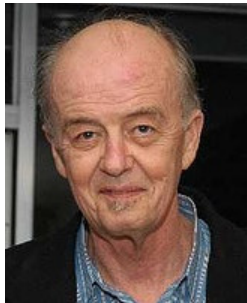


JAMES VINCENT TATE (1943 -)



James Tate grew up in Kansas City, on both sides of the state line, and he attended Pittsburg State University. He then went to Iowa University, which launched his distinguished career as a poet known for his “dream logic.” The laws of the imagination, in his poems, are as potent as laws of physics. He is able to draw readers into his vision by telegraphing vivid images that are suggestive of stories. This allows readers to invest their own experiences into the accumulated information. His technique is like Aesop’s fables, which strip stories to their basic elements. His plot sequence, however, is more subtle.

“Late Harvest” is one of Tate’s few regional poems. He seldom attaches his imagination to finite geography. In this poem he collages together colorful images: “white buffalo,” “red gates,” dried out “cellophane” grasses, and a “black tractor.” What he captures is specific to this geography: the distorted size of late afternoon sun, as it stretches into the horizon. Dimensions in the grasslands have greater depth, so objects may line up as though they were visionary. The “white buffalo” may be drained of color by the sun-glare optics, it may be albino, or it may be a spiritual being—or all of these things. The narrator is surprised by the buffalo, but he cannot rouse the birds nor the girls, who accept this cosmos. The falling of night quiets his fears, as natural order returns. Tate shows Kansas as a mythic place.

LATE HARVEST

**I look up and see
a white buffalo
emerging from the
enormous red gates
of a cattle truck
lumbering into
the mouth of the sun.
The prairie chickens
do not seem to fear
me; neither do the
girls in cellophane
fields, near me, hear me
changing the flat tire
on my black tractor.
I consider screaming
to them; then, night comes.**

Education: James Tate received a BA in English (Pittsburg State University 1965) and an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop (1967).

Career: Tate is a distinguished university professor at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. His second book, *The Lost Pilot* (Yale University Press 1967), won the Yale Series of Younger Poets). His *Selected Poems* (1991) won the Pulitzer Prize and the William Carlos Williams Award, and his *Worshipful Company of Fletchers* (1994) won the National Book Award. He also has won the National Institute of Arts and Letters Award, Wallace Stevens Award, and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2001, he was elected a [Chancellor](#) of the Academy of American Poets. He has published over a dozen books of poetry and prose.