

John Ashbery's April Galleons

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John Ashbery's April Galleons

John Ashbery, the great American modernist poet, achieved a fiscally small but artistically tremendous success with his book *April Galleons*, published in 1987; he won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry with his 1975 effort *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, and won nearly unanimous acclaim from poets both [domestic](#) and abroad; this volume continues in the same stylistic vein as *Self-Portrait*, and furthers the deep and fragmented exploration of the themes which have fascinated him, as evidenced through his verse. This volume was both a stylistic [departure](#) and a thematic continuance from his earlier books, including the notable 1956's *Some Trees* and the subsequent *The Tennis Court Oath*. John Ashbery, in all these works and all the works following them (including his latest [offering](#), *Your Name Here*) addresses several major topics, most notably the meaning of America and the myth of the American Dream, as well as the subjective human experience of consciousness, the unusual and fragmented sense of time and identification it produces; his approach is typified by a search for the truth and meaning of things, explored through series of abstract objects set into a fabric which creates a thick emotional density. Although a investigation of every poem in this book would be valuable and enlightening, for brevity's purpose only three will be selected: *A Mood of Quiet Beauty*, *Insane Decisions*, and *Some Money*.

Ashbery's style in A Mood For Quiet Beauty is typified by the French symbolists he so admires and has used for inspiration throughout his career; this is shown by his reliance on unusual and often impenetrable abstract imagery s...

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For a little money and a coat.

The great tree, once grown, passes over.

I said you can catch all kinds of weird activities.

Meanwhile the child disturbs you..

You are never asked back with its dog

And the fishing pole leans against the steps.

Why have all the windows darkened?

The laurel burned its image into the sky like smoke?

All was gold and shiny in the queen's parlor.

In the pigsty outside it was winter however

With one headache after another

Leading to the blasted bush

On which a felt hat was stuck

Closer to the image of you, of how it feels.

The dogs were in time for no luck.

The lobster shouted how it was long ago

No pen mightier than this said the object

As though to ward off a step

To kiss my sweetheart in the narrow alley

Before it was wartime and the cold ended

On that note.

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