

Conducted by Roxane Gay

Today, I talk with Nate Pritts, the editor of the always interesting [H_NGM_N](#) about poetry, moving online, interesting eye wear and analytic evangelism.

1. How does an interactive poetry journal differ from a poetry journal?

The short answer here is to say — in lots of ways that I haven't figured out yet. I think one way has to do with dissemination. If you have a poem published in a print journal, you have to hand or airlift the entire journal to a friend if you want them to read your poem. And maybe that friend will read other poems in the journal. With an interactive poetry journal, you can send your friend the direct link to your poem. And maybe that friend will read other poems in the journal. I think, since an interactive poetry journal is ostensibly free, the possibilities for promotion are increased — I can tell you that you should read [H_NGM_N](#) & give you the link to do so all at once. And one contributor can post a direct link on his or her Facebook wall, or tweet about it, & you can then simply click & find yourself delivered unto the page itself.

Maybe the apparent immediacy of online publication provides a better network of energies — ie, if you like a poem of mine in an online journal, it's easy to find other poems of mine fairly quickly. It's also easy to find my email address & write to me to tell me you liked it. I think, in some way I can't quite define, online publishing humanizes the process.

2. The first issue of the journal you edit, [H_NGM_N](#) came out in 2001. How has your magazine evolved over the past 8 years? What have you learned? How has poetry changed?

I'll defer part of this question to my answer below but I'll say that the most important way this journal has changed is that it has gone from being something I did alone to something that several people work on with me. Though I still read all submissions myself, & though maybe no one else will feel as comfortable standing up & being accountable for each issue as I am, there are many important hands involved: Matt Dube who reads the fiction & has been around since the beginning; Clay Matthews & Robert Krut & Darcie Dennigan, reading poetry with me; Gina Myers, handling the reviews section; & Eric Appleby, webmeister supreme & the most under-appreciated man in the poetry world. Some day, whole books will be written about what he's done.

3. [H_NGM_N](#) has evolved from a print publication to an online publication. Why that transition? Will the journal ever see print again?

I've [talked](#) about this issue before & I think I was probably more articulate:

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The short recap is that I found myself wanting H_NGM_N to expand what it offered – poetry, yes, but fiction, reviews & especially art. That was the real sticking point – I knew I couldn't afford to print full color art. And while H_NGM_N started as a dittoed 'zine in homage to Ted Berrigan's "C," it became clear to me that the new ditto revolution was going to happen online. It allowed me the same immediacy & reach. Also there's a more immediate "web" of connections made online. If a journal exists in a particular location – as "C" did in NYC – then the possibilities for it to become a touchstone for that location are immense. If a journal sees its goal as being larger – creating a community that isn't geographic in nature but is instead aesthetic – & if that journal is in fact online, then it takes just a click to marshal the forces. [H_NGM_N #9](#) just came out. & within minutes, people had posted the link on their Facebook wall, or tweeted about it, or blogged about it. This creates a kind of accumulated haze of influence which I think is important to my conception of what a literary magazine can & should do.

4. What's going on with Combatives, the companion journal to H_NGM_N?

COMBATIVES came about because I was feeling like H_NGM_N was the company I worked for, even though H_NGM_N was me. I felt a desire to get back to the 'zine roots of H_NGM_N as well as a desire to present (or allow for) a greater focus on one particular writer. The series is currently in hibernation. I imagine it will come back when it is most needed. For now, we're focusing on pdf chapbooks (which issues of COMBATIVES were, sort of, anyway). The web page [explains](#) it better than I could.

5. How did you come up with the name of your journal? Is there any special significance?

Mostly, I like the way it looks. That's not really the complete answer. See #3 above.

6. Many writers wear very chic glasses. What do you look for when selecting a new pair of frames?

I think for a long time I wanted glasses that were as unobtrusive as possible, under the illusion that I could have an unmediated experience of the world. Now I favor glasses that call attention to themselves as glasses — that is, a means for sharpening the ways in which I apprehend the world.

7. What is an analytics evangelist? Where do you preach?

I mean this partly sincerely & partly in jest. An analytics evangelist is a particular type of web guru, who works for a company, & spends his days analyzing all the web data that comes in – hits & traffic & visitors & bounce rate & etc. etc. It's something I'm really

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interested in, as it effects my ability to promote the creative work in the magazine. [This](#) guy is the real deal.

8. H_NGM_N and and PANK meet at a bar, have drinks, hit it off. Do they a. go to a sleazy motel and have a one night stand or b. make out in the bar but leave it at that or c. exchange phone numbers, start dating, and live happily ever after? Show your math.

I've never been good at math but I can point to the fact that H_NGM_N has published a lot of the same writers over the years we've been in business. A particular writer will pop up in our pages over & over. We might publish a chapbook or one of our old COMBATIVES issues. We stick with people.

9. Who are some of your favorite poets these days and why?

Philip Sidney, for starters. I'm excited by his luminous & deeply felt language. Gregory Corso, for the reckless abandon in his writing. But I think you're asking me about contemporary poets. I read an awful lot so as soon as I type this, I'll have already picked up a new favorite. But, the new H_NGM_N has some great work by Ish Klein & her book, UNION!, from Canarium, is amazing. I also just read & reviewed Michael Sikkema's book FUTURING which is stellar (I've already been articulate about it in print so now I can simply gush).

Christopher Rizzo sent me a new series he's working on which is pretty tremendous. We read together recently & I was so struck by the many things we have in common in our writing, though someone might look at our work & think we'd never get along aesthetically.

10. What is the primary weakness you see in submissions to H_NGM_N? What are you looking for in H_NGM_N submissions?

Actually, submissions to H_NGM_N are very strong overall. We get a certain few – say less than 10% of the total – that don't follow our simple guidelines &/or show no sense of the kinds of writing we actually publish. Sometimes, we get poems in really big scripty fonts.

Overall, though, there is sometimes a fundamental confusion about what H_NGM_N publishes. Though we've been labeled as such, I don't think of the magazine as particularly experimental. I'm interested in the things language can say & the things that can be said from one beating heart to another beating heart – & all the problems inherent in those enterprises.

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11. You are also a writer, with two books of your own. How does your editorial work influence your writing? Any new work/projects on the horizon?

My new book, *THE WONDERFULL YEARE* comes out in early 2010, from Cooper Dillon. On one level, getting to read so much solid writing by so many different people keeps me energized & inspired. My own poems are love letters to myself, to specific people I know, to all the people I know, to every poem I've ever read & to Poetry in general.

My continued engagement with that is what keeps me going.

12. What's it like working in a comic book store?

In some ways, it was like any other job. I drove or got driven to work — rather than teleporting or using a flying Fantasti-car. I got a thirty-minute break to eat but I usually just read comics — but there was no time machine available in the basement to enable me to travel to the past, dropping my cell phone on the plains of prehistoric America & thus bringing about the extinction of the dinosaurs.

But it was pretty great. I got to stand around talking about comics with some great co-workers in a very sophisticated way (Did you see the detail of the pencil work in _____?) rather than the more pedestrian way (Who's stronger: Superman or Hulk?). Though, & this is interesting only to people who lived it, the comic book business in Syracuse in the late 80s & early 90s was much more *GOODFELLAS* than *HIGH FIDELITY*. I worked for the big guy — 4 locations at one point! — while there was another guy who ran things out of his house & eventually got arrested. And there were a few other stores as well & it seemed like everyone kind of hated each other & would get into yelling fights when they'd run into each other. And all over funny books.

13. What is your favorite reality television show?

I don't watch tv, other than *CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM* & the occasional hockey game. Is *REAL WORLD* still on? I liked the New Orleans one.

14. Other than PANK, what are some of your favorite literary magazines?

There are so many. I've consistently gone to *FORKLIFT*, *OHIO* & *OCTOPUS* & *DIAGRAM* & *TYPO* — because they have great work there, the editors have sensibilities that match my own, but also for their ambition — their actual work as editors. *FORKLIFT* recently published some unearthed Gregory Corso poems, *OCTOPUS* did an issue with large chunks of poetry by only a few writers with interesting intros.

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There are so many exciting new journals & I read through a lot of them. But what really strikes me — whether I like the work or not — is when the design (online or otherwise) is appealing, & when I can tell the editor is working hard to promote the work in the journal — or to think of new ways to promote & present the work.

The thing is, editors have a unique opportunity. They can simply accept or reject the work submitted. That's fine.

But they can also go out & CREATE work. With H_NGM_N, I ask some people to write a preface or aesthetic intro to their work — there's now a new piece of creative writing in the world that I helped create an occasion for — not just a home. That's important.

link:

http://www.pankmagazine.com/pankblog/interviews/ask-the-editor-nate-pritts-editor-h_ngm_n/