

**Paper Delivered to the El Dorado Millennium Society
for the Preservation and the Contemplation
of Purely Abstract Thoughts and Gestures**

by Larry Atwood

It's very nearly approaching two years now since the last meeting of the El Dorado Millennium Society. Most likely, you are not acquainted with and, perhaps, have never even heard of the El Dorado. Begging your humble pardon, it's not likely that you should. For we do not cater to the public's whims and foolish fancies; we do not deign to rub shoulders with the herd. Indeed, all that is 'normal' and 'common' is abhorred by our members and left to repose in the trough from which that poor benighted creature, 'the common man,' drinks his meager sustenance. Our realm is the realm of thought, of abstract thought—that which is most wily and elusive. To the uninitiated, it appears to be a silly child's game with words, frivolous and senseless. But therein they betray their festering ignorance. For Truth exists in the complex structural qualities and the symbolism, Beauty in the utterance and sublime contemplation of the underlying thought. One must be schooled in the various subtleties and nuances necessary for a proper appreciation, and such intellects are never easily discovered.

But I digress. The purpose for which I intended this piece was simply to acquaint the curious portion of the populous as to my part in the last proceeding of the society, an insubstantial and inauspicious part when placed beside the compelling knowledge and artistic expression of some of my colleagues, but nonetheless, a part of which I am proud to be the architect, most humbly and unassumingly proud.

Having duly served my apprenticeship as a silent member of the society for three of four meetings, thus demonstrating my willingness to learn and unwavering obedience to the Code, I found myself singled out by the Chairman as a likely repository of further intellectual pursuits and was requested to prepare a paper to be presented at the next assembly.

I was aghast, mortified, whelmed over with gratification. My personal stock rose a full ten points on the ego index. I immediately set out upon a path of such abstraction as to scuttle a battleship. Days and nights fused together in a smoky aura of the most intense contemplation. The absurdities of everyday life gave way willingly to a higher plane of existence. There never existed such ecstatic joy in my soul as when I struggled with these illusory fragments of my mind in my painstaking ordeal of consigning them to their eternal prison on paper. At last, after much gnashing of teeth and mopping of the brow, it was complete to my satisfaction.

The day arrived amid trumpets from the skies. With sweating palms and hammering heart, I mounted the podium and looked out upon the vast throng of my confederates in thought.

One last word to the unwary reader: Beware the simplistic approach! You are entering a realm where words are merely symbols, and symbols merely words. A galactic geometry of the mind. It bears no relationship to common (i.e. mass) communication except in the unfortunate necessity of using

words. Attempt to grasp the evanescent beauty of it and allow the particulars to free rein.

To return, I glanced at the upturned, expectant faces, coughed quietly behind my hand, and began:

“Duo-Decimal Armature of the Lower Vertebrate”

“Can it be assumed that, since baseball bats use sonar for direction whereby their tiny furry bodies are incrustated with disreputable subdivision of vindictive mites, lacking any visible means of support beyond their minute crutches which evolution has been so revolting as to infest with a detestable species of marble-playing termites, that if a galvanized rat tail were to fall on the starboard side of the pitched room of a silver shingled brickbat at four-and-twenty paces, bowling balls would neither have hair nor gossip?”

“I maintain that it cannot be so because it only rains on one side and that only when blatherskites possess the legendary hormones of Greek.”

“Furthermore, until one has met a physical, there is small likelihood of gazing on that rampant glories within or the wilderness barbarities without which there would be a noticeable decline in red, semis, gravel roads, roasting pans, and snail tracks. For, if our senses were so developed as to perceive the thunder of a squirrel’s heartbeat or the dread crunching of the slithy tove gyre and gimbeling in the wabe, would not we be inclined to consider ourselves more marvelously endowed than we aren’t? And if, for a moment—a single, crystalline moment—we were to ignore the persistence of the Supreme Beast, would that not be tantamount to walking down the street with a canoe in your back pocket and having the front wheel fall off?”

“To close, I leave you to study upon the conclusion handed down by this land’s highest court upon a recent case in which the plaintiff was bound in leg irons for belching on a freight car: “Were the corpus stalicti to bequest modus operandi in the presence of four or more desecrated Zen Buddhists, it is appellate that the valedictorian duly perform a rigor mortis upon aforementioned habeas corpus.”

I demand to know whom among this august body is self-ordained to proclaim the taras leading us hinterward into the enfeebled rapture of bulba.”

Silence. Complete, stifling, deadening silence. It attacked me and stormed the pores of my skin. Wanting only to die an ignominious death, clutching a grenade to my forehead if necessary, I timorously raised my eyes to the audience, when there arose such a volcano of sound that I half believed the grenade had exploded. Salvo after salvo of applause and cheering thundered toward me. I reeled and was grabbed by dozens of bodiless hands, whisked from one part of the hall to another, praised, extolled, maybe even shriven, until my sense no longer even registered the tempestuous events.

Those last fervid minutes before the meeting was adjourned have completely escaped my recollection. It’s as if I had been some drunken sot after an all-night orgy of pub crawling.

The meeting over, we dispersed to our various abodes around the globe. But that was very nearly two years ago. I trust the Society has not been disbanded without notifying me.