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Letter, 1967 February 9, James Tate to Gene DeGruson

James Tate

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February 9, 1967
Iowa City

Gene:

Thank you for the long letter(s) and poem. Please do not apologize for that poem: it is very fine I think. Occasional or not, it does much justice to that phantasmagorical piece of the world--the cottonmouths and Auden, work beautifully, and the pits come alive. Not really sentimental either, as one would be tempted to be on this occasion~~at~~ and subject, but tough-minded I believe. A modern and controlled Vachel Lindsey celebration, good tone throughout. Well, you can see I am taken with it! When you mentioned the occasion~~at~~ for which you were asked to write it and for which C. C. will be reading it, I thought, with such limitations what can he do? But you did go beyond these social strictures I think. Keep it up.

I returned last night, or rather this morning (2pm) from my Yale reading and dinner. I'm pleased and shocked to say, it went perfectly. I was there for 2½ days and didn't have a chance to worry or get nervous because of the fast pace I was forced to keep: they treated me as a prince. The airlines, of course, were hideous and for that reason I was exhausted when I got there and when I left, never given an opportunity to recover while I was there. I had an absolutely enormous suite in one of the colleges, about 12 rooms, dark panelling, deep black leather chairs and couches, bookcase after bookcase filled with beautifully bound books, a liquor cabinet, ~~and~~ maid-service--everything. And ate at the finest restaurants, drank in the best lounges, talked with interesting people, was on the radio an hour with a critic from Yale U. and even that was perfect. The reading too went well. Too much to hope for. There were displays of the book all over town, and the one at the Press was awesome. But most of all it was just plain fun because I found I was able to relax and converse half-way intelligently with the many kind people I met. (I'm not too easily impressed actually, because the truth is I wanted most to be back here working and just pursuing the daily life.) So, today that's what I am doing, being lazy, drinking coffee, reading mail, and hopefully getting involved in a new poem. Strange thing, by the way, the editor in charge of my book, Wayland Schmitt, reminded me so much of you in looks and mind that I felt immediately at ease with him and as though I had known him all my life. That helped.

A bit of business: as you know maybe, my visit to Pittsburg is one of four in the midwest. The only tight part of my schedule unfortunately is Pittsburg to Chicago. I must catch a flight out of KC February 19th at 10:25 AM.

Will you more or less worry about that for me?
 Car, bus or train, I don't care, as long as I am in
 KC by 10:00 Am. Hangover or no. What time will the
 reading be in Pburg? I can't find it in your letters.
 I will have no trouble getting there whenever it is.
 I will be coming from Marshall, Missouri, or perhaps
 Kc if I decide to not spend the night in the former.

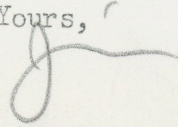
I liked very much your conjecture concerning the
 proposed genre courses; I think there were damned
 accurate! Is Hemmens back? Coming back? Leaving?

Is 'Bill Duffy' the William Duffy with the farm in
 Minnesota and the connection with the Sixties Press
 and the friend of Bly and Wright and the Wm Duffy
 in Wright's 'Lying in a Hammock on Wm Duffy's Farm
 in Pine Island, Minnesota'? Can you send me a copy
 of MISTRESS OF THE INN, for which I will send you a
 check?

If you pass your comps, as I'm sure you will, will you
 be returning to Pittsburg after the semester of
 dissertation-writing? California or NY for four months
 sound nice; you certainly deserve a rest. Mexico
 sounds better. If another windfall comes my way
 unexpectedly,--don't ask me what!--I would be in Mexico
 next yr for sure, may be anyway. I think I am going
 to get a job offer from Yale--rumor had it, well, not
 exactly rumor--that I was going to be asked immediately
 to be a Fellow in Arts and Letters at Timothy Dwight
 College, Yale University. Now what the hell a 'Fellow'
 is I don't know. I think it means I would be available
 to students, and perhaps not officially teach, probably
 social-contact is the primary function of a visiting
 'Fellow'. Anyway, I doubt that it would be much money,
 and as long as I'm going to bother to move some place
 and have certain obligations, I might as well get flush
 in order to allow a flight to exotic places the next yr.
 Well, none of it matters too terribly much, does it?
 Just write, love, be happy, grow. Work somehow fits
 in and provides if anything a matrix--holy word!--for
 the real pursuits. But I do need sometime to get away
 from the damned university, summers are not enough.

Well, I don't know where you are now, maybe westcoast.
 That sounds like a good trip. Will be seeing you very soon
 now. Hope the books have arrived. Yale assures me they
 are on the way, but I don't think they really know.
 Best luck,

Yours,



*nevermind
 just found it in
 your letter.*

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

The Program in Creative Writing

Department of English

IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240

Eugene Dedrusson
1805 North Broadway
Pittsburg, Kansas
66762

FEB 10 AM

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