

James Joyce: Various Quotations

“Portrait of the Artist” (1904 Essay)

The features of infancy are not commonly reproduced in the adolescent portrait for, so capricious are we, that we cannot or will not conceive the past in any other than its iron memorial aspect. Yet the past assuredly implies a fluid succession of presents, the development of an entity of which our actual present is a phase only. Our world, again, recognises its acquaintance chiefly by the characters of beard and inches and is, for the most part, estranged from those members who seek through some art, by some process of mind as yet untabulated, to liberate from the personalised lumps of matter that which is their individuating rhythm, the first or formal relation of their parts. But for such as these a portrait is not an identificative paper but rather the curve of an emotion. (1904 “Portrait” Essay [unpub.]; in *Shorter Writers of James Joyce*, Ellmann, et al., eds., OUP 1991, pp.211-18).

Letters to the publisher of *Dubliners* (May 1906)

My intention was to write a chapter in the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis. I have tried to present it to the indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life. The stories are arranged in this order. I have written it for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter in the presentment, still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard. I cannot do any more than this. I cannot alter what I have written. (To Grant Richards, 5 May, 1906; *Selected Letters*, p.83)

[...] I believe that in composing my chapter of moral history in exactly the way I have composed it I have taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my country. (To Grant Richards, 20 May 1906; pp.88-89)

It is not my fault that the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal hangs [89] my stories. [...] I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass. (To Grant Richards, 23 June 1906; *Selected Letters*, 90)

Sundry remarks

‘A nation which had never advanced so far as a miracle play affords no literary model to the artist, and he must look abroad.’ (cited in D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, London: Routledge 1982; 1991 Edn., p.245.)]

‘For myself, I always write about Dublin because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal.’ (Arthur Power, ‘James Joyce - the Irishman’, in *The Irish Times*, 30 Dec. 1944; rep. in *From an Old Waterford House*, London n.d., p.63-64.)

‘To me an Irish safety pin is more important than an English epic.’ (Remark to Claud Sykes; quoted in Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 1965 Edn. p.436.)

‘If *Ulysses* is not fit to read, life is not fit to live’ (Joyce to Kathleen Murray, on hearing of her mother’s estimate of the novel; interview with Kathleen Murray, quoted in Patricia Hutchins, *James Joyce’s World*, p.139; cited in Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 1959; 1965 Edn., p.551.)