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Quotes by Connolly, Cyril

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Cyril Connolly (10 September 1903 - 26 November 1974) was an English man of letters.

The goal of every culture is to decay through over-civilization; the factors of decadence, -- luxury, skepticism, weariness and superstition, -- are constant. The civilization of one epoch becomes the manure of the next.

- Connolly, Cyril

Green leaves on a dead tree is our epitaph -- green leaves, dear reader, on a dead tree.

- Connolly, Cyril

It is a mistake to expect good work from expatriates for it is not what they do that matters but what they are not doing.

- Connolly, Cyril

The one way to get thin is to re-establish a purpose in life.

- Connolly, Cyril

In America every woman has her set of girl-friends; some are cousins, the rest are gained at school. These form a permanent committee who sit on each other's affairs, who come

out together, marry and divorce together, and who end as those groups of bustling, heartless well-informed club-women who govern society. Against them the Couple of Ehepaar is helpless and Man in their eyes but a biological interlude.

- Connolly, Cyril

There cannot be a personal God without a pessimistic religion. As soon as there is a personal God he is a disappointing God.

- Connolly, Cyril

Greed, like the love of comfort, is a kind of fear.

- Connolly, Cyril

There is immunity in reading, immunity in formal society, in office routine, in the company of old friends and in the giving of officious help to strangers, but there is no sanctuary in one bed from the memory of another. The past with its anguish will break through every defense-line of custom and habit; we must sleep and therefore we must dream.

- Connolly, Cyril

A writer is in danger of allowing his talent to dull who lets more than a year go past without finding himself in his rightful place of composition, the small single unluxurious retreat of the twentieth century, the hotel bedroom.

- Connolly, Cyril

Idleness is only a coarse name for my infinite capacity for living in the present.

- Connolly, Cyril

We must select the Illusion which appeals to our temperament and embrace it with passion, if we want to be happy.

- Connolly, Cyril

Literature is the art of writing something that will be read twice; journalism what will be grasped at once.

- Connolly, Cyril

A lazy person, whatever the talents with which he set out, will have condemned himself to second-hand thoughts and to second-rate friends.

- Connolly, Cyril

We love but once, for once only are we perfectly equipped for loving.

- Connolly, Cyril

There is no pain equal to that which two lovers can inflict on one another. This should be made clear to all who contemplate such a union. The avoidance of this pain is the beginning of wisdom, for it is strong enough to contaminate the rest of our lives.

- Connolly, Cyril

Except for poverty, incompatibility, opposition of parents, absence of love on one side and

of desire to marry on both, nothing stands in the way of our happy union.

- Connolly, Cyril

The dread of loneliness is greater than the fear of bondage, so we get married.

- Connolly, Cyril

The English masses are lovable: they are kind, decent, tolerant, practical and not stupid.

The tragedy is that they are too many of them, and that they are aimless, having outgrown the servile functions for which they were encouraged to multiply. One day these huge crowds will have to seize power because there will be nothing else for them to do, and yet they neither demand power nor are ready to make use of it; they will learn only to be bored in a new way.

- Connolly, Cyril

Our memories are card indexes consulted and then returned in disorder by authorities whom we do not control.

- Connolly, Cyril

In the sex war, thoughtlessness is the weapon of the male, vindictiveness of the female.

- Connolly, Cyril

Imprisoned in every fat man, a thin one is wildly signaling to be let out.

- Connolly, Cyril

The reward of art is not fame or success but intoxication: that is why so many bad artists are unable to give it up.

- Connolly, Cyril

The artist is a member of the leisured classes who cannot pay for his leisure.

- Connolly, Cyril

We are all serving a life sentence in the dungeon of the self.

- Connolly, Cyril

As repressed sadists are supposed to become policemen or butchers so those with an irrational fear of life become publishers.

- Connolly, Cyril

The person who is master of their passions is reason's slave.

- Connolly, Cyril

Were I to deduce any system from my feelings on leaving Eton, it might be called The Theory of Permanent Adolescence. It is the theory that the experiences undergone by boys at the great public schools, their glories and disappointments, are so intense as to dominate their lives and to arrest their development. From these it results that the greater part of the ruling class remains adolescent, school-minded, self-conscious, cowardly,

sentimental, and in the last analysis homosexual.

- Connolly, Cyril

Today the function of the artist is to bring imagination to science and science to imagination, where they meet, in the myth.

- Connolly, Cyril

Those of us who were brought up as Christians and have lost our faith have retained the sense of sin without the saving belief in redemption. This poisons our thought and so paralyses us in action.

- Connolly, Cyril

The worst vice of the solitary is the worship of his food.

- Connolly, Cyril

The only happy talkers are dandies who extract pleasure from the very perishability of their material and who would not be able to tolerate the isolation of all other forms of composition; for most good talkers, when they have run down, are miserable; they know that they have betrayed themselves, that they have taken material which should have a life of its own, to dispense it in noises upon the air.

- Connolly, Cyril

Classical and romantic: private language of a family quarrel, a dead dispute over the distribution of emphasis between man and nature.

- Connolly, Cyril

There are many who dare not kill themselves for fear of what the neighbors will say.

- Connolly, Cyril

All charming people have something to conceal, usually their total dependence on the appreciation of others.

- Connolly, Cyril

Whom the gods wish to destroy they first call promising.

- Connolly, Cyril

No taste is so acquired as that for someone else's quality of mind.

- Connolly, Cyril

Civilization is maintained by a very few people in a small number of places and we need only some bombs and a few prisons to blot it out altogether.

- Connolly, Cyril

Like water, we are truest to our nature in repose.

- Connolly, Cyril

Never would it occur to a child that a sheep, a pig, a cow or a chicken was good to eat,

while, like Milton's Adam, he would eagerly make a meal off fruits, nuts, thyme, mint, peas and broad beans which penetrate further and stimulate not only the appetite but other vague and deep nostalgias. We are closer to the Vegetable Kingdom than we know; is it not for man alone that mint, thyme, sage, and rosemary exhale crush me and eat me! -- for us that opium poppy, coffee-berry, tea-plant and vine perfect themselves? Their aim is to be absorbed by us, even if it can only be achieved by attaching themselves to roast mutton.

- Connolly, Cyril

Vulgarity is the garlic in the salad of taste.

- Connolly, Cyril

No one over thirty-five is worth meeting who has not something to teach us, --something more than we could learn for ourselves, from a book.

- Connolly, Cyril

The true index of a man's character is the health of his wife.

- Connolly, Cyril

Words today are like the shells and rope of seaweed which a child brings home glistening from the beach and which in an hour have lost their luster.

- Connolly, Cyril

A great writer creates a world of his own and his readers are proud to live in it. A lesser

writer may entice them in for a moment, but soon he will watch them filing out.

- Connolly, Cyril

The more books we read, the clearer it becomes that the true function of a writer is to produce a masterpiece and that no other task is of any consequence.

- Connolly, Cyril

When writers meet they are truculent, indifferent, or over-polite. Then comes the inevitable moment. A shows B that he has read something of B's. Will B show A? If not, then A hates B, if yes, then all is well. The only other way for writers to meet is to share a quick pee over a common lamp-post.

- Connolly, Cyril

Youth is a period of missed opportunities.

- Connolly, Cyril

No city should be too large for a man to walk out of in a morning.

- Connolly, Cyril

Civilization is an active deposit which is formed by the combustion of the present with the past. Neither in countries without a Present nor in those without a Past is it to be encountered. Proust in Venice, Matisse's birdcages overlooking the flower market at Nice, Gide on the seventeenth-century quais of Toulon, Lorca in Granada, Picasso by Saint-Germain-des-Près: there lies civilization and for me it can exist only under those

liberal regimes in which the Present is alive and therefore capable of assimilating the Past.

- Connolly, Cyril

The civilized are those who get more out of life than the uncivilized, and for this we are not likely to be forgiven.

- Connolly, Cyril

When I contemplate the accumulation of guilt and remorse which, like a garbage-can, I carry through life, and which is fed not only by the lightest action but by the most harmless pleasure, I feel Man to be of all living things the most biologically incompetent and ill-organized. Why has he acquired a seventy years life-span only to poison it incurably by the mere being of himself? Why has he thrown Conscience, like a dead rat, to putrefy in the well?

- Connolly, Cyril

Slums may well be breeding-grounds of crime, but middle-class suburbs are incubators of apathy and delirium.

- Connolly, Cyril

I review novels to make money, because it is easier for a sluggard to write an article a fortnight than a book a year, because the writer is soothed by the opiate of action, the crank by posing as a good journalist, and having an air hole. I dislike it. I do it and I am always resolving to give it up.

- Connolly, Cyril



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