



ABSTRACT:

Situated in the context of the recent ethical turn in literary theory, this study examines the relationship between ethics and modernist poetry, arguing that the ethical implications of these texts are not only enriched by, but also inseparable from, the creative, unconventional use of language typical of this genre. The majority of studies in the field of ethical criticism either focus on the explicit transmission of moral values in novels and short stories, while ignoring the linguistic complexity at the heart of lyric utterance, or equate the ethics of literature, in a very generalized way, with purely aesthetic phenomena such as the textual experience of alterity or undecidability, thereby bypassing the concrete ethical concerns of individual texts. In order to attain a more nuanced comprehension of the relationship between ethics and (modernist) poetry, I propose to view lyric language as a site of world-disclosure opening up new perspectives on ethical issues that remain veiled or hidden in ordinary speech. This idea has been elaborated by Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricœur, whose writings on art and literature engage with the ways in which poetic texts break the constraints of institutionalized discourse and return language to its original, expressive power. Still before its theoretical conceptualization, the world-disclosing function of language was poetically explored by modernist poets from different generations and cultural traditions, as I demonstrate in my readings of Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, F. R. Scott, and Dorothy Livesay. Investigating the nexus of modernist poetics, linguistic innovation, and ethical reflection, I suggest that the notion of poetic world-disclosure is not only crucial to the understanding of modernist ethics, but also a way to bridge the traditional gap between moralist and aestheticist approaches to literary interpretation.

<http://www.amazon.de/Ethics-Lyric-Poetry-Disclosure-Britannica/dp/3825363236>