

The Zymoglyphic Museum

Literary Guest Book



THE ZYMOGLYPHIC MUSEUM HAS EXISTED, AT LEAST IN SPIRIT, FOR CENTURIES. IT HAS BEEN FORTUNATE TO HAVE BEEN VISITED BY SEVERAL IMPORTANT LITERARY FIGURES, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE COME AWAY WITH VERY DIFFERENT IMPRESSIONS.



“...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”

-- Sir Francis Bacon, 1594

Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones and good in every thing.

-- Wm. Shakespeare, 1599

...a tortoise hung,
An alligator stuff'd, and other skins
Of ill-shaped fishes...
A living drollery.

-- Wm. Shakespeare, 1610

“[E]very man to his own taste...Have not the wisest of men in all ages, not excepting Solomon himself,—have they not had their Hobby-Horses;—their running horses,—their coins and their cockle-shells, their drums and their trumpets, their fiddles, their pallets,—their maggots and their butterflies?—and so long as a man rides his Hobby-Horse peaceably and quietly along the King’s highway, and neither compels you or me to get up behind him,—pray, Sir, what have either you or I to do with it?”

-- Laurence Sterne, 1759

“affords more pabulum to the brain than all the Frusts and Crusts and Rusts of antiquity which travelers can cook up for it”

-- Laurence Sterne, 1765

Spider claw and hoptoad paunch
And winglets to the gnome!
No true beastie will you launch
Albeit a little poem...
You all can feel the secret virtue
Of Nature constantly at work,
As rising effluents alert you
To powers that deep within her lurk

-- Goethe (tr. W. Arndt), 1808

“a considerable miscellany of things and shadows of things: History in authentic fragments lay mingled with Fabulous chimeras, wherein also was reality; and the whole not as dead stuff, but as living pabulum, tolerably nutritive for a mind as yet so peptic”

-- Thomas Carlyle, 1834

“expressive of a mind which has reached the gelatinous mildewy stage in the mortification of all healthy and courageous thought”

-- H.D. Thoreau, 1847

“all this mixes with your most mystic mood; so that fact and fancy, halfway meeting, interpenetrate, and form one seamless whole”

-- Herman Melville, 1851

“The management of this institution has had a severe though not painful attack of novelty on the brain...It is well worth a visit... There are many other things here which make one lift his eyes and wonder at the freaks of Nature when she is in a frolicsome mood.”

-- Mark Twain, 1864

After all not to create only, or found only,
But to bring perhaps from afar what is already founded,
To give it our own identity, average, limitless, free...
In large calm halls, a stately Museum shall teach you the infinite,
solemn lessons of Minerals

-- Walt Whitman, 1871

“imaginary gardens with real toads in them”

-- Marianne Moore, 1919

“a conglomeration at any rate of the most heterogeneous and ill-assorted objects, piled higgledy-piggledy...proved that when the shrivelled skin of the ordinary is stuffed out with meaning it satisfies the senses amazingly.”

-- Virginia Woolf, 1928

“...beneath the flowers, down the dark avenues into the unlit world where the leaf rots and the flower has fallen...Down there among the roots where the flowers decayed, gusts of dead smells were wafted; drops formed on the bloated sides of swollen things. The skin of rotten fruit broke, and matter oozed too thick to run. Yellow excretions were exuded by slugs, and now and again an amorphous body with a head at either end swayed slowly from side to side.”

-- Virginia Woolf, 1931

“...lumpish hybrid things which only fantasy could spawn.... gorgons, chimaeras, dragons, cyclops, and all their shuddersome congeners...hideous parodies on forms of organic life we know...an evil-looking crypt lighted dimly by dusty windows...isolated parts of problematical entities whose assembled forms were the phantoms of delirium.”

-- H.P. Lovecraft, 1932

“Penetrators are permitted into the museomound free...This is the way to the museyroom. Mind your hats goan in!...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... the crux of the catalogue of our antediluvial zoo...A middenhide hoard of objects!...Mind your boots goan out. Phew!”

-- James Joyce, 1939

“...everything oozes...”

-- Samuel Beckett, 1949

“where the faculties of the skull no longer admit the worms of the senses”

-- Allen Ginsberg, 1956

“...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.”

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 1959

“It seems to be some very extensive museum, a place of many levels, and new wings that generate like living tissue - though if it all does grow toward some end shape, those who are here inside can't see it.”

-- Thomas Pynchon, 1973

“formal rot to be enjoyed on a theoretical level...soft with dust and shadow, everywhere the ruck of clustered objects, most of them plainly put together and left to themselves to grow into the look of familiar things”

-- Don DeLillo, 1976

“We walk the familiar and always changing halls now in amusement, now in skepticism, now seeing little but cleverness in the whole questionable enterprise, now struck with enchantment...We may doubt the museum, but we do not doubt our need to return. For we are restless, already we are impatient to move through the beckoning doorways, which lead to rooms with other doorways that give dark glimpses of distant rooms, distant doorways, unimaginable discoveries. And is it possible that the secret of the museum lies precisely here, in its knowledge that we can never be satisfied?...for us it’s enough, for us it is almost enough.”

-- Steven Millhauser, 1987

“As supernatural as a Visitant from the Regime of Death to the sunny Colony of Life, -- to be metaphorickal about it”

-- Thomas Pynchon, 1997



Published by the Zymoglyphic Museum Press
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