LOW LEVEL BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURES: A NOVEL & PRINCIPLES OF THE EMERYVILLE SHELLMOUND

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Low Level Bureaucratic Structures
Principles of the Emeryville Shellmound
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&

PRINCIPLES OF THE EMERYVILLE SHELLMOUND

LYTLE SHAW
LOW LEVEL BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURES:
A NOVEL
for reasons that have to do with narrative.

Fashion of course comes in.

And research.

A new apprenticeship.
Some children find variety a threat.

Test out into the backyard behind a tree.

Maybe learn some details.

Or a new language.

You've been practicing.

Yes, that kind of proliferation.
Everyone will expect this of you in time

Upright, stern and with a perspective

Able to take some air

Juggle oranges blind as you now pilot

Sweep off the eraser shavings

And take stock of the canned goods
Study life in pools
Or Streams nearby

We all like structures of contrast

May I enter your name?

Perhaps a wicker basket of cheeses and apples

A general return to lead

and tools with

high numbers
Bye to the old stuff

My legs are light and the design looks fine

Model glue capless on the basement work table

Look up, I'm behind the mirror

Cigs and cigars

If the trucking holds, we'll be there soon
Often we choose surroundings that bear no resemblance to our aspirations.

Thickly clothed with cheap cooking oil.

A landscape must respire in audible whiffs.

Or a genie emerge from a thicket of tea trees.

Hand frozen on combination slip-joint pliers.

I suspect this chalkboard will arrange our memories.
Remember our struggles
with ruled paper?

Smell soil clods onagrarian boots

Or trade a disturbing piece
of your lunch

When the others come we can anticipate
other rooms

And who will be there to arrange the girders?
For young baseball players, modernism is only a dim possibility.

Comb crease worn into jeans.

Like analytic philosophers who invent "other worlds."

Or he-men designers through history.

This one can be sudden and fierce.

And by turns serene.
Let me explain something right from the start

We are not a charity organization

but sought by tauticians

bound to weather systems and the sheen of small vegetables

This predatory action will take us far into the country

With any bond between us temporary
Our best hours are often those at home

The garage is a place to start

Decals and wood gave speak my language

like an alpine hike with a real Swiss guide

You haven’t taken him down when you capture his leg

But sometimes the real heroes have to wait outside
As you sit by the trail and observe chipmunks at work and play, you may wish to capture their characteristic appearance with a pencil.

At home, the drawers welcome our participation.

Head looming above the terrarium

Civic structures for the temporary cities

Revolution inside even a tuna casserole

Man upsets this equilibrium by rearranging nature to suit himself.
From inside the ashram, the ego-based struggles of the material world recede into the unimportant background.

Violence creeps into the laundry room through a dog-door.

Watering continues in the aftermath.

And the summons names several new members.
On the back porch, the engineers clung silently around the key.

Products of everyone’s labor took on flashy attitudes.

To chart this pull was young Ernie’s secret longing.

Several candidates had systems.

And the warm weather awaited our trips through the surrounding parkways.

So when he proposed to check behind the new flange, no one thought twice.
PRINCIPLES OF THE
EMERYVILLE SHELLMOUND
The ancient shellmound in Emeryville, California was probably produced over hundreds or even thousands of years. The Native Americans who lived in the marshy wetlands north of what is now the Bay Bridge were prodigious fishermen. Some anthropologists believe that shellmound size was taken as a relative measure of a tribe’s fishing skill. Though we have little evidence to confirm such ideas, we do know, however, that the Emeryville mound grew to almost 80 yards in diameter (Rockman and Foster, 1977), making it the West Coast’s largest shellmound south of Koyuk, Alaska.
Most of us are interested in the world around us. Sometimes this world expands suddenly. In California, coastal sea-life must be managed with special care. Houses are placed firmly on bedrock. As a writer and an amateur scientist, I was especially concerned with these issues. When I discovered that the industrial building in which I have a studio rests on the northeastern edge of the mound, I spent several weeks reconsidering my writing's relation to the sedimented structures in my neighborhood. This led to a great deal of research and, eventually, the discoveries I published some years ago—whose origins I describe more fully in what follows.
If you make keen observations and keep accurate notes, you may produce worthwhile contributions to science. In my own case, I began to suspect that the shellmound could incorporate almost any fact, suspending it among mollusks within layers of dirt. How, I wondered, could the nearby reef sustain the high levels and variety of mollusk production indicated by the mound’s astonishing variety. But even stranger was the organization of samples within the mound, which had baffled even Ernest Uhle, the mound’s most distinguished interpreter (Uhle, 1908).
The Western Maritime Library houses its East Bay archive in the small pontoon bungalow next to the famous Polynesian restaurant, Trader Vic's. The archive floats in the harbor a few hundred feet from the site of the mound, and the mysterious reef just beyond it. Doctor Gamward, the regional curator, provided me with excellent documentation of Emeryville's nautical heroes: I began transcribing audio interviews with sea captains.
As I left, Gamward reminded me that massive withdrawals of living substances of the sea by man, without any thought of replacement, may not be feasible. In Hank Schramm's Sportfishing Center I spoke to Cutter Stevens, who runs the bait and tackle section. Though never on a commercial vessel, Cutter had been a recreational fisherman on the Bay since the mid 1960s. Cutter was eager for me to see his collection of marine exotica. With the first limpet, however, I detected crudely enlarged mantle cavities and cut our visit short.
From my apartment I could look across Interstate 80 toward the land features of the cove and marina. In the foreground crews were retrofitting the overpass and reconstructing the on-ramps in both directions. Helicopters ferried metallic debris between sites. Coastal sea and plant life took on luminous import in the technical language of the reference books I had stolen from the research bungalow. Cuvier had seen animality burdened with disturbing and nocturnal powers. When I visited the site again, several joggers, noticing me taking measurements and loading samples into my van, stopped to speculate about winter tidal patterns.

I changed the subject, locked my van and hurried into the bungalow. Inside, I was again disturbed by glances from an older bearded man who, not a student or professor, I had nonetheless seen at East Bay Libraries nearly every day for the past 7 years. After matching shellmound tissue with reef samples, I consulted Hickman and Roberts' most recent Integrated Principles of Zoology, where I climbed their illustrated cladograms, separating, once again, bass, lizard, then mammaly glanded horse and monkey. Hickman had been known as a renegade phylogenist, discovering anagrams within the patterns of animal names of his deeply eccentric phylogenetic tree.
Principles of the Emeryville Shellmound

Lytle Shaw
Unfortunately, the origin of most animal phyla is shrouded in the obscurity of Precambrian times. It is often said that the nominal structures of phylogeny are inefficient and arbitrary (Hickman, 1980). I am not so sure. Many of the artists in my building had recently produced patternistic drawings that seemed to mine Native American animal catalogues. In Uhle’s documentation of the mound, I found drawings that indicated oddly sorted ‘name layers’ with arrows. These field marks suggested an unpredictably regular proportion between excavation depths and the size of individual mollusks. The reefs would have to be examined first hand. We left by boat the very next morning.
Below me in the chartroom my wife, Simone, manned the echo sounder, interpreting its pings through a headset and calling off soundings. I inflated my lungs in eager anticipation of the big day. We were going to investigate the coastal reefs to a depth of two hundred feet, take specimens of fixed animal life in various environmental layers, and document the reef with artificial-light color photography.
Sixty feet down, I entered a vertical field of pliant growths shaped like celery plants, each stalk a different hue. Here were the implausible illustrations of Lister’s treatise on gastropoda. Surfaces pulsated in mineral folds. Above me I could see only the rhythmic movements of polyps, hovering at an indeterminate depth.
At the edge of my authorized pressure, 200 feet, I flirted with letting go. The reef stretched on in gaudy blues and oranges far beyond my sight. Clearly its mammoth production could sustain the most ambitious program of shell organization.
As I floated in this space the horizon flipped ninety degrees and light seemed to vanish accordingly. Sheets of mollusk names spun before my eyes. Small land animals—perhaps raccoons—broke shells and extracted food; a worn club functioned as a line break between conch phrases. The mound's depth was an archive of expanding species knowledge, a generation's record of the name embalmed, and its height grew proportionally from there. It was in this angled position, then, that I discovered the now well known principles of mound construction that I reproduce below.
### Principles of the Emeryville Shellmound

**Lytle Shaw**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>Mammals</th>
<th>Blackstone</th>
<th>Obsidian</th>
<th>Flint-like</th>
<th>Knob-like</th>
<th>Rough</th>
<th>Implement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>[5]</td>
<td>[6]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>—[1]</td>
<td>—[1]</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>[1]</td>
<td>[2]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Animals Found**
- Deer, *Cervus sp.*
- Elk, *Cervus canadensis.*
- Beaver, *Castor canadensis.*
- Squirrel, *Spermophilus sp.*
- Rabbit, *Lepus sp.*
- Gopher, *Thomomys talpoides.*
- Raccoon, *Procyon lotor.*
- Wild cat, *Lynx sp.*
- Wolf, *Canis sp.*
- Bear, *Ursus sp.*
- Dog, *Canis familiaris.*
- Seal, *Phoca sp.*
- Sea-lion.
- Whale.
- Porpoise.
- Canvasback Duck, *Aythya valisneria.*
- Geese.
- Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax sp.*
- Turtle.
- Skates, Thornbacks, and other fish.