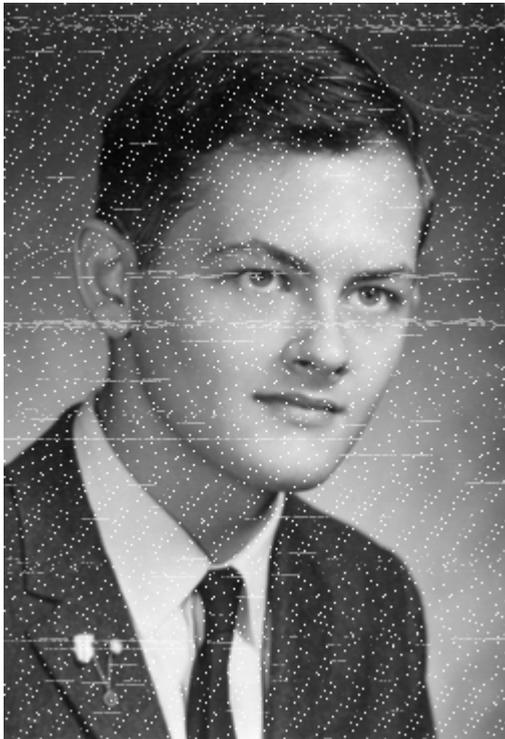# Thomas James

Poet Description:

Thomas James was born Thomas Edward Bojeski in Joliet, Illinois, the city in which he lived most of his life. The obvious predecessor who was his inspiration was Sylvia Plath. As a reviewer writes in the *Boston Review* years later, ?like the *Ariel* sequence, James?s poems fondle and embroider the delicate veil between life and death.? James died in 1974 at his own hand at the age of twenty-seven, just after the first publication of his only book, *Letters to a Stranger*. In the years since, it has become deeply admired in poetry workshops across the country, but it was more an underground classic than an object of critical attention. According to Lucie Brock-Broido, until it was reprinted years later, it ?existed in hundreds and hundreds of xeroxed copies across the country, a small underground railroad of reading for young poets.? Edward Hirsch describes it as ?a book of dark intensities and deeply felt connections, both haunted and haunting, at once brooding, sensual and lucid . . . . The voice in these poems?painfully lonely and filled with longing, estranged and religious?has stayed with me for more than twenty years. It deserves to be remembered.? Brock-Broido remarks about ?Mummy of a Lady Named Jemutesonekh.? the ?poem is a soliloquy in the voice of a young girl from Thebes in the year 1051 BC as she is being mummified according to *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*. For all the physical violence of the process, her descriptions are luminous, romantic, graphically and magically sensual.?

Race/Ethnicity:
European [1]
Picture:

Gender:
Male [2]
Sexuality:

Straight [3]
First Name:
Thomas
Last Name:
James
Birth & Death Dates:
Tuesday, January 1, 1946 to Tuesday, January 1, 1974
School of Poetry:
Other [4]
Birth Place:
Joliet , Illinois
United States
See map: Google Maps [5]
Illinois US
Group visibility:
Private - accessible only to group members

Source URL: https://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/poet/thomas-james

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