

LARRY EIGNER TALKING

Larry Eigner: (As he reads poem with magnifying glass)  
...how you get from poem to poem, it's a little bit like  
a mirror of every day...yeah, speed, "sure speed / the  
rotary canyons"--

Benjamin Friedlander: So "Pure" is written on the drive  
to Martha's Vineyard?

LE: No, that was written a couple of years before I guess.

BF: Was it written in the car?

LE: Oh you wanna see what was...well that wasn't...yeah--

BF: Was it written in the car?

LE: Well, yes it was, on a drive up to Boston in--

BF: So did you write it by hand?

LE: I doubt it--

BF: You had your typewriter?

LE: No, no, I was always impatient, I had the work ethic  
in me, I don't know why I [...?...] and not just tell him  
(laughs) my father could only think of two or three places  
to go, couldn't just go out for a ride, but I was always  
at work you know, and I kept it in my head till I got back  
home.

BF: Oh, so this was written in your head...so the line  
breaks in there are...did you imagine the line breaks as  
you thought it up...?

LE: Now in those days I don't know how much I ever [...?...] these two things, I used to [...?...] a hunch for me [...?...] I said, "Well, let's try this, let's put this down, it's not promising at all, let's..." and that's after I stop typing you know, the poem will have extended itself & that'll be enough [...?...] oh--

BF: Huh.

LE: [...?...] but this one...it sounds like...I did this pretty well in my head because it's not the sort of thing that comes off--

BF: Comes off? What do you mean?

LE: Comes off the top of your head as you're writing or something...this is a rather difficult poem, it would be before '65 when I went down to Martha's Vineyard...I could probably tell you when if you looked it up in the index--

BF: That's not that important.

LE: --we could start off doing it--

BF: It's got a more complicated structure...it has periods & capital letters, strange grammatical things--

LE: (Distrustfully) That's right, periods. [...?...] I thought of something last night, it was kind of fantastic. I said, How many this'll be...a shift in the...gee I'm thinking slower and slower nowadays...[...?...]...well I wrote down [...?...] I made sort of a mistake in trying to do this poem here...I got a line about that chimney over there--

BF: That what?

LE: That chimney in back of you smoking...so I didn't put

that down, I'm glad, I'm forgetting...but that's what this last word "smoke" in the first line comes from, but I woke up Wednesday morning the day after the shuttle tragedy [...?...] it's like fighting windmills, yeah they're fighting space (laughs) I was determined never to go there ...and here is a shuttle poem--

BF: Read it--

LE: Figured I ought to say "To So And So"--

BF: (Laughs)

LE: --maybe it's alright without reference to that, except that, that seems to peter out at the end...if I could think of something better I'd like to. Do you think I ought to type it up?

BF: It is typed up.

LE: I mean make up a regular--

BF: Are those two separate poems there?

LE: Yeah, this way and the other way...never thought it might go together...I thought of calling it "Nothing Flat" and that's not so good--

BF: That's pretty good--

LE: "Morning / dark"...yeah that's pretty good for it...  
"Morning / dark / sea / air cover"...which wasn't [...?...]  
..."smoke / raining / the tree wavers / crash"...maybe I ought to be letting something out, I wonder if it would be better without the sea..."crash / time grows / sun warmed the floor"...I haven't got the din in there yet..."for infinite points in the sky / slow...earth moving children

dying off / something now & then / cross streets disappears  
/ there's no time left / to tell the end / [...?...] "...  
well I almost got that...that's maybe like I used to write,  
the obscurity, taking chances--

1/26/86  
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morning dark sea air cover smoke  
raining and trees waver  
clash time goes  
sun's warmed the floor  
from infinite points in the sky slow  
earth moving children  
die off  
suddenly now and then

cross streets  
disappear  
with no time left

cross streets  
without an end  
timeless

to tell the end  
In the lines above,  
when "end" ends  
the poem

disappear  
enough  
bits, pieces

anfeading out vast  
abundant white

abundant white

CHUMOLUNGMA GLOBE #1, Halloween 1987.

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"Free Standing Work" by Jean Day was originally published as a broadside by David I. Sheidlower at The Coincidence Press in Oakland.

"Alternate Lines": the opening line of each couplet was written by Norman Fischer as a single-line poem. They appeared in Jimmy & Lucy's House of "K" #7. The complimentary second lines were written by Andrew Schelling to be recited at "A Buddhist Poetical Performance" held at Green Gulch Zen Center, April 11, 1987.

The Larry Eigner interview is all that survives of an hour tape accidentally erased. "Pure" is a poem in Flat and Round (Tuumba, 1980). A shorter version of "morning dark sea air cover smoke" [otherwise known as "Nothing Flat" &/or "b u r s t" (or was that "b ú t s t"?)] appears in SINK #1, edited by Spencer Selby.

CHUMOLUNGMA ["Mother Goddess of the Planet"]: Sherpa name for the world's highest mountain, prosaically known as "Everest" to foreigners.

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