Art and society: a consideration of the relations between aesthetic theories and social commitment with reference to Katherine Mansfield and Oscar Wilde

Abstract
The chief purpose of this project is to discuss Katherine Mansfield's aesthetic ideas in connection with those of Oscar Wilde and fin de siècle Aestheticism. The proposed study will also analyse her Modernist technique in Symbolist terms, and consider her major themes from aesthetic and political points of view. The primary, underlying concern of this study is to negotiate two, often opposing critical values: the aesthetic and the political. The artist's negotiation of the conflict between aesthetics (art) and politics (society) is a controversial 'modern' critical issue: the issue all serious artists and critics have been facing and consciously dealing with since the late nineteenth century. Fin de siècle Aestheticism and Symbolism form a dominant stream of Modernism because of this intensified shared concern over the delicate relationship between art, life and society. Wilde's stress on the autonomy of art is related to his notion of an ideal relationship between art, life and society: he shows a keen awareness that the autonomy of art and the aesthetic self-realization of the artist could be realized only in a society without any social, cultural or moral hegemony, that is, in a society without moral, social or political oppression. The Wildean 'poeticization' of society lies in his politicization of art; and this aesthetic influences Mansfield's. French Symbolism suggested to Wilde and Mansfield an aesthetic which enabled them to realize their Aestheticism. Wildean and Mansfieldian Symbolism attempt to 'shock' the reader: they aim at breaking the reader's reading habit, and his or her stereotypic point of view and fixed sense of values. Here lie not only the political potential of Symbolism as a Modernist aesthetic but also the aesthetic and political link between their Symbolism and avant-garde Modernism.

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His narrator, Bernardo Soares, attributes twentieth-century disquietudes to the loss of faith, not just in religion, but in the hopeful doctrines that replaced it, including social equality, aestheticism, science, and philosophy: "We lost all that; we were born orphans of all those consolations. The Book of Disquiet. D. Walsh’s article “Oscar Wilde’s lasting significance,” concerning some of the beliefs in the life and work of Oscar Wilde, has given me some reason to question the perspective and integrity of the Arts in Workers’ News, an otherwise fine newspaper. The worn-out phrase “Art for Art’s Sake” repeated throughout this article is an expression that is particular to the Petty Bourgeois of society, where Art is seen without any deep significance, where purpose in Art is cast aside for the sake of mild leisure, where Art is simply feeding off Art. Art provides opportunity for every individual who is desperate for change in an oppressive society to contribute towards such, to oppose a society which demands the complete conformity and subservience of its “citizenry.” Art and Society a Consideration of the Relations Between Aesthetic Theories and Social Commitment with Reference to Katherine Mansfield and Oscar Wilde. Yukiko Kinoshita - 1999. Analytics. Added to PP index 2015-02-02. Total downloads 70 ( #95,464 of 2,306,366 ). Recent downloads (6 months) 11 ( #49,946 of 2,306,366 ). How can I increase my downloads?