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### Letter, 1967 April 13, James Tate to Gene DeGruson

James Tate

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April 13, 67

Dear Gene:

you apologize for lack of letters? Well, I am so bad at the present I can't even remember if I've answered yours. Terrible. I have temporarily given up most correspondence, I suppose as a reaction to having just completed the very taxing business of innumerable readings on both coasts, and also trying to decide on next year. I have a number of job offers: from Berkeley, Rhode Island School of Design, University of Montana, and a few other feelers. But to my present state of mind --which is harried, dulled, etc.--nothing sounds good: I just do not want to teach at this point all that bad; I want to write, write, write, and travel a little, and study on my own prosody and languages. If I teach I will be teaching the things I already know, Modern Poetry, Poetry Writing, and not expanding my own mind. I know you laugh and say all is possible if the will is there, but not so with me; I get obsessed with the pattern of it all and the responsibility which does not allow spontaneous explosions in unpredictable directions. Oh I don't know. I just want to be left alone is what it comes down to, teaching absorbs an awful lot of me, and right now I am young and full of creative energy and want to channel it while it's here, because, well, it can go or change unhappily. Anyway, I hope I have the courage to refuse all the tempting offers and just stash myself away in Kansas City or Chicago and pursue my own life, no matter how anarchic--that word doesn't sound right?--it may be; poems can grow out of great confusion, and of late my life has been perhaps more sane than ever before because of . . .well, necessity, dealing with 'important things' that had to be approached with some organization, such as readings, and other matters, teaching, etc. And I suppose my current personal life, as always, bordering on marriage, and the reservations and questions which attend that particular threshold for me, annually it appears. No decisions made as yet; and I do not relish the thought of making them, either way. I ain't.

Well, I have managed to do some writing, quite a bit I guess. I should send a second volume to either Harper & Row or Atlantic-Little Brown by end of summer. Summer? God I don't know, not Mexico as I was thinking. Maybe just ruminating America in a car, stopping along the roadside when I find a stump on which to balance my typewriter, maybe KC, if so I will certainly see you. Are you leaving? I am very excited to hear.

HYPOTHESIS works very well for me. It is a tight poem, juggling and intertwining such good images; of course it was potentially sentimental or something with the violets, etc. but the scorpion and empty hall are powerful and frightening. Good for you. DEATH OF A BOY needs work and I'm sure you knew that by the time you returned from mailing it. OVER



I like the 'Christ intoxicated nun' but not the 'hidden breasts sagging.'

Write and tell me your plans, what you are doing now and so on.  
I am sorry to report that I have not yet sat down and read THE MISTRESS  
OF THE INN, though I did and do appreciate your sending it to me and  
I shall have read it by next letter hopefully.

Enclosed are a number of poems --18 or so--written between August '66  
and May '67. Not by any means all I have done in those eight months,  
but about half; some you have seen, I can't recall just how many, and  
many more you heard me read at Pittsburg, but I thought I would like  
for you to comment on any you find provoke either pleasure or displeasure  
for you. Don't feel obligated .....

Best luck,

Yours,

