

Derrick de Kerckhove Replies
to J. O. Tate

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to the views expressed by Mr. Tate about an item concerning my work, which appeared in the Sunday New York Times of February 12th. Though I feel that I am doing a favour to Mr. Tate by taking him up on his criticisms, I am loath to refuse an argument even when it verges on the "ad hominem" category.

The first thing I would like to point out is that when one would criticize another person's ideas, it might be more to the point to address that person in his own write, so to speak. I am therefore forwarding a full paper ["On Nuclear Communication"] which was published in the [Summer 1984] issue of Diacritics.

Regarding Pynchon, I am afraid that I have absolutely ignored his existence until the time your letter informed me about him. I was, after all, brought up in Europe for most of my formative years and I am quite sure no one would fault Mr. Tate for not having seen all the plays of Jean Anouilh or Jean Giraudoux, or read all the witty and prophetic novels of Jules Romains. I am indeed very grateful to Mr. Tate for bringing Gravity's Rainbow to my attention and I certainly intend to search this book out but for my own benefit only, not for the dubious pleasure of refuting the arguments of Mr. Tate.

Finally I am surprised at the indignant tone of Mr. Tate's review. I had no idea that by expressing opinions about what I consider the most serious problem our culture has ever faced in history I would offend anybody. And, honestly if it all comes down to the suspicion that Pynchon has not been given due regard for the similarity of my views with the ones he expressed in a novel I haven't read, all I have to add is that Mr. Tate's response strikes me as frivolous. . . .

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