

The Opinions of Oscar Wilde

Celticity: ‘Indeed the poetic genius of the Celtic race never flags or wearies. It is as sweet by the groves of California as by the groves of Ireland, as strong in foreign lands as in the land which gave it birth. And indeed I do not know anything more wonderful, or more characteristic of the Celtic genius, than the quick artistic spirit in which we adapted ourselves to the English tongue. The Saxon took our lands from us and left them desolate—we took their language and added new beauties to it.’ (Quoted in Montgomery Hyde, *Oscar Wilde*, 1976, 68-69.)

Irish art: ‘Since the English occupation, we have had no national art in Ireland at all. And there is not the slightest chance of our ever having it until we get that right of legislative independence so unjustly robbed from us, until we are really an Irish nation.’ (Quoted in Harry Browne, ‘Wildean Nationalism’, review of Thomas Davis Wilde memorial lectures, RTE, in *The Irish Times* [q.d.]

English civilisation: ‘England will never be civilised till she has added Utopia to her dominions [...] there is more than one of her colonies that she might with advantage surrender for so fair a land.’ (ibid., p.386) [All the foregoing cited in Declan Kiberd, ‘Oscar Wilde: The Artist as Irishman’, in *Inventing Ireland*, London: Cape 1995, pp.33-50.]

Boys & girls—to ‘Bosie’ (Lord Alfred Douglas), Wilde wrote: ‘Your slim gilt soul walks between passion and poetry’, and spoke also of ‘rose-leaf lips made for the madness of kissing’.

On boy-love (after release from Reading Gaol): ‘a patriot put in prison for his loving his country loves his country, and a poet in prison for loving boys loves boys.’ (*Letters*, p.705).

Letter to Frank Harris, ‘[...] while the public liked to hear of my pain—curiosity and autobiographical form being elements of interest—I am not sure that they will welcome me again in airy mood and spirit, mocking at morals, and defiance of social rules.’ (*Letters*, 1962, p. 780.)

Life-style: ‘Of course I have passed through a very terrible punishment and have suffered to the very pitch of anguish and despair. Still I am conscious that I was leading a life quite unworthy of an artist in every way and unworthy of the a son of my dear mother whose nobility whose nobility of soul and intellect you always appreciated, and who was herself always one of your warmest and most enthusiastic admirers.’ (Letter to Mrs. Stannard, 28 May 1897; written shortly after his liberation from gaol; sold at Sothebys for £10,000.)

Last words? [remark to Robert Ross]: ‘My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. One or other of us has got to go!’ (Martin F. Nolan, ‘We’re still Wilde about Oscar’, *Boston Globe*, 22 Nov. 2000.) [Commonly given as ‘either that wallpaper goes I do.’]