

# Tour the Museum with Joyce and Re-joyce!

The Zymoglyphic Museum was one day haunted by the spectre of Modernist literature's pre-eminent figure, James Joyce. The resulting quagmire of puns and multi-use words was captured in real time and is presented here as told. A scholarly interpretive commentary follows.

A decent young docent named Joyce  
Was recently given no choice:  
She could not see him  
In the museum  
But she spoke in her namesake's voice!

## The transcript of the twour

Well, come to the The Zyglomorphic Amusing Rheum! Lots of Fun with Finnegans Wake!

*Penetrators are permitted into the museomound free. For her passkey supply to the janitrix, the mistress Kathe. This is the way to the museyroom. Mind your hats goan in!*

This is a goodly cabinet with a chitinous crabnet, a coleopterous mycocosm of myth and mayhap, of dottles and orts, swirls within whirls within whorls, mortifaction and calcifiction, a composition in compost.

*What a mnice old mness it all mnakes! A middenhide hoard of objects!*

These are the die-oramas, crude cerebrations of animalations, a mothy paradise for fora and flauna, mummyfied and deadified, petrified and putrified.

*a weird of wonder tenebrous as that evil thorngarth, a field of faery blithe as this flowing wild*

This rheum dates from the Late Crustaceous!

These are pulchritudinous picktures from the pickled passed, left in the dust and *laid to rust upon the green.*

These are the arktifacts that harken back, in fact, to wandrous daze, inspiring promordioli "oooh!"s, from an arkeologic and arkapelagic land enfaloped in fog and mistery.

*you would see in his house of thoughtsam...what a jetsam litterage of convolvuli of time lost or strayed, of lands derelict and of tongues laggin, too.*

This is a fish that murmur made, *the crux of the catalogue of our antediluvial zoo*, a psychordelic mating plaice for ye of liddell fate, off to wander land.

*Though Wonderlawn's lost us forever. Alis, alas, she broke the glass!*

But the winnegan's fake.

*See what happens when your somatophage merman takes his fancy to our virgitarian swan?*

This swan's Mayan and that wan's urine!

This is the zymic lab'ratory, demoted to the supplimation, redaction, and collusion of allusionogenic substances, alife with deoxyribonucleic gyrations and possum- and proper-bilities.

This is, in some, a grand fissionary tombessence, teaming with troglodytes and zyglomorphs in constint fluxus, a restless peripatesis, eternally seeking the great cerulean circum-aximtranssubstantiation!

*Transfusiasm!*

For is it not inscripchewered: "a dream cometh through the multitude of business..." (and hear we quoteth the sagely Qoheleth)

A zymonesiac emission from the post-orifice fallows rabidly, shewing by a vigorous mythemagical proof that effluvium divided by hex may be further derided by why, dancing to an algorithym lost in a zee of allusions.

A post-tickle announcement comes: Achtung! Snicklefritz's Gotterdammerung! Make a call to Shedley Arms! Cast off yer

xenophobic ways! Alight the torch of entropy! La fiaccola dell'entropia! La fiaccola dell'entropia!

*Well, all be dumbed!*

This transmission has ended (and with it all hour revels); the medium is mooted and the me-seum is the message (and the mess-age is a spillchicker's noughtmare...What a metagigamess!)

*This way the museyroom. Mind your boots goan out. Phew!*

### **Scholar's commentary**

Phrases *in italics* are quotations from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (Viking edition, 1959), especially the tour of the fictional Willingdone Museum (pp 8-10). This museum is also known as the Walinstone Museum and other variants. It is, according to Joseph Campbell's *Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*, "a kind of reliquary containing various mementoes symbolizing not only the eternal brother-conflict, but also the military and diplomatic encounters, exchanges and betrayals of recorded history."

**Joyce and Re-joyce** - This pun on an Irish surname dates back in print at least to 1875. For the family's most illustrious scion, it may be read as "rejoice!" or formally as "Re: Joyce" or casually as "read Joyce!". With the addition here of the second Joyce, we have re-Joyce, or Joyce again.

**docent named Joyce** - There is no evidence that this incident ever took place, nor indeed that the museum ever employed a docent by that name (or one by any other name for that matter). Presumably this bit of doggerel is a reference to the Irish county of Limerick.

**Zyglomorphic** - a common adaptive spoonerism sometimes used by persons unable to remember or pronounce "Zymoglyphic"

**rheum** - the dried ocular exudate known as “sleep”; refers to a dreamlike quality in the museum. The full phrase “Amusing Rheum” refers to the museum being seen by some as whimsical (“amusing”) and by others as gross.

**Lots of Fun** - The title of *Finnegans Wake* refers to an Irish drinking song starring a hod-carrier named Finnegan who suffers an apparently fatal fall, but manages to join the festivities at his own wake. The refrain is “Lots of fun at Finnegan’s wake!” The book title, however, famously has no apostrophe, opening it to alternate interpretations (e.g., multiple Finnegans wake up, possibly in a boat that leaves a literal or metaphorical wake behind it; both being Finnegan, they are Finn and Finn again; and so on).

**a goodly cabinet** - The iconic description of a 16th century cabinet of curiosities was given by Sir Francis Bacon (*Gesta Grayorum*, 1594):

“...a goodly huge Cabinet, wherein whatsoever the Hand of Man by Art or Engine has made rare in Stuff, Form or Motion; whatsoever Singularity, Chance, and the Shuffle of things hath produced, whatsoever Nature has wrought in things that want Life and may be kept, shall be sorted and included”

**dottles and orts** - a reference to Skip’s Museum in Kurt Vonnegut’s *The Sirens of Titan*

“...a museum of mortal remains - of endoskeletons and exoskeletons - of shells, coral, bone, cartilage, and chitin - of dottles and orts and residua of souls long gone.”

**mortifaction and calcification** - mortification and calcification are two of the eight traditional steps in the alchemical transformation of base materials into the philosopher’s stone (cf. Jeff Hoke’s *The Museum of Lost Wonder*)

**..ark..ark...ark...ark..** - John Tredescant’s 17th century cabinet, a

microcosm of the world, was known as “The Ark” and later became the foundational collection of the Oxford’s Ashmolean Museum, one of the first public museums.

**urine** - the Willingdone Museyroom may in fact be an outhouse behind the protagonist’s pub, Wellington’s “water loo.” According to Joseph Campbell (op. cit.) “two urinating girls who intoxicate [the protagonist Humphrey C. Earwicker] are variant aspects of the one eternal river-woman.”

**thoughtsam...jetsam...** - FW, p. 292

**Alis, alas** - FW, p. 270. Lewis Carroll and Alice (like the Wake protagonist, a dreamer) are frequently referenced in *Finnegans Wake*. Carroll’s Humpty Dumpty originated the notion of a “portmanteau word” which, like a suitcase, packs multiple word meanings into one - a literary device greatly expanded upon by Joyce.

**fluxus** - an intermedia art movement (fl. 1960s), many of whose values echo those of Zymoglyphic art - simple, humorous, unpretentious, non-commercial, working with materials at hand, open editions, etc.

**Qoheleth** - the preacher of Ecclesiastes; the quote is from Ecclesiastes 5:3, *The Holy Bible*, King James Version

**Shedley Arms** - refers to a proposed plan for a bed-and-breakfast in the museum which was never realized.

**xenophorous** - Xenophora, or carrier shells, are marine snails that collect shells, stones, and other marine debris. They are sometimes referred to as “assemblage artists of the deep.” They are featured in the museum’s natural history wing.s

**the torch of entropy** - from an Italian blog entry about the museum

**all hour revels** - reference to Prospero's speech in Shakespeare's "Tempest"

"Our revels now are ended...We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep"

**The me-seum is the message** - a reference to Marshall McLuhan's catchphrase "The medium is the message" (or massage). McLuhan was fond of both *Finnegans Wake* and the extension metaphor, in which the wheel may be seen as an extension of the foot, the book an extension of the eye, electric circuitry (and now the world wide web) an extension of the nervous system. In its ideal form, a personal museum ("me-seum") is an extension of the curator's psyche, a mental attic similar to those dreams one may have in which the dreamer discovers a set of rooms in a forgotten part of a house. (cf. the Dream House diorama in the Zymoglyphic Museum)

**metagigamess** - A reference to *Gigamesh*, a book whose Irish author, Patrick Hannahan, not only outdoes Joyce in the number of allusions per word of text, but, unlike Joyce, provides his own commentary, which runs twice as long the book itself. *Gigamesh* is reviewed in detail by Stanislaw Lem in *A Perfect Vacuum* (1971).

“Possibly the most obscure and solipsistic story ever written. It assumes the reader’s familiarity with both the most obscure and solipsistic novel ever written (*Finnegans Wake*) and the author’s own alter ego, the Zymoglyphic Museum. Fortunately, the author has graciously provided a set of explanatory footnotes.”

-- Stanislaw Strzybisz, *The Fictocryptic Review*

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