in the poem to conceptually refer to nearly all-American history. The outcome is an epic journey through well-known figures and incidents reported through Crane's creative perspective. The title of the poem refers to the Brooklyn Bridge, one of the most iconic monuments of American industrialism, and the poem traces the development of modern America in eight long sections. Even though the poem is regarded as modernist in form, Crane explains the evolution of human civilization referring to the conventional image of escape from the Garden of Eden to the current urban state. To portray the progress of the American nation since its discovery, Crane refers to emblematic events and scenes such as Columbus's discovery of the continent, the story of Pocahontas, Rip Van Winkle's folktale as well as scenes from the Bible and Greek mythology. John Pistelli resembles the poet's mythical journey in history to ancient Greek epics viewing it as "commitment to a high style combining Elizabethan grandeur with modernist abstraction." Establishing a circular timeline, the poet begins and ends the poem with the same literary and historical landmark, the Brooklyn Bridge, the paramount symbol of American industrialism. Crane's modern epic discloses the dramatic changes in science and technology in the post-industrial society by aestheticizing them. His modern epic discloses the dramatic changes in science and technology in the post-industrial society by aestheticizing them. Thus Crane's "The Bridge" bridges the urban and pastoral spheres intermingled in the new continent.

The period between the two World Wars has witnessed economic, social, and political difficulties in American society while enriching modern national poetry. The social, economic, and political aftermath of the two World Wars and the Great Depression accelerate the emergence of new forms in every branch of art, especially in poetry. In the Introduction of **the Cambridge Companion to American**

Modernism Walter Kalaidjian quotes Paula Rabinowitz's comments on the period of rapid urban movement and regionalism: "Rabinowitz explores urban space as a social site that provided radically new modes of self-fashioning. As Rabinowitz shows, the urban experience of modern city life - increasingly characterized by a multiplicity, mobility, and diversity of social exchange among bodies, machines, commodities." (9). The social diversity Rabinowitz mentions induces the emergence of an American avant-garde movement combining different art techniques to represent the merging of different ethnics, class and racial identities in the mosaic of American national identity.

20th-century American poetry offers significant examples that demonstrate the dual perspective of urban pastoral poetry: the city is reflected in these works not only as the source of evil and rottenness but also as the new home. 20th-century American poets mainly present the dynamic structure of the city viewing it as a symbol of the wheel of life. Highly industrial cities such as New York, Chicago and San Francisco are displayed with their polluted, mechanized, decayed aspects and are depicted as the source of danger. However, these modern poets also present the city as a source of vitality and diversity, where the cycle of life never ceases its energy. In **Midwest Quarterly Winter 2014's** "Introduction: Rural and Urban", Christopher Todd Anderson dwells on Carl Sandburg's representation of the city: "Famously calling Chicago the 'Hog Butcher for the World' and 'City of the Big Shoulders,' Sandburg celebrated the labor and industry of the city and celebrated even hunger and prostitution as tolerable parts of its urban dynamism, embracing everything the city offers..." (7). Sandburg's representation of the city through human characteristics goes along with the pastoral poetry's necessity of human engagement with the landscape, a landscape that is considered as 'home' where the poet experiences and observes the rottenness of modern society but also feels the sense of security and belonging at the same time. This conflict of being exposed to the anti-pastoral elements of modern society and creating a new nature through the representation of rural components is one of the main concerns of 20th century American poetry.

1.6 The New York School of Poetry and the Urban Pastoral

Profound changes occur in postwar America on various levels, including social, economic, and political ones that deeply affect the literary world of the era. All these changes give rise to two different trends in the scene of American poetry. On the one side, there are poets who tend to use conventional techniques to represent the postwar atmosphere of the 1950s. On the other side, there are anti-tradition poets who assert their revolutionary spirit in both the content and form of their works. In this section, I will first provide a brief background of these two literary trends. Then, I will dig into the experimental and unconventional literary work of a specific group of poets who gather around New York City namely Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, Barbara Guest and James Schuyler.

The first trend in postwar American poetry is deeply affected by the formalist techniques of New Criticism. Defined as "Age of Conformity" by Irving Howe in "This Age of Conformity" (1954), the social and political restraints of the 1950s are visible in the works of well-known poets such as Richard Howard, Richard Wilbur, and James Merrill. Influenced primarily by W. H. Auden and the principles of New Criticism, these postwar poets prefer to write conventional poetic compositions using traditional rhyme and rhythm techniques. Merrill's well-known sonnet "The Broken Home" (1967), Wilbur's "A Simile for Her Smile" (1948), a poem written in iambic pentameter, and Howard's dramatic monologues, as well as dialogues in **Two-Part Inventions** (1974) and **Fellow Feelings** (1976) reflect the spirit of conservatism in postwar American poetry. However, there is another group of poets who challenge these formal and conventional representations in their works. The formalist and conformist sanctions stemming from McCarthyism prompt an anti-traditional counter poetics that reacts the traditional form and content. Beach discusses the emergence of this dual poetic environment in the following terms:

By the late 1950s, American poetry was already undergoing what James Breslin has referred to as a 'radical transformation of poetic theory and practice.' The poetry of New Critical formalism, a style that had 'rigified into orthodoxy' and begun to feel 'limited, excluding [and] impoverished,' was rejected by many poets who participated in a sweeping 'antiformalist revolt.' The dramatic change in postwar American poetry

was the result of a feeling of deep dissatisfaction with inherited models of language and form. (148)

Even though the second group of poets differ in their poetic techniques they all unite in suggesting that poetry must be demanding rather than supportive when it comes to criticizing the culture, the political environment, and even its own creative process. With the publication of Donald Allen's famous anthology, **The New American Poetry 1945–1960**, these avant-garde poets are acknowledged by the literary communities in this era. Beach defines the main characteristics of the avant-garde poets in the following statement: "The poets included varied considerably in their backgrounds, styles, and attitudes, but they were alike in their experimental focus and in their rejection of the kind of academic verse represented by the New Criticism" (189). Allen divides the postmodern avant-garde poets into five groups: Black Mountain, New York School, San Francisco Renaissance, California Beat Poets, and a last group of poets inspired by various members of the first four trends.

The youngest group among them is the New York School of Poetry which is constituted by John Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, and James Schuyler according to Allen's categorization. As their name designates, the New York School poets gather around New York City, especially Manhattan, and this city forms the major setting of their works. Like other postwar poetry schools, they are highly influenced by other art branches such as abstract expressionist painting, jazz, and casual events from their international art circle. The highly experimental and unconventional nature of the New York School of poetry can be explained with this impact of different forms of art. The two most significant poets who lead and direct the School, John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara, believe in the spontaneity of the poetic process, reminiscent of the mode of painting embraced by Abstract Expressionism:

Abstract Expressionism provided O'Hara with the idea of art as process rather than as finished product: the poem was to be 'the chronicle of the creative act that produces it.' Like the paintings of Franz Kline and Jackson Pollock, O'Hara's poetry would be one of richly varied surfaces instead of symbolic depth. Rather than the layers of meaning provided by symbols or "deep images," O'Hara sought a language that

resisted interpretive strategies based on reading "behind" the words. Unlike poets such as Lowell and Bishop, who labored over many drafts of a poem before considering it finished, O'Hara often composed his poems very fast, achieving a verbal and emotional energy through the speed of his composition... Like O'Hara, Ashbery was more interested in process than in finished product: he claimed that his poems were less about the outside world than about the act of the 'poem creating itself.' Since 'things are in a continual state of motion,' the poem should convey 'the experience of experience.' (Beach, 198-201)

In his essay "Personism: A Manifesto," O'Hara gives voice to the notion of poetry advocated by the New York School of poetry. Terence Digory discusses O'Hara's manifesto stressing the fact that the search for "quietness" in the middle of the urban chaos forms the core of the works of this school in contrast to the prevailing tendency to present the "alienating" aspects of the city. In his spontaneous poetic compositions O'Hara uses colloquial language to present the mundane, casual nature of the events he experiences. This unconventional, informal approach explains the phrase "I do this, I do that poems" used to characterize his **Lunch Poems** in which he displays daily life in New York from the perspective of a postmodern flaneur. His poetry strikes a balance between the frantic vitality of city life and the mundane silence of daily life. This contrast between the vitality of urban chaos and the dullness of everyday cores amounts to the disguised urban-pastoral structure of his works.

The complex interaction between urban and pastoral is the core component of John Ashbery's poetry too. "His major themes include the nature of consciousness and temporality; the fundamental instability of the self; the impossibility of closure; and the falsity of fixed absolutes" (Beach, 201). The spontaneity, temporality, and usage of multiple selves are some his distinguishing features, they can be observed in the poems included in **Some Trees** (1956) and **Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror** (1975), collections that set him apart from the establishment poets. In their avant-garde poetry, both Ashbery and O'Hara create urban city spaces that are unique in incorporating pastoral components. It is the ambiguity of urban and/or pastoral existence that distinguishes the New York School poets from the conservative approach that governs American social, political, and artistic life in the 1950s.

Despite being a practitioner and a leading figure of avant-garde pastoral poems, Barbara Guest is largely ignored in the discourse of the New York School by many literary critics such as Donald Allen, David Lehman, and David Shapiro. After she moves to New York City, Guest becomes known in the 1960s as a member of the New York School of Poets. Her avant-garde style, shaped by the influence of Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism links her to the community of authors that included Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, and James Schuyler. In her later works, the impact of "language poetry" is also visible. Some of Guest's most representative collections include **The Red Gaze** (2005), **Miniatures and Other Poems** (2002), **Musicality** (1988), **Biography** (1980), and **Poems: The Location of Things / Archaics / The Open Skies** (1962). Also, she has published a novel **Seeking Air** (1978) and a biography of the poet Hilda Doolittle, **Herself Defined: The Poet H. D. and Her World**, (1984).

Her aqueous imagery is the most notable part of her urban pastoral representations. Gray emphasizes that the natural imagery in Guest's poetry provides "mystifying beauty and power" suggesting that the urban and pastoral ambiguity creates multiplicity rather than an epiphany (72). A significant example of her urban-pastoral perspective of the city is provided in her famous poem "The Location of Things":

The street, the street bears light
And shade on its shoulders, walks without crying,
Turn itself into another and continues, even
Cantilevers this barroom atmosphere into a forest
And sheds its leaves on my table (3)

The poem presents a variety of urban spaces defined through pastoral metaphors like the presentation of the barroom as a forest. Filreis quotes Robert Bennett's comment on Guest's urban pastoral spaces in the following terms: " [he] describes these spaces as 'deliberately constructed both to unsettle conventional expectations about the nature of spatiality itself and to suggest instead intimations of a more complex world in which

both 'proofs' and 'illusions' of 'stability' are subverted by a profound awareness of the chaotic contingencies of modern life.' " The most significant point suggested by both Bennett and Filreis is how the poet aims to establish total authority over the spaces created in the poem. Contrary to the domestic ideals of the American social policy of the 1950s and 1960s, Guest plays with gendered, domestic space and reconstructs it using pastoral elements too. The poet questions these suppressive domestic ideals with the repetitive "why" in the following lines:

Why from this window am I watching leaves?
Why do halls and steps seem narrower?
Why at this desk am I listening for the sound of the fall
of color... (11)

Rather than presenting only the speaker's perspective who looks through the window of her house, Guest invites the reader to participate in the design of this urban pastoral space. Thanks to this interactive questioning, Guest pushes the limits of the governing domestic ideals and redefines the urban spaces from a different perspective. In **Urban Pastoral**, Timothy Gray explains it in the following statement: "For a writer such as Guest, the landscape is disordered, and the observing makes it more so" (98). Composed of many oppositions, Guest's urban spaces disrupt the conventional gendered notion of place/space to demonstrate how difficult it is to exist for a woman, both physically and mentally, in a man-dominated world.

Another key figure of the New York School is undoubtedly the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet James Schuyler who was born in 1923, in Chicago and who joined the Ashbery and O'Hara in the early 1950s. In 1969, Schuyler published his first significant poetry book **Freely Espousing**, and it was followed by **The Crystal Lithium** in 1972, **Hymn to Life** in 1974, and **The Morning of the Poem** in 1980. Even though Schuyler writes several novels such as **Alfred and Guinevere** (1958), **A Nest of Ninnies** with John Ashbery (1969), and **What's for Dinner** (1978), his poetry has attracted more attention from critics and brought him a variety of literary awards.

The poet receives the Longview Foundation Award in 1961, the Frank O'Hara Prize for Poetry in 1969, a Whiting Award in Poetry in 1985, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Fellowship from the American Academy of Poets, as well as the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.

Schuler stands out among the other members of New York School with his relatively realistic representation of nature. The abstract perspective is less visible in his poetic production which is associated with the paintings of a contemporary artist, Jane Freilicher. In **Urban Pastoral**, Gray defines Schuyler's poetry and Freilicher's painting as an urban pastoral synthesis that "seem as natural as a flower, as sturdy and shareable as an apartment building" (100).

These features turn Schuyler to the most painterly poet of the community of New York poets. Contrary to O'Hara and Ashbery, who naturalize the urban spatiality with pastoral components, Schuyler predicates the urban signs on the pastoral landscape. Although he follows a reverse route in his poetic creation, his poetic material is similar to that of O'Hara and his fellow poets. To illustrate Schuyler's urban pastoral poetic view, I would like to focus on the importance of flower imagery in "February" from **Freely Espousing** (1969).

"February" starts with a striking urban-pastoral image that combines the pink overshadows of industrial smoke with the pink colour of tulips:

A chimney, breathing a little smoke.
The sun, I can't see
making a bit of pink
I can't quite see in the blue.
The pink of five tulips
at five p.m. on the day before March first. (1-6)

The conspicuous urban-pastoral mode of representation is enhanced with interconnection between the urban overtones of the word "chimney" and the natural connotations of the images of "the sun". The title of his book itself, **Freely Espousing**, indicates Schuyler's predilection for fluency to inflexibility. The sense of fluidity

inspired by Abstract Expressionisms is visible in O'Hara's lunch poems and in the immediate transition between past and present in Ashbery's works. It can also be observed in Guest's water imagery and Schuyler's color transmissions among different objects and elements of nature. In "February," the pink sky of the industrial city converts into "the pink of five tulips", the number five espouses the overtones of the urban punctuality of five p.m., this phrase in its own turn is replaced the seasonal, pastoral connotations of the word "March". Clearly, Schuyler's poetic composition progresses to a more advanced level, incorporating various modes of literary and visual elements from both urban and pastoral worlds. Gray notes his merits stating that "[w]e should hail [Schuyler] for introducing the city to its long-lost relative, its country cousin, and for doing so in a manner that is surprisingly natural and breathtakingly beautiful" (120). Yet his vision is still relevant to the mode urban pastoral poetry shaped by the avant-garde aesthetics of figures such as O'Hara, Ashbery, and Guest.

The New York School of Poetry has been examined from an urban pastoral perspective by several critics. However, it is Timothy Gray's **Urban Pastoral**, that launches the term and the new approach to urban literature: "Urban pastoral often refers to a cosmopolitan retreat conducive to the development of aesthetic experimentation and countercultural community, ... it refers as well to the natural sensibilities' city writers secretly harbor", through which the poets of the New York School reflected not only their 'joie de vivre' but also 'a sense of calm in the midst of all their rushing around' (2). Even though variously regarded as a mode, genre, or tradition, urban pastoral, an oxymoronic term by nature, indicates exclusively a process of quest to find or complete a component that is missing in the writers/poets' lives. Similar to the shepherds' intellectual search in the surrounding rural landscape, the 20th-century American avant-garde poets welcome the urban landscape as both destructive and stimulating for their intellectual quests. While having quite different characteristics in terms of their poetic tone and mode, the New York School poets unite in their aim to give the urban sphere a pastoral identity by establishing a dialogue with the rural in the midst of the metropolis. The social and political restrictions of the urban environment force their speakers/poets to isolate themselves from the urban

atmosphere and find a new identity in the tranquil pastoral literary world. Frank O'Hara revives the intellectual relationship of the shepherd with the pastoral in his close connection with the metropolis whereas John Ashbery reflects the ambiguous connection between past and present through a nostalgic trip to the realm of the pastoral. Using different elements of the pastoral in their urban settings, the New York School poets resist against conservative postwar ideas by envisioning a new city space where the forces of the urban and the pastoral meet on a neutral ground rather than combating each other.



CHAPTER TWO

JOHN ASHBERY AND PASTORAL NOSTALGIA

This chapter analyzes the multifaceted aspects of the pastoral ideal in the modern setting of John Ashbery's poetry to demonstrate that despite being famously known as a city poet, his works are imbued with nostalgia for the pastoral, a drive

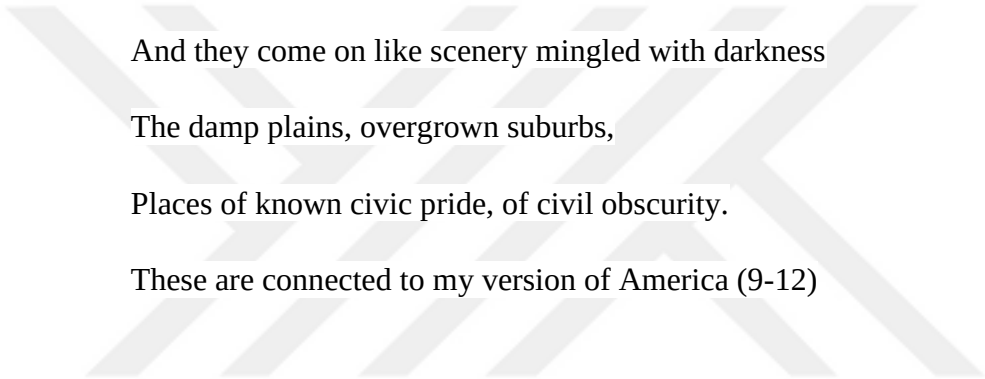
which rivals with an acute sense of urban anxiety caused by the inescapable limitations of the modern city. Depicting the modern individual under the overwhelming pressure of urban reality, the poet creates a "middle landscape" where pastoral elements intrude the urban scene to dissolve the sense of entrapment created by the bustle of the metropolitan city. Thus, the first section analyzes the poem "These Lacustrine Cities" and applies Leo Marx's concept "middle landscape" to the discontinuous and ambiguous urban setting of the work. I demonstrate how Ashbery manages to find his own unique method of melding urban and pastoral elements as a response to the destructiveness of industrialism. The chapter goes on with the study of the poem "The Instruction Manual" in the light of Paul Alpers' "pastoral retreat" ideal. I argue the poet/speaker escapes from the chaotic urban reality and examines it from a pastoral perspective to reshape himself as a modern shepherd. The last section of the chapter focuses on "The Skaters" examining the poem from a conceptual perspective shaped by James McCorkle's "nostalgia and immediacy" duality. This part of the thesis discusses the connection between Ashbery's use of multiple voice and the patchwork structure of the work to display an urban-pastoral environment that establishes a balance between the call of the past and the drive of the present.

Although Ashbery has numerous other poems that combine urban and rural components (such as "For John Clare" and "Soonest Mended") these three aforementioned poems are examined as works that illustrate best the urban anxiety the poet/speaker feels and his need for pastoral retreat by combining the urban setting with bucolic dreams. In doing so, the poet/speaker manages to create an imaginative space that cures his urban anxiety.

Born in Rochester and raised by a farmer father, Ashbery has a rural childhood before he enters Harvard University and moves to New York after his graduation. Being a leading figure of the New York School of Poetry, Ashbery is particularly defined as a city poet thanks to his use of animated images from New York City. Many of his poems such as "Hotel Lautréamont," "It Was Raining in the Capital," and "Strange Things Happen at Night" illustrate different aspects of city life. For instance, in "It Was Raining in the Capital" (1969) Ashbery presents an urban corner in the

winter season: "Between the pages of the newspaper/It smiled like a face. /Next to the drugstore on the corner/It looked to another place" (9-12).

In **Urban Pastoral**, Gray emphasizes that Ashbery's relationship with New York does not go beyond being "a benignly neutral space to write in" as the poet himself describes the city as "an anti-place, an abstract climate" (44). "The One Thing That Can Save America" is another work that creates an eloquent picture of urban experience:



And they come on like scenery mingled with darkness
The damp plains, overgrown suburbs,
Places of known civic pride, of civil obscurity.
These are connected to my version of America (9-12)

Ashbery's presentation of his urban perspective with various references to current examples of art and music, specific examples from cartoons, even gossips from the New York art world in several of his poems such as "Daffy Duck in Hollywood," "Letter to Fairfield Porter, " and "Blue Sonata," strengthen his image as a city poet. Yet, his poetry, written in one of the most metropolitan cities in the 1950s, is heavily affected by his pastoral memories that are collected from his childhood and regarded as semi-autobiographical by literary critics. As the combination of urban-pastoral representation in Ashbery's poetry is rather complex and paradoxical, it is far from being merely a response to early childhood recollections. On the surface, Ashbery does not merge the urban and pastoral ingredients that compose his works, there is also a clear barrier between past memories and present actions. He defines the rural landscape as a place with rigid rules and obligations retrieved from childhood memories. The city space has distinct contours too. On a deeper level, Ashbery's works present a paradoxical urban-pastoral blend which envisions city life as a complex experience that transcends the norms of urbanism.

Leo Marx introduces the term "middle landscape" to contextualize the mentality of the modern American that blends the fear of technological/urban progress with the nostalgia for the rural past. Marx's perspective illustrated eloquently with the metaphor of the "machine in the garden" can be reversed to be applied for the study of Ashbery's works too. In "A Wave," for example, Ashbery refers to "middle distance" as "home":

And our landscape came to be as it is today:
Partially out of focus, some of it too near, the middle distance
A haven of serenity and unreachable, with all kinds of nice
People and plants waking and stretching, calling
Attention to themselves with every artifice of which the human
Genre is capable. And they called it our home. (7-12)

Marx suggests that the first encounter with the locomotive in a pastoral landscape, which is the metaphor that he uses for the first attempts of urbanization in rural American provinces, is the reason for the modern anxiety of many American writers such as Hawthorne, Melville, and Thoreau. As opposed to Marx's theory, Ashbery voices nostalgia within his present-urban condition to escape from his urban anxiety, as he declares in "Crossroads in the Past: "

In what way do things get to be wrong?
I'm sitting here dialing my cellphone
with one hand, digging at some obscure pebbles with my shovel
with the other. (10-13)

By interconnecting the rural memories and urban experiences, the speakers in most of Ashbery's works create "an ambiguous topography". Ashbery's aim for creating this decentered spatiality is presented by Gray in the following terms: "In Ashbery's most affecting work, time circles back upon itself, providing a pastoral cure for the restlessness he feels in urban environments." (46). Gray goes on with the nature of this "restlessness": "Ashbery wants his rural alter ego to invade his urban domain and cure his middle-age lethargy" (60). Thus, Ashbery's explicit focus on both past and present in a relationship between nature and the self provides an urban replacement of the rural experiences in his poetry. While creating his own urban landscape with nostalgic memories from the past, Ashbery connects his speakers with the pastoral shepherds who are longing for the past yet this time the yearning is voiced in the metal-gray meadow of the city. Gray expands his argument with the attempt to escape from the urban pressure in the modern world: "outlining an urban pastoral solution, one that is located neither in the nostalgic past nor in the fleeting present, but rather in a complex negotiation of the two, described here as 'the gap of today filling itself'" (60). The freedom that the pastoral landscape provides to its inhabitants is defined by the scholar as "the abstract openness" to envision Ashbery's urban-pastoral dynamics "not as any naïve attempt to escape the ravages of time, but rather to grasp an 'idea of what time it is/ when that time is already past.'" (60).

"The System" is another text that deserves attention as here Ashbery's urban anxiety acquires the form of an apocalyptic fear:

The system was breaking down. The one who had wandered alone past so many happenings and events began to feel, backing up along the primal vein that led to his center, the beginning of a hiccup that would, if left to gather, explode the center to the extremities of life, the suburbs through which one makes one's way to where the country is.

While the modern urban space is defined by Ashbery as a collapsing mechanism, I argue that the urban pastoral ideal in his poetry provides a nostalgic attachment to the idea of the rural childhood as a lyrical pursuit for a less limited a more life sustaining existence. This modern pastoral landscape turns into an imaginary space where the poet/speaker retreats in search for a center away from the urban chaos. It is not the "natural" city reality, but this contrived pastoral landscape that offers the poet/speaker the true creative environment he needs for artistic expression.

2.1 "The Middle Landscape"

In his relentless, breathless anti-narratives in the present tense, John Ashbery creates his own haven to respond to modern life and the anxiety that it imposes on him. Knowing that the modern literary conventions cannot express the depth and complexity of this urban experience, Ashbery uses a disruptive language to create his ambiguous topography reminiscent of Leo Marx's "middle landscape". I will elaborate on the concept of the middle landscape as an urban-pastoral space from the Ashberian perspective since he runs away from the limits of modern social obligations and obtains an authentic voice through the amalgamation of the urban and pastoral images.

Before we dig into Ashbery's ambiguous topography, let us examine the term "the middle landscape" introduced by Leo Marx in his seminal **The Machine in the Garden**. Here Leo Marx discusses the famous Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson's perception of the urban and pastoral spheres from a distinctly American point of view. The scholar argues that "[t]he countryside is the setting of his most intense emotional experiences. 'We need nature,' he [Emerson] writes, 'and cities give the human senses not room enough'" (232). In his critique, Marx emphasizes the unique combination of urban and pastoral elements in the American landscape by using "the machine" and "the garden" images to contrive the "machine in the garden" metaphor. While "the machine" symbolizes the technological and industrial developments in the new continent, "the garden" stands for the agricultural traditions

and the pastoral landscape. From Emerson's definition of the contemporary American landscape, Marx deduces that while the Romantic era experiences difficulty in getting accustomed to the effects of technology and industrialism, the post-Romantic era prefers to adapt to the new systems. Marx calls this modern adaptation of pastoral spatiality affected by the industrial and technological forces "the middle landscape" (31). Marx defines this urban and pastoral unity in the modern world as a development of the pastoral force, however, he emphasizes that contrary to the traditional pastoral mode which is defined as "sentimental," this modern adaptation of urban and pastoral unity is "imaginative and complex" (5). "The middle landscape", applied to literature, is more than just a modern combination of the urban and the pastoral forces in the same work of art. Marx highlights the fact that the traditional or "sentimental" pastoral also unites the culture and nature in contrast to the common belief that pastoral has a primitive composition. The main element of the pastoral, the "shepherd," enables this connection between the natural landscape and culture in a sentimental mode. In "Leo Marx's 'Middle Landscape': A Critique, a Revision, and an Appreciation," Howard P. Segal explains the main difference of "the middle landscape" from previous pastoral ideals in the following statement:

The middle landscape, then, differed from the traditional pastoral not in fusing nature with civilization but in fusing them in new ways and in response to a new condition: widespread industrialism. The originality of the middle landscape lay in its accommodation of nature to this condition, which was the severest form of civilization yet to appear (138).

The term can be successfully applied to Ashbery's poetry too since he projects natural/rural/pastoral elements to a clearly pronounced urban existence. His originality is expressed in his ability to turn this into strategy that frees his poet/speaker from the bounds of civilization and allows him to attain a genuine identity that transcends socially imposed roles.

In some works, the trope of the middle landscapes serves other purposes too. His famous urban-pastoral poem "Soonest Mended" starts with a distinct image of a middle ground merging the catastrophic fears of technological decline with the prospect "to start all over again" from a stage preceding the turmoil of urban existence:

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*

Before it was time to start all over again. (1-4)

By emphasizing the problematic nature of living at a center, Manhattan in Ashbery's sense, while occupying a peripheral position in society, Ashbery envisions his poems an irresistible urge for pastoral retreat. Gray explains this interpenetrating lyricism with "the abstract openness of New York City" that "allows Ashbery to insert rural experiences as he sees fit" (60). Ashbery's use of the dual complexity of the natural and industrial spatiality intermingled within each other is connected to his obvious skepticism "towards the lyric 'I'" as suggested by Stephen J. Ross (107). Ross explains the urban-pastoral relationship of Ashbery's skeptic "I" in the following statement: "while sidestepping potentially 'antagonistic' social pressures by de-centering his lyric subject (submitting to heteronomy), he pursues a self-reflexive 'dense transparency' that renders ravishing self-portraiture out of subjective dissolution" (107). The ambiguity that is created by the pronouns as well as the use of dual spatiality in a significant feature that distinguishes Ashbery from his predecessors who had employed the tools of the pastoral mode.

In **The Poetics of Indeterminacy**, Marjorie Perloff views Ashbery's plural narrative approach as key element of his modern perspective:

Not *what* one dreams but *how*—this is Ashbery's subject. His stories 'tell only of themselves,' presenting the reader with the challenge of what he calls 'an open held

of narrative possibilities' (TP, 41). For, like Rimbaud's, his are not dreams 'about' such and such characters or events; the dream structure is itself the event that haunts the poet's imagination. (252)

In contrast to his ancestors from whom he had inherited the pastoral mode who focus on the place itself, Ashbery's poetry reflects new horizons for the reader through the plurality of the narrative voice as well. In order to observe this urban pastoral discontinuity achieved through a plural narrative perspective, I will analyze "These Lacustrine Cities" from **Rivers and Mountains** written in 1962. I aim to present Ashbery's escape from the current political and social problems of his urban reality through discontinuous and ambiguous landscape composition that establish his notion of an urban life as "middle landscape."

Ashbery himself classifies the poem as "a kind of dream of history" while David Shapiro defines it as a strong poem that explores a mode of writing he specifies as "urban horror" (81). The poem starts with the dark depressive atmosphere of the modern city:

These lacustrine cities grew out of loathing
Into something forgetful, although angry with history.
They are the product of an idea: that man is horrible, for instance,
Though this is only one example. (1-4)

Right from the beginning, Ashbery forces the reader to face the paradox of the city as an abode that is hostile to its citizens. To present this as a common characteristic of urban life Ashbery uses the general term "lacustrine cities" instead of limiting the setting to his favorite New York City. Ashbery imbues these cities with the contradictory human emotions such as anger, loathing and forgetfulness. Shapiro links these negative emotions to a pervading sense of escalating emptiness: "The central and

abiding theme here seems to be one of the 'ascending emptiness' of the urban artificiality of language itself, and the concomitant interior sense of emptiness on the part of the persona" (82). The term "ascending emptiness" introduced in the third stanza of the poem points back to the lack of emotion or sincerity that the urban environment creates for its inhabitants. The quick changes of subject pronouns in this relatively short Ashberian poem also provide a feeling of indeterminacy and loss. The opening phrase itself "lacustrine cities", defining the city with the pastoral concept "lake" asserts the fluid nature of American spatiality.

The second stanza continues the image of the urban darkness yet the interference of the "past" with the pastoral "swans and tapering branches" enhance the ambiguous situation the speaker experiences:

They emerged until a tower
Controlled the sky, and with artifice dipped back
Into the past for swans and tapering branches,
Burning, until all that hate was transformed into useless love. (5-8)

In his interview with Glenn D. Lowry, the famous American architect Michael Maltzan defines the term "Middle Landscape" in terms reminding the landscape in Ashbery's poem. Maltzan remarks: "This is an in-between landscape. It doesn't have the identity of the city, the urban metropolis, nor the suburbs, and it certainly doesn't have the traditional identity of a rural landscape. I think that it is a space that is always becoming – an incredibly American idea" (2). For Maltzan, the modern American landscape represents "a state of flux" rather than "a refined, static" nature. This is valid also for the emotions it creates as the last line of the second stanza declares: "...all that hate was transformed into useless love" (8). This transformation of hate to love, no matter "useless", takes place in the atmosphere of "artifice" brought by the tendency of the urban "tower" to "control" nature.

This constant shift from urban to pastoral in Ashbery's poetry calls to mind "the imaginative and complex" nature of the middle landscape marked by Leo Marx. Rather than directly stating his hostility to the controlling mechanisms of the urban landscape, Ashbery reflects his dissatisfaction using the mode of dual representation that blends abstract notions with nature elements. The third stanza continues with the foregrounding of emotions against the setting of pastoral forces:

Then you are left with an idea of yourself
And the feeling of ascending emptiness of the afternoon
Which must be charged to the embarrassment of others
Who fly by you like beacons. (9-12)

The change of personal pronouns from "they" to "you" enhances the discontinuity that the speaker feels in his/her middle landscape between rural and urban. The recurring theme of the poem appears clearly in this stanza with the abstract image of "ascending emptiness". The escalating degree of urban superficiality constantly aggravates the speaker's sense of systemic emptiness and loneliness.

The next stanza reinforces the image of the city as a "blurry middle ground [that] provides a buffer zone for his urban pastoral consciousness, flora, and fauna functioning as the natural embodiment of a personal history stretching out to meet him" (Gray, 63):

The night is a sentinel.
Much of your time has been occupied by creative games
Until now, but we have all-inclusive plans for you.
We had thought, for instance, of sending you to the middle of the desert,

To a violent sea, or of having the closeness of the others be air

To you, pressing you back into a startled dream

As sea-breezes greet a child's face.

But the past is already here, and you are nursing some private project. (13-20)

Perloff emphasizes the importance of landscape, which is presented as a delicate transition in a dreamy atmosphere that makes the poem more complex and fluid (270).

In **The Poetics of Indeterminacy**, Perloff mentions W.Auden's definition of Ashbery's poetry as an abstract world with "calculated oddities" and "strange juxtapositions of imagery" (249). The opening line of the stanza quoted above personifies night attaching to it "strange juxtaposition of imagery" as the night functions both as watchman ("sentinel") and a companion that allows the speaker to delve into "creative games" and "startled dreams". The middle landscape becomes more explicit with the "all-inclusive plans" contrived for the speaker. With "the middle of the desert," "a violent sea" and "sea-breeze," the landscape transforms into an imaginary, dreamy atmosphere. Thus, the poem presents a true middle landscape where the borders of the dream and the real are blurred, and the speaker is in the fluid state of transition from urban to pastoral settings.

M. Perloff remarks that "in Ashbery's poem, the connection between stimulus and response is never established" (273). Last two stanzas of "These Lacustrine Cities" support her observation:

The worst is not over, yet I know

You will be happy here. Because of the logic

Of your situation, which is something no climate can outsmart.

Tender and insouciant by turns, you see

You have built a mountain of something,

Thoughtfully pouring all your energy into this single monument,

Whose wind is desire starching a petal,

Whose disappointment broke into a rainbow of tears. (21-28)

The ending does not provide unity or closure to the reader, as the dialogues between different selves do not compose a totality throughout the poem. The speaker suggests that the escape from the urban to this ambiguous landscape will create an ambivalence, however, "You will be happy here" he/she remarks in an assertive tone marked with a full stop. Perloff calls Ashbery's method of defamiliarizing the pastoral elements in an ambiguous tone "absent casualty" (274). Using odd expressions that combine contradictory notions (such as "rainbow of tears" or defining happiness in negative terms), Ashbery deviates from the Romantic or sentimental urban pastoral mode and forces the reader to view his middle landscape from a postmodern perspective. Providing only fragments and clues, the poem ends in tension and forces the reader to create his/her own landscape for his/her own pastoral escape. Perloff emphasizes this fact by suggesting that "these cities cannot be specified; they emerge as part of a theater decor upon which the curtain may fall any minute" (276).

The study Ashbery's works demonstrates that the rapid industrial transformation of the American continent has destroyed the pastoral ideal. Despite the fact technology is presented as a "tower" that controls nature, his works envision a modern world where the border between urban and pastoral is fluid. Since it defies rigid definitions, Ashbery makes it clear that if the modern man pours his/her energy into identifying only with one of the opposing aspects of the middle landscape, the result will be "disappointment" and a "rainbow of tears."

2.2. Pastoral Retreat

Human being's need to escape from the city to nature is an incentive as old as civilization. Even the first literary examples of the pastoral mode, such as Theocritus's **Idylls** and Virgil's **Bucolics**, mention this earliest urge to retreat from the urban surroundings in order to find peace in nature. The primary characteristic of the pastoral mode is to provide freedom and authenticity to the poet. This ancient promise of freedom and authenticity is an appealing force in Ashbery's poetry too since his speakers experience the political pressure of the Cold War and the social pressure of being a citizen of New York, one of the most chaotic cities in the world. Thus, I claim that the retreat to the pastoral is the foundational stage prerequisite for poetic creation since the poet/speaker in his works escapes from the urban chaos and examines it from a pastoral perspective to reshape himself as a modern shepherd.

In **What is Pastoral?** Paul Alpers defines this feeling of escape in lyrical pastoralism applying the argument of the German philosopher Friedrich Schiller to Edmund Spenser's **Shepherd's Calendar**, a famous English pastoral poem that is written after Virgil's **Eclogues**. Alpers focuses on the effect of the pastoral mode as a method of connecting present experiences to nostalgic dreams and memories in sentimental poetry. He explains why the theme of pastoral escape is still a significant issue in the literary world in the following statement:

These uneasy and condescending accounts can be referred to and explained by Schiller not only because they still discern in pastoral the features of the sentimental idyll, but also because they measure them by similar criteria. They share with Schiller ideas of psychological integrity and fullness of experience that make pastoral appear callow or self-indulgent, and they share a sense of the necessities of history that make it appear escapist. (35)

Schiller connects Spenser's aim to present current experiences with the escape to nature as an Edenic ideal because "the psychological basis of the pastoral retreat" takes its components from the incidents of reality (35). For Spencer, the pastoral image stands for the most important Renaissance metaphor of heaven, while for Virgil, the pastoral is strongly affiliated with the ancient ideal of the Golden Age. Even though the representation of pastoral harbor changes its shape in different literary works, its strong connection to the present time of the writer remains the same.

In **Invisible Terrain**, Stephen J. Ross describes "pastoral retreat" in the following terms: "The characteristic pastoral move is the retreat from urban space to the regenerative space of nature – often figured as the 'good place' or 'middle landscape'" (101), while Marx defines the literary term in the simplest sense as: "to withdraw from the great world and begin a new life in a fresh, green landscape" (3). Marx displays the pastoral retreat as "a quest" or "a journey" that the speaker seeks to complete in order to experience a close intimacy with the pastoral world rather than aiming merely to escape from the urban landscape (378).

This ancient pastoral ideal that is also pursued by the settlers of the American colonies changes and develops with the industrial and technological inventions in the new continent and this new approach finds reflection in the poetics of the nation as well. In contrast to the bucolic ideals and expectations of the first settlers, the effects of rapid industrialism are the main reason for the emergence of the "interrupted idyll" in 20th-century American poetry (Marx, 374). In "**The Ruined Garden at Half a Century: Leo Marx's The Machine in the Garden**", David M. Robinson comments on the significance of the postmodern pastoral from Leo Marx's perspective. Robinson believes that the literary pastoral mode in contemporary American society is redefined "as the core of both modern fears and hope" (571). Both Alpers and Marx assert that 20th-century American poetry combines contrasting notions to present the pastoral retreat ideal, such as hope and fear, present and past, or immediacy and nostalgia. For instance, the famous American poet Robert Frost writes successful pastoral poems

such as "Mending Wall" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" where he manages to combine everyday life or simple objects with metaphysical concepts to present the beauty of nature. One of the most famous American Transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson emphasizes the irreversibility of the past and its continuous effect on the present in "The Past" and "The River." John Ashbery continues this urban pastoral tradition highly elaborated by the previous Romantic American poets. However, John Ashbery's poetry manages to present this literary ideal more than only focusing on these dualities.

Gray emphasizes that Ashbery's perspective of pastoral retreat stems from his longing for past experiences: "The convoluted phrases and teasingly ironic images filling his poems help him evade the facile escapism prompting pastoral writers since Virgil" (42). Gray's emphasis on the virtual base of Ashbery's poetry is an important point to understand the escapist urge behind the pastoral images. Since Marx regards the pastoral retreat in poetry as "a quest, a journey in search of an alternative form of life 'closer to nature,' " it is significant to locate Ashbery's urge for the pastoral retreat in the 1950s American socio-political conjuncture (378). In order to understand the motives that lead to his escape to nature, let us examine one of Ashbery's best examples that reflects his pastoral poetic quest, "The Instruction Manual" in the light of Alpers' "pastoral retreat" ideal. In this long poetic composition, the speaker's artistic retreat results in the formulation of his own middle landscape. Combining urban and pastoral elements, it is far away from both the irretrievable past and the social pressure of the present.

First published in **Some Trees** in 1956, "The Instruction Manual" is an experimental poem that conveys the urban pastoral dilemma of the speaker through multiple frames of space. On the surface, the speaker, who is a writer, presents his dull job to write a manual with an anti-narrative by mocking or satirizing the urban lifestyle. Ashbery creates alternative writing for his urban speaker who dreams of a pastoral place from his office room. In this frame-tale, the poet teaches the other urban poets how to use their creativity or imagination to construct their own free and authentic space without even leaving their urban location, in this case, the office of the

speaker. In that sense, Ashbery uses the irony of the instruction manual as a manual for teaching how to write experimental avant-garde poetry. The specific diction of the poem, based on repetitive phrases such as "there is" and "look," strengthens the mocking tone the poem establishes throughout this imaginary journey.

Stephen J. Ross describes this ironic prose poem as "a hermetic, sentimental daydream" (137). "Instruction Manual" presents the postmodern conflict of the ordinary urban occupations and the imaginary escape of modern humans to the pastoral landscape from the city's banality to find the "inner peace," as Ashbery suggests. This 20th-century urban pastoral literary work is a significant example for observing the complex pastoral or postmodern pastoral ideal that is explained by Leo Marx in **The Machine in the Garden**. In contrast to the classical pastoral literary elements, Ashbery uses paradoxical urban-pastoral components. For instance, instead of a classical shepherd-speaker, there is a technical writer who has been paid for the composition of an instruction manual. Even though the speaker's occupation as a writer requires creative writing skills, the manual that he/she prepares is about "a new metal," which foreshadows the fact that the speaker will show his/her creativity not as a writer, but as an escapist dreamer. Also, instead of a bucolic environment, the poem starts in an office building near a crowded street, a restricting urban setting that the speaker finds himself/herself in. Thus, both the occupation and the setting that the speaker deals with direct the reader's attention to the stereotypical urban characteristics right at the beginning of the poem. Ashbery's imaginative retreat from this urban center to the country can be examined in the light of Marx's description of pastoral retreat:

What is attractive in pastoralism is the felicity represented by an image of a natural landscape, a terrain either unspoiled or, if cultivated, rural. Movement toward such a symbolic landscape also may be understood as movement away from an "artificial" world, a world identified with "art," using this word in its broadest sense to mean the disciplined habits of mind or arts developed by organized communities. In other words, this impulse gives rise to a symbolic motion away from centers of civilization toward their opposite, nature, away from sophistication toward simplicity, or, to

introduce the cardinal metaphor of the literary mode, away from the city toward the country. (9-10)

The contrasting images of "an organized community" and undeveloped landscape are provided in the beginning of Ashbery's poem. In this little and gloomy office room, the speaker starts dreaming of a Mexican city rather than the classical bucolic image presented in sentimental pastoral poetry. However, the description of this southern city does not have any similarity with the urban setting that the speaker lives in:

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! (9-12)

Thus, the opening of this prose poem resembles anything but a pastoral poem despite the artificial attempts to show the city in a bucolic perspective with its "rose-colored flowers." The urban elements such as the professional writer as a speaker, the office environment, and the urban crowd in the street that the speaker observes are so strong and intimidating that the reader does not get the peaceful imagery of the green pastures of Virgilian bucolic poetry. The city image the speaker desires to see conflicts with the rural images established by pastoral poetry tradition. However, the speaker gives the first glimpses of the bucolic image in this urban environment with his/her observation of the city crowd. The speaker remarks:

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! (4-6)

The "inner peace" that the speaker observes despite the distance between him/her, and the crowd is the first pastoral element that the poem provides. "That attribution of inner peace marks the unimaginative anti-empathetic diseased vision of the trapped worker, busy refusing a task but distributing that bitter refusal in inverted form over everything and everyone else seen," says Geoffrey G. O'Brien in "Canceled Pastoral: Ashbery's 'The Instruction Manual' and Genre Responsibility." This image of a "trapped" speaker who dreams to escape from his/her office to find an inner peace resembles the pastoral dream of a shepherd who escapes from his present occupations by delving into nostalgic memories. Also, the lack of information about the speaker's urban setting, (it is defined as "the building") increases the stereotypes that are attributed to postmodern dystopian cities and this image intensifies the modern human's urge to escape. Besides, the dreaming posture of Ashbery's postmodern shepherd who is described as "resting [his] elbows on the desk" is defined by O'Brien as the "equivalent of a shepherd-under-tree who is leaning slightly out of the window towards the false freedoms of elsewhere."

Both the resemblances and the differences between this urban-pastoral poem and the ancient pastoral poetry continue with the postmodern shepherd's aim to see a Mexican city, a city that the speaker has never visited before. It is interesting to note that while in pastoral poetry shepherds dream of their best memories from the past, such as the Golden Age, or to be in desired places such as Arcadia, in "The Instruction Manual" the speaker's dreams envision a city that even "most did not see, in Mexico." Timothy Gray emphasizes the fact that this ambiguous dream for the urban-pastoral setting stems from the urge to retreat from the present situation of the poetic self: "Feeling disconnected after having 'Grown up, or moved away,' the ruminative city poet [Ashbery] decides to recount his rural episodes in vague, evasive language, the better to escape present feelings of entrapment" (50). This "vague, evasive language" is visible in the pronoun choices of the speaker who is trapped inside of an office. The subject pronouns of the poem keep changing from "I" to "you" and "we," until the

speaker turns his/her gaze to the instruction manual at the end. This constant shift of the subject creates an ambivalent tone as it is difficult to understand whether the speaker is addressing the reader or his past self with the pronouns "you" and "we."

When the setting changes from the urban reality to the pastoral imaginary landscape, the gloomy atmosphere of the office building gives its place to a colorful "city of rose-colored flowers!" (11). When the speaker starts dreaming of Guadalajara, each detail is ornamented with the vivid colors of nature. Although the speaker has never been to this non-urban southern city before, his/her lucid imagination presents Guadalajara's streets in sharp contrast to his/her urban reality. While the city streets and the urban crowd are depicted in a gray, foggy aura that is so far away from the speaker, the music band, the flower girls, the cheerful couples are described in a sincere tone, as the speaker mentions that in this place "everyone is in a holiday mood" (23). The evasive feeling of being trapped influences the choice of verbs in the presentation of the physical activities taking place in the office and the distant city. It is worth noting that the pastoral setting is described with active verbs that envision scenes of energy and vitality: "the band is playing," "the couples are parading" and "women in green serve you green and yellow fruit" (16, 21,23). In "Locus Sodus, Tracking Time and Place in John Ashbery's Landscapes," Timothy Gray quotes Peter Stitt's comment about this colorful fluidity in the poem's structure: "Ashbery is 'a poet of perceptions rather than of events and actual objects,' ... 'and just as our attention passes quickly from impression to impression, often without any sort of completion, coherence, or connection, so do his poems'" (45). In the imaginative description of Guadalajara, the reader experiences Stitt's observation about Ashbery's perceptive poetry. Ashbery's speaker depicts a setting that he/she has never been before while giving no details about the place he/she is in in the real world. Also, in the imaginative pastoral setting, the snapshots are given in vivid and colorful details as if the speaker is taking a picture of this dreamy land but there is not a strong connection or coherence between the citizens of this southern city. The conversation between the people of Guadalajara is not provided, or the speaker does not engage in any kind of dialogue with other characters. As a passive observer, the speaker only provides vague impressions created with the uncertain scenes and images:

I try to hear what they are saying

But it seems they are just mumbling something—shy words of

love, probably. (46-48)

Here the speaker does not provide any exact detail about the dialogue between the young lovers, instead he/she assumes ideas by observing their movements and appearances and portrays the scene with vague adverbs such as "probably" or "obviously." Ashbery's favor of perception over physical concepts reminds Gray of the famous nature poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, "who preferred the thinking process over the intellectual end products, the abstract over the concrete" (45). This preference for the abstract results in the creation of an ambiguous pastoral setting the speaker depicts as an observer rather than a participant. "How limited, but how complete withal, has been our experience of / Guadalajara! " exclaims the speaker at the end of the poem by emphasizing his/her feeling of completeness that is missing in the urban world.

Despite being imaginary, this pastoral retreat provides the speaker with an opportunity to escape from the insignificant occupations of the urban world, such as writing an instruction manual for new metal and trying to find the "inner peace" that the speaker longs for in his/her office. Gray suggests that this imaginary retreat offers "a pastoral cure for the restlessness he [Ashbery, or our speaker here] feels in urban environments" (46). In the boredom of writing an instruction manual the speaker manages to find an impulse for creativity in his/her occupation as the speaker remarks in the last stanza: "Back to the instruction manual which has made me dream of Guadalajara". The poem circulates in time and the speaker turns back to reality because staying in the pastoral retreat is not an option for the urban settler, as he/she emphasizes by stating "And that we cannot do" (104). Thus, this creative escape to the non-urban environment provides a "pastoral cure" or retreat for the uneasy urban settler. However, at the end of the poem, Ashbery shows that as there is no way to turn back the pastoral

days of his childhood, staying in Guadalajara is not possible for the speaker who is destined to live within the city's confines. Still, this vivid urban-pastoral poem can be defined as one of Ashbery's best attempts to present the image of the poet's/speaker's temporary pastoral retreat from his/her distinctly urban environment.

2.3 Nostalgia and Immediacy

In his urban-pastoral poetry, Ashbery provides a new perspective by creating an ambiguous topography with his redefinition of the two contrasting tendencies, "immediacy" and "nostalgia" conceptualized by McCorkle as the driving forces of the urban pastoral dynamics. While the term "immediacy" describes the binding force of present-day urban reality, "nostalgia" is linked with the regressive drive to the pastoral past. Marking the complexity of the urban pastoral aesthetics, these terms prove helpful for the elucidation of the multilayered structure of John Ashbery's urban pastoral poetry.

The importance of these literary terms in the evaluation of Ashbery's poetic production is first asserted by James McCorkle in "Nimbus of Sensations: Eros and Reverie in the Poetry of John Ashbery and Ann Lauterbach." McCorkle suggests that the polyphony of the voices, a term that refers to the plurality of the pronouns in Ashbery's poems results in the simultaneous presentation of the past and present, because of "the trace of the fleeting and conditional presence of the self" (102). McCorkle makes a connection between the ambiguity created by Ashbery's use of different pronouns and plural "I"s in several of his poems, and the collages of the famous collagist Joseph Cornell, who combines straightforward and random objects in the same work of art and creates unity. He claims that the patchwork structure of Cornell's colleges and Ashbery's poems "compel both nostalgia and immediacy, created by the fusion, as Ashbery states, of 'the object and its nimbus of sensations, wrapped in one package, thrust at the viewer, here, now, inescapable' (RS I7) " (McCorkle, 102). This urge to combine past and present in "one package" can be

interpreted as an extension of the desire for "pastoral retreat" that carries the speaker to a freer zone where he/she feels safe and secure, away from the chaotic urban environment. In Ashbery's case, the event is more than a mere escape from the city: "When Ashbery is successful, memory trumps reality, town and country merge, and a new pastoral setting floats into view," writes Gray in **Urban Pastoral** (43).

The urban-pastoral mode is solidified with Ashbery's ambiguous pronouns too, as the multiple selves from the past and present merge into each other, in addition to the memories and immediate experiences reflected in most of his poems, especially in **Rivers and Mountains**. This section of the thesis will analyze one of Ashbery's most famous poems from **Rivers and Mountains**, "The Skaters", in the light of McCorkle's "nostalgia and immediacy" duality. This analysis aims to interpret the connection between Ashbery's use of multiple identities and the patchwork structure to display an urban-pastoral environment that unites the past and present, in other words, nostalgia, and immediacy, in a balanced way.

"The soft veil of nostalgia that hangs over our urbanized landscape is largely a vestige of the once dominant image of an undefiled, green republic, a quiet land of forests, villages, and farms dedicated to the pursuit of happiness," remarks Marx (6). Ashbery's non-traditional quest for finding happiness, or an authentic self in his case, reoccurs in many of his poems. One of the best examples is "The Skaters," a four-section-long poem that is first published in **Rivers and Mountains** in 1966. In his interviews, Ashbery repeatedly stresses that "The Skaters" is a poem that can be attributed to neither conventional nor modern poetic movements. The main goal of the poem is to challenge the contemporary literary expectations about the creation of poetry as well as to disrupt the traditional lyrical frameworks in the reader's poetic reasoning. By combining nostalgia and immediacy, in other words, the main forces that attach the individual to the past or the present, Ashbery creates a circular timeline for the poem to show the modern mindset of this poet/speaker, whose perception of reality alternates between memories of the past and the experiences of the present. To achieve his aim, Ashbery uses a polyphony of voices and creates an ambiguous poetic syntax in which the reader frequently struggles to capture the core of the poem.

However, "a 'satisfying reality' exists in the country and in the city, in the past and in the present, so long as a proper balance is achieved" remarks Gray to emphasize Ashbery's success of fusing nostalgia and immediacy in his pursuit of happiness (68). While Ashbery is deconstructing the continuity of the poetic timeline in a circular movement by hovering between past and present, his change of pronouns disintegrates the speaker's identity. "Certainly its quest motif (the poet embarks on some sort of spiritual journey) is a familiar Romantic topos; seen within the larger context of 'The Skaters', this particular voyage is part of the poet's ongoing quest for selfhood, a quest eternally blocked as the self-fragments and must be reassembled," says Marjorie G. Perloff in " 'Transparent Selves': The Poetry of John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara" (194). In "The Skaters," Ashbery successfully shows the modern poet's challenge with conservatism, his/her struggle with the urban and his/her attempt to escape to the realm of the pastoral to complete his/her spiritual journey. However, what Ashbery proves with "The Skaters" is the importance of the process, the struggle of the modern poet in his/her quest rather than the result. That is why the ambiguity created by the multiple selves and the disintegrated poetic syntax suspends the reader without providing a proper ending or a sense of closure.

The suspension created by "the self-fragments" starts from the very beginning of the poem with the title. Inspired by Giacomo Meyerbeer's famous ballet **Les Patineurs**, the title foreshadows the metaphoric quest of the speaker who is always in action but unable to conclude (Milesi, 48). As the skaters ski in circles on the ice platform, the speaker goes in a circular motion for his/her quest without reaching the destination throughout the poem. There are several fragments from the speaker's unsuccessful quest for finding his/her authentic self or true happiness. The following lines describe it vividly:

Yet I shall never return to the past, that attic,

Its sailboats are perhaps more beautiful than these, these I am leaning against,

Spangled with diamonds and orange and purple stains,

Bearing me once again in quest of the unknown. These sails are life itself to me. (259-262)

This metaphoric journey to "the unknown," as the speaker does not tell where he/she sails toward, is the poet's emphasis on the significance of action rather than the termination that the title also suggests. This uncertainty constitutes the main dilemma of the poet/speaker in the first section in which he/she presents the melancholic tone with the winter elements and the moves of the skaters as an endless act of unfinished harmony. "Mild effects are the result" is the message that the speaker gives in the first section to stress that nothing is perpetual, and everything leaves a temporary mark in the world, such as the snowflakes and the gliding marks of the skaters on ice (149). The convoluted syntax in addition to the disconnected observations of the speaker results in an indeterminacy at the end of the first section. The speaker reveals his/her dilemma in the following line: "Placed squarely in front of his dilemma, on all fours before the lamentable spectacle of the unknown" (184). The poet's dilemma emphasizes the uncertainty of nature, even "the solar system" and the impossibility of being happy or having a good life while being a part or observant of this unknown environment (179). The whole section of the poem is constructed upon a very limited spatiality, however Ashbery manages to portray the ambivalence of urban life from the beginning of the work. The rapid changes of the speaker's observations, the stress on temporality as well as the image of the "unknown" envisions a poetic ideal which is used as a tool to escape from the contemporary social and political restrictions. Still, the first section foreshadows the fact that the poem will only provide the process of running away from the uncertainty of nature and there will be no clear resolution at the end.

The second section focuses on the attempt of the speaker, who is referred to as "the poet," for a pastoral retreat in order to escape from his/her dilemma. In "Figuring out Ashbery: 'The Skaters,'" Laurent Milesi makes a symbolic connection between Ashbery's pastoral retreat ideal and well-known traditional literary productions which similarly present the "voyage" metaphor as a way to escape to nature:

As it weaves in and out of self-contradictions about (dis)continued voyaging-as-metaphor, 'The Skaters' uncovers a more metapoetic journey into earlier texts on travel and dwells on the (fulfilled or failed) escapism of literature as travel: Baudelaire's 'Voyage' poems and 'L'Albatros' (the latter allegorizing the poet being hampered in his progress by his wings-cf. 55-56, possibly alluding also to Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'), Rimbaud's 'Le Bateau ivre' (cf. 'bateau' 43), or even the Shelleyan ode to the 'west wind,' with faint echoes of the last line in Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' (46)

What Milesi suggests is that the effect of Ashbery's postmodern poetry is expressed especially in the image of the unfulfilled poetic quest as a part of the pastoral retreat ideal. In the second section of "The Skaters," Ashbery repeatedly stresses that the quest, or voyage of "the poet" is an imaginary one:

This should be a letter

Throwing you a minute to one side,

Of how this tossing looks harmonious from a distance,

Like sea or the tops of trees, and how

Only when one gets closer is its sadness small and appreciable.

It can be held in the hand. (187-192)

Presenting this quest or voyage in Milesi's term, Ashbery plays with the traditional notion of pastoral retreat. While being on an imaginary voyage, the speaker emphasizes that there is a distance between him/her and the natural scene the poet wants to arrive at. However, by highlighting the fact that the observer cannot participate in the real act of being part of nature, which is referred to as a delusive letter, Ashbery clarifies that the poet's quest will never be actualized. The key dilemma of the poet in the first section is repeated at the end of the second one, as Ashbery

stresses that the postmodern poet's quest for finding an authentic identity or true happiness in nature, away from the urban restrictions, is a vain attempt and can never be fulfilled, it can only be "held in the hand" (192). Ashbery's attempt to present nature as an unknown and uncertain world to which the postmodern poet cannot belong with his/her true identity is supported by the multiple selves throughout the poem. In "'Transparent Selves,'" Marjorie G. Perloff quotes Ashbery's own words about the use of different pronouns and the reason for the deliberate confusion in the following statement:

The personal pronouns in my work very often seem to be like variables in an equation. 'You' can be myself or it can be another person, someone whom I'm addressing, and so can 'he' and 'she' for that matter and 'we'; sometimes one has to deduce from the rest of the sentence what is being meant and my point is also that it doesn't really matter very much, that we are somehow all aspects of a consciousness giving rise to the poem and the fact of addressing someone, myself or someone else, is what's the important thing at that particular moment rather than the particular person involved. I guess I don't have a very strong sense of my own identity and I find it very easy to move from one person in the sense of a pronoun to another and this again helps to produce a kind of polyphony in my poetry which I again feel is a means toward greater naturalism.' (195)

This quote clearly demonstrates that the poet's polyphonic identity, the ambiguity of the syntax, and the evasive quality of the narrative snapshots promise a rather unconstructive yet challenging poetic process to the reader. In **The Last Avant-Garde**, David Lehman suggests that with the use of multiple selves and interchangeable pronouns in his poetry Ashbery reflects every aspect of his own mind in an escapist manner: "It is as if, for Ashbery, the act of writing a poem involves an emptying of his mind, an escape from his personality, and a departure from the particulars of his daily and professional lives" (98). The third section shows this urge for escape from the immediacy of the urban life to the dreamed pastoral setting. The speaker describes the pastoral landscape in connection to his/her nostalgia for early childhood experiences:

A pure scream of things arises from these various sights and smells

As steam from a wet shingle, and I am happy once again

Walking among these phenomena that seem familiar to me from my earliest
childhood. (513-515)

While the speaker hovers between nostalgia and immediacy, he/she compares the dullness of urban life and the liveliness of the pastoral setting and its positive effects on his/her mental wellbeing. "In reality of course the middle-class apartment I live in is nothing like a desert island" (560) is the most significant line of the third section that discloses the urban-pastoral perspective of the speaker. In his illustration of urban-pastoral ambiguity Gray refers to Emerson's "Experience" and defines it as "staying neutral in the battle between town and country while accessing a shareable imaginative realm" (45). The same idea is equally valid when applied especially to the third section of Ashbery's "The Skaters". While the pronouns constantly change, the imaginary travel routes in this deserted island are continually postponed or dislocated. As the title suggests, the speaker goes around in circles without arriving at any destination in this dreamy land like the skater on an ice platform. The multiple selves and disturbed circular narration prevent the reader from making any reasonable prediction about the speaker or the imaginative topography that he/she escapes to:

Another time I thought I could see myself.

This too proved illusion, but I could deal with the way

I keep returning on myself like a plank

Like a small boat blown away from the wind. (630-633)

These lines clearly emphasize the circular setting of Ashbery's pastoral landscape where the speaker keeps "returning on" himself/herself without any

achievement. The illusionary structure of the pastoral retreat, which takes its power from the speaker's childhood experiences, creates a nostalgia that he/she wants to mirror the image of the past in an urban immediacy. However, the phrase "It all ends in a smile somewhere" at the end of the third section stresses the impossibility to stay in this illusionary landscape (634). Although nature provides numerous routes to travel in multiple identities, the dreamy urban shepherd must turn back to the immediacy of the middle-class office. However, this nostalgic pastoral trip to what Gray defines as "an ambiguous topography" ultimately changes the speaker who "seeks communion with his rural past" (45-46).

In the last section the speaker describes the results of the dullness and commonness of urban life and the monotonous effect of circular time with the following images: "Now I am old but scarcely any wiser. / So little are white hair and a wrinkled forehead a sign of wisdom! " (642-643). Even though time passes, it does not maintain a better standard for its attendants in this urban spatiality. Gray suggests that Ashbery's "ambiguous topography" or "decentered landscapes" provide "new possibilities for reverie in temporal extension instead of spatial depth" (45). This "temporal extension" is ensured by the patchwork structure of the poem that is maintained throughout the four sections. By assembling unrelated pastoral images in a dreamy atmosphere, Ashbery maintains the core feature of Abstract Expressionism in his poetry. All elements that create this abstract aura, such as the multiple selves, the use of nostalgia and immediacy at the same time, and the circular timeline which underlines the dullness of modernity, emphasize Ashbery's main poetic credo expressed in the belief that poetic form is as vital as the work's content.

The analysis of Ashbery's works demonstrate that Ashbery is an unconventional pastoral poet despite his urban settings and city images. He asserts himself as a master of the urban-pastoral mode in poetry by presenting nostalgic expeditions and imaginative pastoral escapes. By retreating from the urban center of New York City to the realm of the pastoral where he reaches the deep memories of his childhood, Ashbery constructs for his poet/speaker a more fulfilling life by supplanting it with the pastoral elements that are missing in his/her modern urban environment. He

vividly manages to illustrate his/her dream to be rescued from "our technological society" as a modern poet who lives "on the margin" ("Soonest Mended," 1-2). From his urban perspective, Ashbery lingers between the poet/speaker' rural childhood and urban adulthood to present his/her journey for an authentic self. Thus, it is not possible to label Ashbery as merely a city poet, nor can we idealize him as a pastoral shepherd either. However, my analysis suggests that Ashbery's circular motions between past and present and his eagerness for pastoral retreat create a delightful balance between urban immediacy and pastoral nostalgia. This results in an imaginary temporal space where the modern anxieties of urban pandemonium cease to exist as the following lines from "And the Stars were Shining" assert: "Children we had lost once / know how to keep on repeating the piece / they learned, knew their way back to us" (49).

CHAPTER THREE

FRANK O'HARA, THE SEMIOTIC SHEPHERD

This chapter analyzes the semiotic pastoralism in the urban milieu of Frank O'Hara's poetry to reveal that, even though the poet is closely associated with New York City, his poems evoke pastoral images on a semiotic level. As a symbol of socio-spatial terrain of New York in the 1950s with his mobility and anti-formalist literary perspective, O'Hara is known as a city poet, famous for his lunch walks in the streets of Manhattan. However, he struggles with the disorder that the city compels him to live in, making him feel obliged "to be available, to be everything to everybody" (Gray, 30). In defining his favorite urban terrain, O'Hara modifies New York City using a unique time and space capsulation that he creates through pastoral imagery. In this chapter, I first describe O'Hara's literary background and his rise to fame in the American poetry scene as the successor to Whitman as a city poet. To demonstrate how New York becomes a source of anxiety for O'Hara, I emphasize his close connection with the city, referring to his poems "In Memory of My Feelings" and "Personal Poem." I then examine "October," "Walking," "Poem (It was snowing and now)" and "Music" in the light of the "semiotic shepherd" concept, a term Timothy Gray uses to describe the poet's urban-pastoral tendencies. Even though the term "shepherd" refers to being in disguise in traditional pastoral poetry, I examine this

expression from an urban-pastoral perspective. I maintain that O'Hara defines the urban sphere using pastoral language to relieve his depression.

Known as the dynamic leader of the New York school of poetry of the 1950s, Frank O'Hara is one of the most prominent figures associated with New York City. He is frequently referred to as Whitman's successor, with unique urban images collected from the streets of New York. Gray argues that O'Hara's connection with New York has a semiotic effect on the spatiality of the city: "the body whose movement draws new city limits becomes both the sign that reorders urban space" (526). I read this "sign" in both abstract and concrete terms since O'Hara's literary affiliation with the city is inevitable. O'Hara stands side by side with Whitman on the shore of the Hudson River, one of the most urban-pastoral spots of the city. "City of tall facades, of marble and iron-proud and passionate city-mettlesome, mad extravagant city!" declares Whitman about the banks of the river, and O'Hara replies, "One need never leave the confines of New York to get all the greenery one wishes" (CP 197). In his reply to Whitman, who emphasizes the urban side of the city in the above quotation, O'Hara highlights the pastoral qualities of this "marble and iron-proud" city with its "greenery." Expressing himself through the lens of New York City, O'Hara's reconstruction of the urban topography through the use of pastoral images at the semiotic level is a significant feature of his work that warrants examination. In "A True Account of Talking to the Sun at Fire Island," the poet reveals his affinity for pastoral imagery in the dialogue with the sun. The sun advises the speaker to engage more with nature:

I know you love Manhattan, but
you ought to look up more often.
And
always embrace things, people earth
sky stars, as I do, freely and with
the appropriate sense of space. That
is your inclination, known in the heavens (CP 307)

This poem hints at O'Hara's need for things pastoral, even though he explicitly stresses that he does not need to leave the city for his pastoral needs. The poet describes this "inclination" of the speaker as something predetermined by divine forces "known in the heavens," an idea that challenges the poet's strong associations with the city. However, I read this conversation with the sun in this poem as O'Hara's striving to create "the appropriate sense of space."

Before dwelling on O'Hara's pastoral tendency to rebuild his urban surroundings to achieve "the appropriate sense of space," I examine the literary definitions of New York as O'Hara's favorite place to wander in search of memories for his work of art. New York is one of the best-known modern cities that has inspired famous artists throughout the decades. In **Statues of Liberty – The New York School of Poets**, Geoff Ward defines New York City as follows:

New York is infamous on account of the chemicals its denizens ingest, as for those its industry expels into the water. As the emblem of a contemporary condition of toxicity, New York is an infernal *primus inter pares*; the most concentrated dose so far of what is present in more diluted form elsewhere, be it vagrancy or insider trading, crime or vanguard art. It is the city to which other cities look for a sign, most often a warning, of the episodes to come in their own unfolding narrative. In one sense a triumph over Nature, its skyscrapers and subway system are the new Nature, as fields of concrete and forests of scaffolding dwarf the species that created them, 'while nature itself, in the form of parks, a snowfall, cats and dogs, is a detail in the stone and steel of his habitat' (1)

Ward sees New York as an urban-pastoral space in terms of a contemporary perspective. Michel de Certeau, however, defines New York in **The Practice of Everyday Life**, as " [a] city composed of paroxysmal places in monumental reliefs. The spectator can read in it a universe that is constantly exploding... On this stage of concrete, steel, and glass, cut out between two oceans (the Atlantic and the American) by a frigid body of water, the tallest letters in the world compose gigantic rhetoric of excess in both expenditure and production" (91). Both conceptualizations of New York focus on the ambiguities and diversities that the city offers—nature versus industry, or

constant change versus feeling at ease for being part of the city versus an urban feeling of wholeness.

Frank O'Hara is one of the few artists who appreciates and glorifies this ambivalent diversity and the change of urban life in postwar New York City while identifying himself with New York in order "to be true to city" (Gray, 23). He succeeds in reflecting this urban vibrancy in his *I do this, I do that* poems, where first-person speakers casually walk around the city and narrate the urban signs around them. Ward identifies O'Hara's casual but unique urban representation as "great chunks of the city," because the city is a place where "nerves and restlessness [are] hardening into something created and concrete" (37). The way O'Hara's poems are produced and presented to the reader is reminiscent of the constant change and play of the representation of the well-known corners of New York City.

Closely associated with the metropolis and frequently defined as a city poet, O'Hara produces poetry that is purely personal; the pastoral is juxtaposed in his works with the city space. In **The Poetry of the Americas**, Harris Feinsod characterizes O'Hara as "the most distinguished practitioner of poetry as urban choreography ... whose poems are organized around the chatty observations of metropolitan flaneur" (180). O'Hara's vivid celebration of the urban experience is highly visible even in the title of his poems and poetry books. In **Lunch Poems** (1964), **A City Winter and Other Poems** (1951), **Second Avenue** (1960), and **Standing Still and Walking in New York** (1975), O'Hara portrays the cosmopolitan energy of the 1950s New York City. Gray calls O'Hara a "freewheeling individual blessed with charisma and intellect" (17) because most of his poems illustrate urban encounters during his lunch walks in Manhattan. Frequently mentioning everyday objects of urban life, O'Hara's observations in his lunchtime walks, or his recollections of and commentary about contemporary American artists paint a vivid picture of life in New York in the 1950s. Gooch comments on the uniqueness of O'Hara's city poetics:

O'Hara matched the spirit of his new artist friends by trying to create a poetic city of New York. Other poets had certainly written about Manhattan – Whitman, Crane, Lorca, Auden. But over the next fifteen years, O'Hara composed a fragmented epic of the city, focusing particularly on the humor and chaos of the growing metropolis and using his experiences as a trail through an ever-changing urban labyrinth rather on the scale of Joyce's Dublin or William Carlos Williams's Paterson. (191)

In the preface of **Collected Poems**, Ashbery claims that O'Hara's poetry has a certain sense of attachment to New York in terms of its form and content: "O'Hara is certainly a New York poet. The life of the city and the millions of relationships that make it up hum through his poetry; a scent of garbage, patchouli and carbon monoxide drifts across it, making it the lovely, corrupt, wholesome place New York is. Emphasizing O'Hara's association with New York as "making it," Ashbery highlights both the semiotic and the spatial representations of the city in O'Hara's poetry. He goes on to describe O'Hara's unique ability to create time and space, which gives the reader a sense of a present-tense time capsule in the streets of New York City: "That space, in Frank O'Hara's case, was not only the space of New York school of Painting but of New York itself, that kaleidoscopic lumber-room where laws of time and space are altered" (x). The intentional modification of time and space leads to the formation of an exclusive urban experience that O'Hara aims to present in his depictions of New York.

O'Hara's admiration for New York City is undeniable. However, in some of his well-known city poems, the poet gives insights into his anxiety, which is triggered by the chaotic structure of this postwar American terrain. Although he worships every corner of the city, the feeling of restlessness expressed in his poetry cannot be ignored. In "In Memory of My Feelings," the speaker mentions a "transparent" self that is carried "like a gondola, through the streets." After setting the urban atmosphere, the speaker reflects the tension that they experience in this urban surrounding through physical panic and suffering: "so many pistols I have borrowed to protect myself / from creatures who too readily recognize my weapons / and have murder in their heart! " Gray claims that the feeling of nervousness in this urban surrounding is related to the poet's reaction to feeling "entrapped":

In 'Memory,' New York's shepherd speaks approvingly of the 'Grace / to be born and live as variously as possible,' yet he also exposes the 'sordid identifications' constituting New York's avant-garde 'masque.' Specifically, he laments his figural entrapment in a milieu that wants him always to be available, to be everything to everybody. Steady ground is hard to find in such a weightless atmosphere, especially if you are the 'various' figure called upon to create it. 'I have lost what is always and everywhere / present, the scene of my selves, the occasion of these ruses,' O'Hara admits (CP 252, 256-57) (30).

Gray suggests that O'Hara's urban restlessness and panic in the streets of his favorite locale stems from the most modern aspect of the city— the pressure to be present anytime and anywhere. Although O'Hara seems to savor this chaotic side of the city, he also feels fragmented and entrapped by the various urban requirements that create a sense of pressure upon this city poet. When the speaker admits that " [s]o many of my transparencies could not resist the race! " (27), they are obviously referring to the social pressure for unity and commitment. Americans' obsession with social conformism in the 1950s triggered the New York school poet's spirit of defiance against urban restrictions.

While O'Hara's speakers' walking in the famous streets of New York City does not focus on the description of the physical place itself, the restlessness that they feel reflects the original urban experience. Thus, rapid modernization and traumatic postwar experiences gave rise to the concrete construction of the urban surface, and they also led to the formation of an urban restlessness, which caused a feeling of placelessness that creates the vibrance of O'Hara's poetry. In "Placelessness in Baudelaire's 'Les Sept Vieillards' and 'Les Petites Vieilles,' " Daniel A. Finch-Race defines this urban feeling of placelessness as follows:

Spatial and relational knowledge is developed through familiarization with fixed topographic referents, around which our everyday existence and movements revolve.

The reconfiguration of a familiar setting consequently represents a quasi-traumatic event, involving a feeling of disconnectedness that is proportional to the magnitude of the personal association with the bygone incarnation of a site. Edward Relph espouses the idea of 'placelessness' as a way of conceptualizing the debilitating consequences of 'the weakening of distinct and diverse experiences and identities of places' on human consciousness (1014).

This feeling of disconnectedness that results from industrial power and postwar experiences in New York City can be vividly observed in one of O'Hara's famous "lunch poems." "Personal Poem" (1959) starts with the speaker's feeling of urban pressure:

Now when I walk around at lunchtime
I have only two charms in my pocket
an old Roman coin Mike Kanemitsu gave me
and a bolt-head that broke off a packing case
when I was in Madrid the others never
brought me too much luck though they did
help keep me in New York against coercion
but now I'm happy for a time and interested (CP 335)

The speaker refers to his possible anxiety in New York as "coercion," a term that can be interpreted as both pressure and intimidation, which scares the speaker as well. The speaker's superstitious belief that carrying charms will "help keep [him/her]

in New York" also implies that the speaker wants to be part of the city and to be "happy for a time," but they are also intimidated by the pressure that the city imposes.

So far, I have demonstrated that, despite being a symbol of modernity and urbanization, New York City turns into a source of urban anxiety for O'Hara, whose poems are nourished by images and memories collected from the streets of this city. Urban pressure forces him to find a cure for the restlessness he feels in this familiar terrain through the elements of nature. In "Pastoral Influence in the English Drama," Homer Smith explains the reason for modern poets' fascination with pastoral depictions of the city: "The chief motive which actuates men to write this kind of literature is a desire to escape from the complexity of city life with its vices and follies, and to refresh themselves with the simplicity and freedom of the golden age" (356). O'Hara clarifies this situation in the following terms: "New York is one of the most violent cities in the world, and its pace is hectic. What can survive must have had some quality, what can be done all the different pressures of circumstance must have meant something to the artist who managed to get it done" (Gray, 20). Given a new perspective on the pressure he was under, O'Hara finds a cure in invoking pastoral images.

New York City is the central setting and is frequently the poetic object of O'Hara's urban poems. In "Walking," from the beginning to the end, O'Hara modifies the city using pastoral images in such a way as to create a built environment for his favorite locale:

I get a cinder in my eye

it streams into

the sunlight

the air pushes it aside

and I drop my hot dog

into one of the Seagram Building's

fountains

it is all watery and clear and windy

the country is no good for us

there's nothing

to bump into

or fall apart glassily

there's not enough

poured concrete

and brassy

reflections

the wind now takes me to

The Narrows

and I see it rising there

New York

greater than the Rocky Mountains (CP 476-477)

O'Hara clearly favors the city over the country since the speaker stresses that "the country is no good for us." However, O'Hara's modern environment, which the speaker defines as "concrete" and "brassy," has a peculiar pastoral depiction. The speaker compares New York to a mountain when they say, "I see it rising there" despite the fact that the city is illustrated as a space that is "greater than the Rocky Mountains." Although the speaker conceptually praises the urban, at the semiotic level, the images of two opposite forces merge into a perfect harmony. While describing an artificial city object, "fountain," the speaker uses pastoral adjectives such as "watery," "clear,"

and "windy" as if describing the weather instead of a landmark. In addition, the speaker travels with "the wind" through "The Narrows," an urban-pastoral image where the strait meets the bridge. Lawrence Buell calls this pastoral depiction of the city "perverse urban pastoral," where the poet favors the urban but brushes it with elements of nature. No matter how great New York is, O'Hara's simile indicates that it is built by "the wind," like the mountains. Hence, O'Hara's imagery glorifies the urbicolous New York while his language, signs and symbols imply its pastoral grandeur; Buell suggests that it is the poet's attempt "to imagine a city/nature as a livable, or at least survivable, habitat." (125)

O'Hara's literary effort to cope with his urban anxiety, or his effort to survive in his favorite habitat (in Buell's terms), can be clearly observed in his 1960s "Poem (It was snowing and now) ". The pastoral images buried in the speaker's Manhattan portrayal creates a gloomy urban atmosphere even from the first stanza:

it is raining the slush

is all the mud

Manhattan can hope for

yet if it holds

we may have flowers all

over the sidewalk after

all and our shoes will

decay like the complicated

farmer's as the blossoms

grow up and hide them

then barefoot we'll be

happy

but the slush is like my heart leading through

little paths and puddles

to a delicatessen or theatre

where no number of fountains

will make anything grow except

the idea of a few flowers

to be trodden or run over

grown up and cut

to save the space we need

to walk single file

to keep the streets clear

so we can hurry through life (**Collected Poems** 382-3)

The dark atmosphere of Manhattan gradually clears away with the urban "sidewalks" that have "flowers" on them. The speaker expresses a sudden feeling of joy "as the blossoms/ grow up," envisioning being "happy" when going barefoot. Between two depressing urban realities starting with "slush" and "mud" and ending with the speaker's return to the "clear" streets, O'Hara creates a sense of pastoral relaxation in the midst of these two urban edges. In the second part, the speaker closes

the pastoral capsule and reappears in the urban world. Flowers being "cut" and "trodden" to "keep the streets clear" constructs an irony as the speaker designs/builds the urban environment.

In the preface, Ashbery explains O'Hara's pastoral attempt to reconfigure the multifaceted urban topography "as a last resort in trying to juggle the contradictory components of modern life into something like a livable space" (x). "Music" is an eloquent example for scrutinizing the poet's pursuit of re-designing the tumultuous urban terrain as "a liveable space: "

If I rest for a moment near The Equestrian
pausing for a liver sausage sandwich in the Mayflower Shoppe,
that angel seems to be leading the horse into Bergdorf's
and I am naked as a table cloth, my nerves humming.

Close to the fear of war and the stars which have disappeared.

I have in my hands only 35c, it's so meaningless to eat!

and gusts of water spray over the basins of leaves

like the hammers of a glass pianoforte. If I seem to you

to have lavender lips under the leaves of the world,

I must tighten my belt.

It's like a locomotive on the march, the season

of distress and clarity

and my door is open to the evenings of midwinter's

lightly falling snow over the newspapers.

Clasp me in your handkerchief like a tear, trumpet

of early afternoon! in the foggy autumn.

As they're putting up the Christmas trees on Park Avenue

I shall see my daydreams walking by with dogs in blankets,

put to some use before all those coloured lights come on!

But no more fountains and no more rain,

and the stores stay open terribly late.

The poem offers a short tour of midtown Manhattan, using the names of the real places and urban signs such as "The Equestrian," "the Mayflower Shoppe," and "Park Avenue." In "**Frank O'Hara and the Aesthetics of Attention**," Perloff claims that "It defamiliarizes objects by presenting them as if seen for the first time or by distorting their form 'to make the act of perception more difficult and to prolong its duration.' " I argue that the speaker's spreading names of urban signs and places in a seemingly random way is the cause of what Perloff calls "defamiliarization." This defamiliarization effect is observed when the pastoral images create a contrast with these city symbols. By adding the definite article "the" before the city signs such as "The Equestrian" and "the Mayflower Shoppe," he builds a sense of familiarity between the speaker and the reader. However, O'Hara dislocates the urban spatiality by combining the signs with contrasting pastoral images, as in "angel seems to be leading the horse into Bergdorf's," where the contradictory images of "angel" and "horse" clash with the concrete image of a famous department store on Fifth Avenue. To do so, O'Hara uses pastoral images to interrupt the sense of familiarity, creating a defamiliarization effect on the reader. The speaker also provides information about the streaming of time through pastoral images, even though the setting is purely modern and concrete. They use expressions like "the evenings of midwinter's," "early

afternoon! in the foggy autumn," and "Christmas" give the reader an idea of the approximate time when the poem takes place instead of specifying a definite time and date that a reader would expect in this urban framework. As the title suggests, the poem oscillates between urban/familiar and pastoral/unfamiliar in a rhythmic movement from the motif of "a locomotive on the march" to the calmness of "the evenings of midwinter's/lightly falling snow." The movement and rush presented by the animated network of the urban signs are decelerated by tranquil impressions of objects of nature. This contrasting imagery provides an insight into the poet's urban restlessness and his obvious attempt to construct a serene surrounding in his favorite locale.

Situating aspects of modern reality in urban-pastoral settings, the poet examines the values of the urban self as symptoms of the depressive urban landscape. Along with the presentation of his everyday urban encounters in his simple *I do this, I do that* fashion, O'Hara's creation of a conceptual urban-pastoral identity in describing the concrete urban setting of New York turns into a method of displaying the modern anxiety that he tries to overcome. "October" (1952) is a revealing example of this conceptual identity.

Summer is over,
that moment of blindness
in a sunny wheelbarrow
aching on sand dunes
from a big melancholy
about war headlines
and personal hatreds.

...

Is there at all anywhere

in this lavender sky
beside the UN Building
where I am so little
and have dallied with love,
a fragment of the paradise
we see when signing treaties
or planning free radio stations? (CP, 109-110)

The poem starts by foreshadowing the negativity that the speaker will experience in the line "Summer is over." The speaker builds a connection between a moment of oblivion and the "blindness" that occurs when looking at the sun, using a bucolic image of sitting on a "wheelbarrow." The emphasis on "signing treaties" and "planning free radio stations" creates a "Cold War grammatical and ideological inverse" that O'Hara purposely reacts to (Neal, 779). At the end, these postwar formalities lead to "a big melancholy" and "personal hatreds" that the speaker wants to escape, at least for a moment.

The pastoral impulses in the urban context of Frank O'Hara's poetry have been examined throughout this chapter, revealing that, although the poet has an intimate association with New York City, his poems contain pastoral motifs on a semiotic level. With his mobility and anti-formalist literary stance, O'Hara's renowned lunch walks in the streets of Manhattan in the 1950s socio-spatial landscape of postwar New York creates an appealing image of him as a city poet. Yet he suffers from the turmoil that the city forces him to live in, which he feels compelled to do. To relieve his urban uneasiness, O'Hara rebuilds New York City with his own time and space synopsis through pastoral imagery to create his ideal metropolitan environment. I have

analyzed some of his urban poems such as "In Memory of My Feelings" and "Personal Poem" to show how New York becomes a cause of concern for O'Hara by underlining his close connection to the city. I then examined several other O'Hara poems such as "October," "Walking," "Poem (It was snowing and now)," and "Music" from Gray's concept of the "semiotic shepherd," a phrase he coined to describe O'Hara's urban-pastoral aspirations. Although in conventional pastoral verse, the term "shepherd" indicates a disguise, I have explored this expression using an urban-pastoral approach, stating that O'Hara employs this practice to characterize the urban environment by utilizing pastoral terminology to comfort his nervousness. Despite its allegedly metropolitan traits, O'Hara's poetry tends to identify his preferred locale, New York, with pastoral themes that eventually turn him into a "semiotic shepherd."

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I attempted to conceptualize the pastoral mode in the urban poems of Frank O'Hara and John Ashbery, two leading figures of the New York School of Poetry. The most challenging aspect of my research is the fact it deals with the works of two distinctly *urban* poets who have been generally praised for their representation of New York. Tracing back the roots of the pastoral tradition and its development in American poetry, I have argued that their poems employ pastoral motifs within an urban context as a means of escape from current postwar circumstances and a reminder of happier times.

In the first chapter, I have traced the developments of the pastoral tradition from ancient times to the post war era and its interaction with the urban mode in literature. I have observed that despite the immense changes in both the content and form of literary works, the urban aesthetics has always nurtured some pastoral ideal. I illustrate this interaction giving examples from the poems of Philip Freneau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, T.S.Eliot, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and Hart Crane.

I expanded this chronological outline of American poetry from an urban-pastoral perspective going on with the post war era. Clarifying the political and social conditions that give birth to the formalism movement and the strictness of post-war American social discourse, I dwelled on the anti-academic groups of poets who resist formalist poetic principles in the 1950s. These experimental groups of poets are distinguished from their forerunners by their impulsive literary approach and the

rejection of conventional poetic style. I concentrated my study on the New York School of Poetry because of its great potential to gap the abyss between the urban setting, New York, and the naturalistic tools that are used for its portrayal.

While I was framing this theoretical part of my thesis, I profited from the views of several scholars such as Richard Lehan, Kevin R. McNamara, Timothy Gray, Leo Marx, M.A.R. Habib, Christopher Beach, Terence Diggory, Donald Allen, David Lehman, and David Shapiro. Their ideas were crucial for this study as they provide a literary perspective for the social connections between urban and pastoral forces.

The second chapter has examined various aspects of the pastoral ideal in the modern setting of John Ashbery's poetry to show that, despite his reputation as a city poet, his works are infused with nostalgia for the pastoral. The poet creates a "middle landscape" in which pastoral elements trespass on the urban site to dispel the impression of confinement caused by metropolitan haste. As a result, the first section has delved into the poem "These Lacustrine Cities," applying Leo Marx's concept of "middle landscape" to the work's fractured urban setting. I have demonstrated how Ashbery develops his own unique technique of combining urban and rural elements in response to the devastating influence of industrialism. Considering Paul Alpers' concept of "pastoral retreat," the chapter has continued with the poem "The Instruction Manual." I have claimed that the poet/speaker is attempting to recreate himself as a modern shepherd by fleeing the chaotic urban world. By focusing only on the speaker's evocative senses, I have demonstrated how Ashbery presents the sense of escape as a rural cure for his urban entrapment in an instant of a visionary reverie. In the second half of the chapter, the poem "The Skaters" has been explored from a theoretical perspective shaped by James McCorkle's "nostalgia and immediacy" dichotomy. I have argued that the connection between Ashbery's use of many voices and the poem's patchwork construction to describe an urban-pastoral environment maintains a balance between the past and the present. I have displayed how naturalistic qualities primarily affected by the poet's childhood experiences not only merge past and current moments but also alleviate the poet's anxiety in his metropolitan location.

The last chapter has examined the pastoral inclinations in the urban context of Frank O'Hara's poetry to demonstrate that despite the poet's close connection with New York City, his poems contain rich pastoral imagery. O'Hara's celebrated lunch walks in the streets of Manhattan in the 1950s socio-spatial milieu of postwar New York establish an appealing image of him as a city poet, thanks to his mobility and anti-formalist literary position. I have argued that to ease his urban anxiety, O'Hara reconstructs New York City using pastoral imagery and his own time and space description to create his ideal metropolitan atmosphere. I have focused on representative poems such as "In Memory of My Feelings" and "Personal Poem," to see how New York becomes a source of anxiety for him. I have applied Gray's concept of the "semiotic shepherd" to several other poems, including "October," "Walking," "Poem (It was snowing and now)," and "Music." Although the term "shepherd" connotes a disguise in traditional pastoral poetry, I have investigated this language from an urban-pastoral perspective, claiming that O'Hara uses this method to define the urban environment by adopting pastoral vocabulary to calm his anxiety. Despite its ostensibly metropolitan characteristics, O'Hara's poetry tends to reconstruct his favorite city, New York, through pastoral images that eventually transform him into a "semiotic shepherd."

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