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Quotes by Pound, Ezra

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Ezra Weston Loomis Pound (October 30, 1885 – November 1, 1972) was an American expatriate, poet, musician and critic who, along with T. S. Eliot, was a major figure of the modernist movement in early 20th century poetry. He was the driving force behind several modernist movements, notably Imagism and Vorticism. The critic Hugh Kenner said on meeting Pound: "I suddenly knew that I was in the presence of the center of modernism."

There are few things more difficult than to appraise the work of a man suddenly dead in his youth; to disentangle promise from achievement; to save him from that sentimentalizing which confuses the tragedy of the interruption with the merit of the work actually performed.

- Pound, Ezra

All my life I believed I knew something. But then one strange day came when I realized that I knew nothing, yes, I knew nothing. And so words became void of meaning. I have arrived too late at ultimate uncertainty.

- Pound, Ezra

In our time, the curse is monetary illiteracy, just as inability to read plain print was the curse of earlier centuries.

- Pound, Ezra

Real education must ultimately be limited to men who insist on knowing. The rest is mere sheep-herding.

- Pound, Ezra

I dunno what my 23 infantile years in America signify. I left as soon as motion was autarchic -- I mean my motion.

- Pound, Ezra

'Tis the white stag, Fame, we're a-hunting, bid the world's hounds come to horn!

- Pound, Ezra

AS A MIND, who the hell else is there left for me to take an interest IN??

- Pound, Ezra

A slave is one who waits for someone to come and free him.

- Pound, Ezra

Any general statement is like a check drawn on a bank. Its value depends on what is there to meet it.

- Pound, Ezra

A man of genius has a right to any mode of expression.

- Pound, Ezra

If the individual, or heretic, gets hold of some essential truth, or sees some error in the system being practiced, he commits so many marginal errors himself that he is worn out before he can establish his point.

- Pound, Ezra

One measure of a civilization, either of an age or of a single individual, is what that age or person really wishes to do. A man's hope measures his civilization. The attainability of the hope measures, or may measure, the civilization of his nation and time.

- Pound, Ezra

People find ideas a bore because they do not distinguish between live ones and stuffed ones on a shelf.

- Pound, Ezra

The real meditation is... the meditation on one's identity. Ah, voil? une chose!! You try it. You try finding out why you're you and not somebody else. And who in the blazes are you anyhow? Ah, voil? une chose!

- Pound, Ezra

The Image is more than an idea. It is a vortex or cluster of fused ideas and is endowed with energy.

- Pound, Ezra

It is more than likely that the brain itself is, in origin and development, only a sort of great clot of genital fluid held in suspense or reserved. This hypothesis would explain the enormous content of the brain as a maker or presenter of images.

- Pound, Ezra

You let me throw the bricks through the front window. You go in at the back and take the swag.

- Pound, Ezra

The only chance for victory over the brainwash is the right of every man to have his ideas judged one at a time. You never get clarity as long as you have these packaged words, as long as a word is used by twenty-five people in twenty-five different ways. That seems to me to be the first fight, if there is going to be any intellect left.

- Pound, Ezra

The intellect is a very nice whirligig toy, but how people take it seriously is more than I can understand.

- Pound, Ezra

A heroic figure... not wholly to blame for the religion that's been foisted on him.

- Pound, Ezra

Literature is news that stays news.

- Pound, Ezra

If a nation's literature declines, the nation atrophies and decays.

- Pound, Ezra

Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.

- Pound, Ezra

Literature does not exist in a vacuum. Writers as such have a definite social function exactly proportional to their ability as writers. This is their main use.

- Pound, Ezra

The art of letters will come to an end before A.D. 2000. I shall survive as a curiosity.

- Pound, Ezra

I guess the definition of a lunatic is a man surrounded by them.

- Pound, Ezra

It ought to be illegal for an artist to marry. If the artist must marry let him find someone more interested in art, or his art, or the artist part of him, than in him. After which let them take tea together three times a week.

- Pound, Ezra

The author's conviction on this day of New Year is that music begins to atrophy when it departs too far from the dance; that poetry begins to atrophy when it gets too far from music; but this must not be taken as implying that all good music is dance music or all poetry lyric. Bach and Mozart are never too far from physical movement.

- Pound, Ezra

There once was a brainy baboon who always breathed down a bassoon for he said, It appears that in billions of years I shall certainly hit on a tune.

- Pound, Ezra

It is difficult to write a paradise when all the superficial indications are that you ought to write an apocalypse. It is obviously much easier to find inhabitants for an inferno or even a purgatorio.

- Pound, Ezra

As a bathtub lined with white porcelain, when the hot water gives out or goes tepid, so is the slow cooling of our chivalrous passion, o my much praised but-not-altogether-satisfactory lady.

- Pound, Ezra

We do NOT know the past in chronological sequence. It may be convenient to lay it out anesthetized on the table with dates pasted on here and there, but what we know we know by ripples and spirals eddying out from us and from our own time.

- Pound, Ezra

If a patron buys from an artist who needs money (needs money to buy tools, time, food), the patron then makes himself equal to the artist; he is building art into the world; he creates.

- Pound, Ezra

But the one thing you should. not do is to suppose that when something is wrong with the arts, it is wrong with the arts ONLY.

- Pound, Ezra

Humanity is the rich effluvium, it is the waste and the manure and the soil, and from it grows the tree of the arts.

- Pound, Ezra

Good art however immoral is wholly a thing of virtue. Good art can NOT be immoral. By good art I mean art that bears true witness, I mean the art that is most precise.

- Pound, Ezra

I should consent to breed under pressure, if I were convinced in any way of the reasonableness of reproducing the species. But my nerves and the nerves of any woman I could live with three months, would produce only a victim... lacking in impulse, a mere bundle of discriminations. If I were wealthy I might subsidize a stud of young peasants, or a tribal group in Tahiti.

- Pound, Ezra

The worst mistake I made was that stupid, suburban prejudice of anti-Semitism.

- Pound, Ezra

Religion, oh, just another of those numerous failures resulting from an attempt to popularize art.

- Pound, Ezra

Gloom and solemnity are entirely out of place in even the most rigorous study of an art originally intended to make glad the heart of man.

- Pound, Ezra

The jargon of these sculptors is beyond me. I do not know precisely why I admire a green granite female, apparently pregnant monster with one eye going around a square corner.

- Pound, Ezra

'Tis not need we know our every thought or see the work shop where each mask is wrought wherefrom we view the world of box and pit, careless of wear, just so the mask shall fit and serve our jape's turn for a night or two.

- Pound, Ezra

No good poetry is ever written in a manner twenty years old, for to write in such a manner

shows conclusively that the writer thinks from books, convention and cliché, not from real life.

- Pound, Ezra

I could I trust starve like a gentleman. It's listed as part of the poetic training, you know.

- Pound, Ezra

A classic is classic not because it conforms to certain structural rules, or fits certain definitions (of which its author had quite probably never heard). It is classic because of a certain eternal and irrepressible freshness.

- Pound, Ezra

Properly, we should read for power. Man reading should be man intensely alive. The book should be a ball of light in one's hand.

- Pound, Ezra

No man understands a deep book until he has seen and lived at least part of its contents.

- Pound, Ezra

With one day's reading a man may have the key in his hands.

- Pound, Ezra

I have always thought the suicide should bump off at least one swine before taking off for

parts unknown.

- Pound, Ezra

Technique is the test of sincerity. If a thing isn't worth getting the technique to say, it is of inferior value.

- Pound, Ezra

I have never known anyone worth a damn who wasn't irascible.

- Pound, Ezra

A great age of literature is perhaps always a great age of translations.

- Pound, Ezra

The real trouble with war (modern war) is that it gives no one a chance to kill the right people.

- Pound, Ezra

Wars are made to make debt.

- Pound, Ezra

Good writers are those who keep the language efficient. That is to say, keep it accurate, keep it clear.

- Pound, Ezra

Nothing written for pay is worth printing. Only what has been written against the market.

- Pound, Ezra

The curse of me and my nation is that we always think things can be bettered by immediate action of some sort, any sort rather than no sort.

- Pound, Ezra

The act of bell ringing is symbolic of all proselytizing religions. It implies the pointless interference with the quiet of other people.

- Pound, Ezra

Mass ought to be in Latin, unless you could do it in Greek or Chinese. In fact, any abracadabra that no bloody member of the public or half-educated ape of a clargimint could think he understood.

- Pound, Ezra

All great art is born of the metropolis.

- Pound, Ezra

A civilized man is one who will give a serious answer to a serious question. Civilization itself is a certain sane balance of values.

- Pound, Ezra

Man is an over-complicated organism. If he is doomed to extinction he will die out for want of simplicity.

- Pound, Ezra

I consider criticism merely a preliminary excitement, a statement of things a writer has to clear up in his own head sometime or other, probably antecedent to writing; of no value unless it come to fruit in the created work later.

- Pound, Ezra



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