

Masthead Logo

The Iowa Review

Volume 4
Issue 4 *Fall*

Article 62

1973

Cruisin' Even

James Tate

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tate, James. "Cruisin' Even." *The Iowa Review* 4.4 (1973): 102-103. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1585>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

JAMES TATE won the Yale Series of Younger Poets in 1966 at the age of 23, and has since published two major books with Little, Brown, *The Oblivion Ha-Ha* (1970) and *Absences* (1972), as well as numerous pamphlets and full-length collections with small presses. He spent last year in Sweden, and currently teaches at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

CRUISIN' EVEN

In order to belong to the Million Mile
Club one must belong to the Society
to Prevent Intelligent Intercourse.
The spirit is said to escape, especially

in crowds, like a shout in the park.
First there is an oral examination,
such questions as: Can we just sit here
in silence without resort to meditation?

What is the secret meaning of "organic"?
Does everything change at the same rate?
Is the typewriter organic? At one point,
a brain-damaged highschool poetry teacher

says, "Fantastic, look at that moon Marie!"
Sitting on a sponge, practicing for the
unknown. It will go away tomorrow, he
thinks to himself, lost in long, hollow

tunnels of night-thought. A long-winded
novel about a man who thinks he is reading
a long-winded novel. "What is the other me
doing right now who is not reading this?"

Silence for forty pages. Comfort in knowing
that you belong to a chain-gang of such
wretches, from where this mobile of a life
appears to stand perfectly still.

America, kiss my ass! I didn't mean that,
laughing myself sideways down the cul-
de-sac and into the Franz Kafka Re-election
Committee headquarters: Prague comes
to Prairie Village, a rather cuddly ghost,
still miraculously unweary of understanding
the speakable sadness of a dried-up port.

EAVESDROPPER WITHOUT A PORT, BECOMING SMALL

Arabs are twisting downshore,
members of a leading desert tribe.
Perhaps that have lost contact
with their highschool peers,
lovers, golfers and fishermen.

Waves can be as formless: over
illuminations, cocktail nuts drift.
The Captain in his bathtub tells
terrible stories, false stories
of breathless beginnings in a shivery cove,
which turn out to be the same as this one
by a thick thread of broken paddles.

The fabulous highwayman considers remaining
on an island never adequately explained,
without regard to time, space or spectators.
And by rubbing granite cliffs together
morning becomes Thor Heyerdahl
on his way to work, and a cannon
announces Spring groping its way
as a hearse among lotus blossoms.

The zebras want to visit Chicago:
it is said they have memories but they don't.
They receive their energies
from a completely unknown source,
some malignant force is directing them.
The electricity from our nightmares?

Full of illusory weathervanes and silent cocks
that sleep past noon, in a field of marble?