

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--

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

cross streets
without an end
timeless
disappear
enough
bits, pieces

anfeading out vast
abundant white
~~abundant white~~

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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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