

James Joyce's literary tastes

Jorn Barger October 2000

This is divided into three lists-- likes, mixed, and dislikes-- and each list is arranged as far as possible from strongest to weakest.

Sources

These first two should be much better known:

Arthur Power (1922 to early 30s): *Conversations with James Joyce* [\[Amazon\]](#) [\[Bibliofind\]](#)

Willard Potts (ed): *Portraits of the Artist in Exile: Recollections of James Joyce by Europeans* [\[Bibliofind\]](#)
[\[Amazon-OOP\]](#)

Ellmann (E); Letters (L1, L2, L3, SL); Stannie's books, Budgen's book (1918-23?)

[Noriyuki](#)

Likes

Shakespeare

"In my history of literature I have given the highest palms to Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Shelley." [L2-90]

[If on a desert island what one book?] "I should hesitate between Dante and Shakespeare but not for long. The Englishman is richer and would get my vote." (Budgen, 184)

But as a dramatist he placed Shakespeare far below Ibsen. (Budgen, 183)

...superabundance of worldly wisdom... radiance of language... grandiose formations and deformations, puns and wonderful zaniness (WP272)

Aristotle

"The greatest thinker of all times, in my opinion, is Aristotle. Everything, in his work, is defined with wonderful clarity and simplicity. Later, volumes were written to define the same things." (WP71)

Dante

"Italian literature begins and ends with Dante. But that is a great deal. In Dante the whole spirit of the Renaissance is to be found." (WP54)

"I love Dante almost as much as the Bible. He is my spiritual food, the rest is ballast." (E218; cf WP54?)

"Dante tires one quickly; it is as if one were to look at the sun." (WP69)

Homer

He expounded upon many facets and features of the *Odyssey*, including the smallest details, fragments to which the glow of genius adhered, as a tiny rainbow does to morning dew. He derived extraordinary meanings from otherwise commonplace words. "Its construction is incomparable, and one must be a German ass to detect in it the work of several authors. It is a unique work, at once fairy tale and cosmos. Such a thing cannot be done a second time." (WP157-58)

"The most beautiful, all-embracing theme is that of the *Odyssey*. It is greater, more human than that of 'Hamlet', *Don Quixote*, Dante, *Faust*... The most beautiful, most human traits are contained in the *Odyssey*." (WP69)

Ibsen

"...a fine playwright... He wrote serious plays about the problems which concern our generation... Dr Stockman in *An Enemy of Society*... was a fine character... the infected water supply and the leaking pipes... are all symbolical of what Dr Stockman was protesting against, 'that all our spiritual sources are poisoned'... Dr Stockman is a far finer character than any of Synge's and... a man fighting against the corrupt politics of his town is a finer theme than brawling tinkers, and half-crazy 'play-boys'... his purpose... his psychological depth as opposed to Synge's romantic fantasy; his brilliant research into modern life when he plumbed new psychological depths which have influenced a whole generation of writers... The purpose of *The Doll's House*... was the emancipation of women, which has caused the greatest revolution of our time in the most important relationship there is-- that between men and women; the revolt of women against the idea that they are mere instruments for men... The relationship between the two sexes is now on a different basis, but I do not know if they are happier or unhappier than they were before; I suppose it depends on the individuals. But I do know that Ibsen has been the greatest influence on the present generation; in fact you can say that he formed it to a great extent. His ideas have become part of our lives even though we may not be aware of it.... Ibsen's dialogue is always slim and purposeful." (c1922 AP34-35)

He possessed Defoe's complete works, and had read every line of them. Of only three other writers, he said, could he make this claim: Flaubert, Ben Jonson and Ibsen. (Budgen, 186)

[Little Eyolf] brilliant exposition... as regards dramatic technique Ibsen was the greatest master and artist.(WP272)

...deep psychic mysteries of puberty portrayed most poetically and dramatically in *Hannele's Ascension* [???] and *The Wild Duck*. (WP271)

"He towers head and shoulders above everyone else, even Shakespeare. Ibsen will not become dated; he will renew himself for every generation because his problems always will be seen from a new side as time goes on. He has been called a feminist in *Hedda Gabler*, but he is no more a feminist than I am an archbishop. He is the greatest dramatist I know. No one can construct a piece as he can. There is not an extraneous word in his work. [performance details] ...I am sorry I have never seen *Little Eyolf*. The first act is pure wonder." (WP147-48)

"I admire Ibsen precisely for these two reasons: his morality consisted not only in the proclamation of his ethical ideals, but in the fierce struggle for the perfection of his work."
[e688]

Flaubert

Of all the great nineteenth century masters of fiction Joyce held Flaubert in highest esteem. (Budgen, 184)

He possessed Defoe's complete works, and had read every line of them. Of only three other writers, he said, could he make this claim: Flaubert, Ben Jonson and Ibsen. (Budgen, 186)

He recited a page from F's 'Herodias'-- the dance of Salome. His delivery of the passage sounded splendid; he recited it vigorously with his full voice and broke it off sharply, the way F always concludes his long, swollen sentences. (WP160)

Ben Jonson

He possessed Defoe's complete works, and had read every line of them. Of only three other writers, he said, could he make this claim: Flaubert, Ben Jonson and Ibsen. (Budgen, 186)

Defoe

Joyce was a great admirer of Defoe. He possessed his complete works, and had read every line of them. Of only three other writers, he said, could he make this claim: Flaubert, Ben Jonson and Ibsen. Robinson Crusoe he called the English Ulysses. (Budgen, 186)

Chaucer

"Of all English writers Chaucer is the clearest. He is as precise and slick as a Frenchman."
(Budgen, 186)

Wordsworth

"In my history of literature I have given the highest palms to Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Shelley." [L2-90]

"I think W of all English men of letters best deserves your word 'genius'. Read his poem to his lost son [\[qv\]](#) in 'Excursion'..." [L2-91]

Yeats

"No living poet can write better than that." [Wild Swans at Coole, 1919 [etext](#)] (Budgen, 182)

"...he is a true mediaevalist with his love of magic, his incantations and his belief in signs and symbols, and his later bawdiness." (AP93)

"a poet of the first order... the immortality of his books is assured, which is hardly the case with mine." (WP239)

Many times I heard him recite with admiration 'My impetuous heart, be still! be still!' [\[etext\]](#) these eight or ten verses that he held to be the world's best, or the majestic tercet, as noble as a chorus by Sophocles, which ends his drama *Countess Cathleen*. (WP186)

Mangan

Mangan, the subject of one of his rare critical essays, was a favourite of his among Irish poets. We often heard him recite "Dark Rosaleen" [\[etext\]](#) and "O'Hussey's Ode to the MacGuire." (Budgen, 182)

Tolstoy

"...the best authors of any period have always been the prophets: the Tolstoys, the Dostoevskis, the Ibsens-- those who brought something new into literature." (AP53)

"Tolstoy is a magnificent writer. He is never dull, never stupid, never tired, never pedantic, never theatrical! He is head and shoulders over the others." (to Stannie, 18Sept 1905, L2-106)

"Tolstoy is a great writer. Think of the story of the rich man's devotion to his poor manservant --- Master and Man. After Flaubert the best work in novel form has been done by Tolstoy, Jacobsen and D'Annunzio." (Budgen, 184)

Jacobsen

"After Flaubert the best work in novel form has been done by Tolstoy, Jacobsen and D'Annunzio." (Budgen, 184)

D'Annunzio

"After Flaubert the best work in novel form has been done by Tolstoy, Jacobsen and D'Annunzio." (Budgen, 184)

"He was at one time a magnificent poet." [e694]

Chekhov [\[etexts\]](#)

"...the writer of that period I admire most is Chekhov. For he brought something new into literature, a sense of drama in opposition to the classical idea which was for a play to have a definite beginning, a definite middle, a definite end, and for the author to work up to a climax in the second act and resolve in the last. But in a Chekhov play there is no beginning, no middle, and no end, nor does he work up to a climax; his plays are a continuous action in which life flows onto the stage and flows off again, and in which nothing is resolved, for with all his characters we feel that they have lived before they came onto the stage and will go on living just as dramatically after they have left it. His drama is not so much a drama of individuals as it is the drama of life and that is his essence, in contrast, say, to Shakespeare whose drama is of conflicting passions and ambitions. And whereas in other plays the contact between personalities is close to the point of violence, Chekhov's characters are never able to make any contacts. Each lives within his own world, and even in love they are unable to become part of the others' lives and their loneliness frightens them. Other plays you feel are contrived and stagy; abnormal people do abnormal things; but with Chekhov it is all muffled and subdued as it is in life, with innumerable currents and cross-currents flowing in and out, confusing the sharp outlines, those sharp outlines so loved by other dramatists. He is the first dramatist who relegated the external to its proper significance: and yet with the most casual touch he can reveal tragedy, comedy, character and passion. As the play ends, for a moment you think that his characters have awakened from their illusions, but as the curtain comes down you realise that they will soon be building new ones to forget the old." (AP57-58)

Coleridge

We both agreed in admiring Coleridge...(Budgen, 182)

...so troubled, unstable, and penetrating; whose 'Kubla Khan' might have been the most beautiful poem in the English language if he had been able to finish it (WP228)

Sheridan

"Look at his quick short sentences, primed and witty. There is no drooling about him." (AP36)

Verlaine

...he was an ardent admirer of Verlaine. (Budgen, 181)

Horace

He delighted in Horace, whom he preferred to Vergil because of his minute perfections, his diverse meters, his rarest music. (WP228)

Plutarch

It is an artist such as Plutarch who makes [men of action] live again..." (AP73)

Stendhal

"Passion was his *raison d'être*, and that surely is the religion of all romantics-- exaltation through the passions... Stendhal was a product of the Napoleonic age, when the French saw themselves as world conquerors, and his attitude was such. But putting that aside one must admit that *La Chartreuse* is a good book in the romantic tradition... few men have conveyed passion with such intensity as he has... [examples] His description of their emotional frenzy is magnificent... Stendhal never became sentimental and soft the way Thackeray did, especially over women; in his greatest extravagance he remains hard and glittering... but Thackeray has something which Stendhal did not have: humour." (AP87-88)

Donne

"Compare [Tennyson] with a poet like Donne, whose verse is a rich contrapuntal music which makes Tennyson seem as though he played with one stop. And Donne's love poems are more intricate, deeper than any others I know. To me he is very English, far more so than Tennyson, for the English mind, in spite of all that has been said about it, is intricate, and with Donne you enter a maze of thought and feeling. A poem of his is an adventure in which you do not know where you will end, which is what a piece of writing should be... Donne is Shakespearean in his richness, and in comparison the famous French love poets sound trivial. He was a typical mediaevalist before classicism straightened out the English genius, for Donne and Chaucer were the two splendid geniuses in love with life before the puritans put out their ice-cold hands. Classicism was all right when it was paganism, but when it came to the Renaissance it had lost its purpose, and so it has continued miserably until this day, getting weaker and weaker until it has petered out in Tennyson, and in the stultified nudes of Alma-Tadema." (AP102)

Spenser

He extolled the music of S's 'Prothalamion' repeating softly the refrain, of which he never tired: 'Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.' (WP220) [\[etext\]](#)

Hemingway

"He has reduced the veil between literature and life, which is what every writer strives to do... 'A Clean Well Lighted Place'... is masterly. Indeed, I think it is one of the best short stories ever written; there is bite there." (AP107)

"He writes well, he writes as he is, we like him. He is large and wonderful and robust like a buffalo, athletic, created to live the life that he describes and that he could not describe without his physique, but such giants as he are bashful. Beneath the surface, H is more intensely 'Hemingway' than has been assumed." (WP148)

Quinet

the whole atmosphere of the Mediterranean is in [the FW quote], its ports, its flowers, the azure sky, the sun on the sea. In that passage he felt at home. (WP239)

Valéry

He loved V's verse (WP223)

HC Andersen

"He is Denmark's greatest writer; there's no one like him in the world. No one will ever manage to tell stories for children as well as he did. He is unique." (WP142)

Maurice Scève

poems to Délie [\[etext- French\]](#) [e693]

Samuel Beckett

"I think he has talent" [e701, also memorised part of 'Murphy']

Italian opera

brilliance and virtuosity of the singing attracted him to Rossini, Verdi, Monteverdi,, truthfulness and purity of soul... sincerity... brilliant, subtle, sonorous, and cordial music, generous to the voice, speakable, singable... humanity, good faith... religious but never metaphysical it did not upset the order of the world and did not seek to interpret the mystery of life. In it Joyce felt free... (WP248)

Othmar Schoeck (composer)

"head and shoulders over Stravinsky and Antheil as a composer for orchestra and voice" (L1-356, WP268)

Mixed reviews

Bible

"I love Dante almost as much as the Bible. He is my spiritual food, the rest is ballast." (E218, but this is from Francini Bruni's idiotic memoir, and I don't see any support!?)

Saint John was for him the highest attainment of the Evangelists... (WP62)

Proust

Notes:

Nov1922 10.42 "Proust - max text - min action Cine [vice versa]"

Apr1923 A-Oxen 47 "Proust reader ends sentence before him"

Jun1923 A-Scylla 35 "Proust, analytic still life"

"Our goal is.. also to enlarge our vocabulary of the subconscious as Proust has done." (AP74)

"He is the most important French author of our day... the best of the modern French writers, and certainly no one has taken modern psychology so far, or to such a fine point. I myself think, however, that he would have done better if he had continued to write in his earlier style, for I remember reading once some early sketches in a book of his entitled *Les plaisirs et les jours*, studies of Parisian society in the '90s, and there was one in it, 'Mélancolique Villégiature de Mme de Breyves' which impressed me greatly. [\[Spanish?\]](#) If he had continued in that early style, in my opinion he would have written the best novels of our generation. But instead he launched into *À la recherche du temps perdu*, which suffers from over-elaboration... He is a special writer, I admit, yet in spite of the fact that he writes about decaying aristocrats, I rank him with Balzac and Thackeray... It was not experimentation, his innovations were necessary to express modern life as he saw it. As life changes, the style to express it must change also.... Proust's style conveys that almost imperceptible but relentless erosion of time which... is the motive of his work. [attitude towards noble blood compared to Saint Simon]" (AP78-79)

Proust spoke of nothing but duchesses "while I was far more interested in their maids" (WP227)

Dostoevski

"...the best authors of any period have always been the prophets: the Tolstoys, the Dostoevskis, the Ibsens-- those who brought something new into literature." (AP53)

"...he is the man more than any other who has created modern prose, and intensified it to its present-day pitch. It was his explosive power which shattered the Victorian novel with its simpering maidens and ordered commonplaces; books which were without imagination or violence. I know that some people think he was fantastic, mad even, but the motives he employed in his work, violence and desire, are the very breath of literature. Much as we know has been made of his sentence to execution, which was commuted as he was waiting for his turn to be shot, and of his subsequent four years' imprisonment in Siberia. But those events did not form his temperament though they may have intensified it, for he was always enamoured of violence, which makes him so modern. Also it made him distasteful to many of his contemporaries, Turgeniev for instance, who hated violence. Tolstoy admired him but he thought that he had little artistic accomplishment or mind. Yet, as he said, 'he admired his heart', a criticism which contains a great deal of truth, for though his characters do act extravagantly, madly, almost, still their basis is firm enough underneath... *The Brothers Karamozov*... made a deep impression on me... he created some unforgettable scenes [detail]... Madness you may call it, but therein may be the secret of his genius... I prefer the word exaltation, exaltation which can merge into madness, perhaps. In fact all great men have had that vein in them; it was the source of their greatness; the reasonable man achieves nothing." (AP58-60)

"Rousseau, confessing to steal silver spoons he had really stolen, is much more interesting than one of Dostoevsky's people confessing to an unreal murder." (Budgen, 184)

Eliot

Note: Mar1923 A-ChamberMusic 1 "T S Eliot ends idea of poetry for ladies"

"Eliot has a mind which can appreciate and express both [reality and ideals] and by placing one in contrast to the other he has obtained striking effects." (AP75)

[Sweeney among the Nightingales] "It is full of cliches which have been used by literary men ad nauseam [examples] Haven't we had enough of all that? It was written in a tradition that is dying - is already dead, one may say... *The Waste Land* is the expression of our time in which we are trying to lift off the accumulated weight of the ages which was stifling original thought: formulas which may have meant something in the past but which mean nothing today. Eliot searches for images of emotion rather than for an ordered sequence, and in this he is related to all the other modern poets." (AP101)

When I once spoke to him about TSE, he grimaced. (WP87)

Shelley

"In my history of literature I have given the highest palms to Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Shelley." [L2-90]

"No doubt there is much beauty in Prometheus Unbound and Hellas, but I feel that it's all one the wrong track." (Budgen, 182)

Shelley's "When the lamp is shattered" [\[etext\]](#) is a poem I often heard him speak. (Budgen, 182)

Gide

Joyce had a great admiration for Gide; in fact he was the only French writer, or indeed the only modern writer, whom I ever heard him admire with any real enthusiasm. [of *La Symphonie pastorale*:] "Read that, and let it be your model... He has a beautiful style... *La Porte étroite*... is a little masterpiece. It is as fine as a spire on Notre Dame." (AP76-77)

He admired Gide, *The Pastoral Symphony* or *Lafcadio's Adventures*, but not what he had written about Russia, which Joyce considered slight and sentimental. As for *Corydon*-- he looked toward the sky, with the look he would assume when he meant to mock the universe. "Will you explain to me how an intelligent man could have written that?" (WP223)

"I love two of Gide's books: *La symphonie pastorale*, which is a masterpiece, and *Les caves du Vatican*, which is funny." (WP146)

Cardinal Newman

"...nobody has ever written English prose that can be compared with that of a tiresome footling little Anglican parson who afterwards became a prince of the only true church..." [e682]

"silver-veined prose" deeply admired... sublimely simple and evocative style owes itself to faith of the convert. (WP173)

prose that he esteemed so highly "But he bores me when he tries to make his reader believe the impossible. Saint Thomas is more entertaining: he proves far too much to convince anyone." (WP239)

the greatest of English prose writers... not in the *Apologia*, which he thought rather badly written, but in his sermons. "I have read him a great deal... [in 'Oxen'] where all the other authors are parodied, Newman alone is rendered pure, in the grave beauty of his style. Besides, I needed that fulcrum to hold up the rest... The Church will surely decide to make a saint of him, if only for the numerous conversions that have followed in the wake of his own. At least a Blessed, if they don't succeed in finding a miracle." (WP217)

George Moore

"...how could a man like George Moore, the Parisian, admire a writer like Dostoevski-- Moore whose literary heroes were Balzac and Turgeniev, traditionalists like Moore himself with all the inherited weariness of the traditionalists." (AP59)

I have heard him express admiration for the work of George Moore... *Esther Waters* (Budgen, 184)

Kipling

"There was something of the artist in him in such a story as 'The Butterfly who Stamped'. [\[etext\]](#) Also the *Just So Stories* have delightful touches of fantasy in them..." (AP46-47)

"...that vein of crude practicability which runs through him, like that of the suburban subaltern. I agree, and then there is that jingling jingoism of his which must be very offensive to foreigners." (AP47)

Maupassant

[Bel Ami] "amusing and lively... but I could not call it a great work. Like everything M wrote it is in miniature. In fact I thought it read like a series of excellent short stories..." (AP107)

admired the works of M, but. at times too concise because of his insistent wish to define things in a phrase... frequently brutal in judging the characters... always tell some anecdote which is amusing, indecent, pathetic, or brutal, and in the course of which the life of the characters seems to rise to momentary interest only to fall back again into banality [Stannie's 'Recollections' p18]

Whitman

"...he has a certain flavour it is true, the smell of virgin forest is in him, and of the wooden shack, a kind of primitive colonialism, but that is a long way from being civilised." (AP93, contrasting writers like Rabelais and Cervantes who have the scent of their place and time)

Americans

"...the real American writers so far have all been minor writers, such as Jack London, Bret Harte, Robert Service in Canada and such like, and it will take a long time before they produce any art which is worthwhile. What they want in my opinion is a few more wars..." (AP94)

"I haven't anything against [Jack London], but I daresay we are rather different!" (WP150)

Michelangelo

He had no great admiration for Petrarch, who lacked intellect: an aesthete. There is far more beauty in the poems of Michelangelo, despite their faulty forms. (WP220)

Gottfried Keller

"I don't like K's style of *derjenige dessen welcher.*" ...He later was impressed by K's suite of poems set by Schoeck, and translated one. (WP62-63)

Dislikes

Wagner

could scarcely tolerate... a form of musical drama that assigns meaning and accent far more often to the orchestra than to the voices... a system of myths that was arbitrary and opposite to the true and daily myths of the dream and of history explored in FW (WP248)

Synge

"I do not care for it [Synge's work] for I think that he wrote a kind of fabricated language as unreal as his characters were unreal. Also in my experience the peasants in Ireland are a very different people from what he made them to be, a hard, crafty and matter-of-fact lot, and I never heard any of them using the language which Synge puts into their mouths... Those characters only exist on the Abbey stage... [Ibsen's] Dr Stockman is a far finer character than any of Synge's and... a man fighting against the corrupt politics of his town is a finer theme than brawling tinkers, and half-crazy 'play-boys'... Synge's romantic fantasy... whom has Synge influenced? Nobody but a few playwrights also trying to work for the Abbey, writing about provincial comics, characters from whom they hope to raise a laugh... It is his language that I object to... those long overweighted sentences, through which the actors have to stumble painfully. wondering, as they seem to do, if they will ever get to the end of them-- long flowery speeches which hold up the action. It is a misuse of the stage." (c1922 AP33-36)

Pushkin

"I cannot understand how you can be entertained by such simple fare-- tales which might have amused one's boyhood, of soldiers, and camps, villains, gallant heroes, and horses galloping over the wide open spaces, and tucked away in a suitable corner a beautiful maiden of about seventeen years of age to be rescued at a suitable moment... *The Captain's Daughter*... there was not a pin's worth of intellect in it... Tolstoy... did much the same thing but on a grander scale... [Pushkin] lived like a boy, wrote like a boy, and died like a boy... [Captain's Daughter] good for its period... people have become more complicated nowadays." (AP51)

Hardy

"...something of a poseur... with his big butter-up of a dairymaid; the wicked squire with his curled moustaches and his dog-cart; her easy rape, and the sequence of the illegitimate baby; and then the biblical Angel Clare; their contrived misunderstandings, and that final drama of the murder; and Angel and Tess's sister standing outside the jail to see the black flag go up. To me the whole story is reminiscent of *The Murder in the Red Barn* or *The Woman Pays*. Also some of the writing is as clumsy as the plot... [examples] If you analyse his plots you will see that they contain all the tricks and subterfuges of melodrama, that ancient and creaking paraphernalia of undelivered messages, misunderstandings and eavesdroppings, in which the simple are over-simple, and the wicked are devilish." (AP44-46)

Turgenev

"He does many things well and is useful technically..." [L2-90]

"[details of *Collection of Gentlemen*] ...the only merit of the book that I could see was that it is one of the first attempts at psychology in the novel. But the whole story is written in such an old-fashioned style that it creaks. Her secret thoughts remain hidden, as does the real movement of her inner being; for he is like all the classical writers who show you a pleasant exterior but ignore the inner construction, the pathological and psychological body which our behaviour and thought depend on. Comprehension is the purpose of literature, but how can we know human beings if we continue to ignore their most vital functions? Turgenev was a sentimentalist who wished to remain enamoured of his own sensualism. He saw life in an ordered fashion, in spite of his proclaimed admiration for revolutionaries; in fact, he seems to have taken a special pleasure in taming and defeating them, as he tames and defeats Bazarov in *Fathers and Sons* and, in contrast to Dostoevski for example, he was a nicely mannered Russian gentleman playing occasionally with fire but taking care never to get burnt. Tolstoy was a more sincere man in my opinion, for Turgenev preferred his slippered ease and his literary circles to anything else, and the only people who are convincing in his novels are his anaemic gentlefolk. His interest was in isolation and not in action, and his world is a faded world of watercolours. I admit he was an admirable person, and you cannot help liking him as you like a weak but pleasant personality, but I cannot admire him as a great writer. I think his best work was those early *Sportsman's Sketches* [\[etext\]](#) of his, for in those he went into life more deeply than in his novels, and reading them I get the impression of the confused and simmering cauldron that Russia was in the 1840s, before the great boil-over. And I always remember the answer a peasant gave to Turgenev to explain why

he was not married: 'Have you got a family? Are you married?' 'No sir, impossible, Tatyana Vassilyevna, our last mistress-- God rest her soul-- allowed no one to marry. She even went so far as to say before the priest. "God keep me from having to put up with that-- I, I am a spinster and as long as I live I will stay one. And what is all this to-do about? They are spoilt, that's what they are; what will they be asking next?'" [Joyce laughed explosively. *Spring Waters* very negative. sentimentalist] His short work was best." (AP55-57)

Balzac

"I am inclined to think that Balzac's reputation rests on a lot of neat generations about life." (Budgen, 184)

Thackeray

"Compare for instance Thackeray's social scenes in *Vanity Fair* with Stendhal's, how flat they are, yet they were written about the same period and deal with much the same kind of people. Stendhal never became sentimental and soft the way Thackeray did, especially over women... but Thackeray has something which Stendhal did not have: humour." (AP88)

Thoreau

"...an American Frenchman, a disciple of Bernadin de St Pierre, Chateaubriand, and others of that school. He is not a real American in my opinion, he just carried European *fin-de-siècle* passivism into the new world, that is all." (AP94)

Lamartine

"bad prose writer... exaggerated romanticism... conventional mysticism... plethora of description, but I remember liking 'Le Lac'... [also] a well-sugared piece of sentimentalism... fundamental insincerity." (AP96-97)

Browning

"Browning of the many words, whose characters, no matter who they are, all talk like intellectuals: a mind that creeps along repeating itself endlessly until eventually he is lost in the maze of words. But did you ever hear anyone talk like Browning's characters? Or if you did, didn't you feel you were going crazy, or getting drunk? ...Does any total man satisfy us? Certainly not the total Browning, if anyone could digest him. At least Eliot has not over-written himself as Browning did." (AP101-102)

Tennyson

"Lawn Tennyson, the rectory prude, a poet deficient in intellect... he was suburban. It is not a wild countryside he writes about, but gardens. No, I do not care for Tennyson. Compare him with a poet like Donne, whose verse is a rich contrapuntal music which makes Tennyson seem as though he played with one stop... Classicism was all right when it was paganism, but when it

came to the Renaissance it had lost its purpose, and so it has continued miserably until this day, getting weaker and weaker until it has petered out in Tennyson, and in the stultified nudes of Alma-Tadema." (AP102)

Kant

"In the last 200 years we haven't had a great thinker. My judgment is bold, since Kant is included. All the great thinkers of recent centuries from Kant to Benedetto Croce have only cultivated the garden." (WP71)

Goethe

"The rejuvenation of old Faust had an unpleasant effect on me." (WP69)

Petrarch

He had no great admiration for Petrarch, who lacked intellect: an aesthete. (WP220)

Mérimée

[Carmen] "entertaining, but like so much that is French it is miniature in comparison with, say, Tolstoy's short stories. He was an unimportant writer..." (AP108)

DH Lawrence

"That man writes really too poorly" (WP87)

Wedekind

[Spring Awakening] struck him as the weakest of 'puberty dramas' (WP271-72)

Giradoux

"G interests me very little... It's too bad he doesn't write in verse: he would have been able to unmask himself more easily. G belongs to the school of poets whose day has passed, the so-called rhetoricians, and waits in vain for his Du Bellay and his Ronsard to come to life again. Never have I come upon a writer who was such a brilliant bore." (WP1566)

Auden-Spender school

"big boy scouts without any brains" (WP234)

modern art

But in general he was not interested in modern art which was the rage in Paris. Picasso, Matisse, Braque, were names which never seemed to occupy his mind. ... In fact, he had a contempt for the multiple artistic activities of Paris. (AP103)

bohemians

He hated anything to do with bohemians, and always showed contempt for their way of life. (AP38)