

# MiPOesias REVISTA LITERARIA

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## Clay Matthews Interviews Nate Pritts



*How do you envision online magazines changing the literary scene, or will they? Do you think books will ever be a thing of the past, online journals will ever be respected as much as print journals, or things will remain perhaps relatively the same?*

This is a question I've been thinking about recently as I'm considering taking my own print journal, *H\_NGM\_N*, to an exclusively online format—mostly for financial reasons; there are things I'd like to do with *H\_NGM\_N* that I just can't swing in print. Online, I can have 100 pages of material & a full-color portfolio

from a featured artist.

For poetry, the internet can fill the same general function as it does for music—online journals let you look at poems in the same way that many sites let you download songs. I think we can put Lars Ulrich's great nightmare to rest & agree that this creates a kind of exposure-driven buzz that can translate into increased sales—for individual books of poetry as well as poetry overall. I'm trying to tackle your whole question at the same time—& so books will never be relegated to the ancient & rotting past because all our whiz-bang futuristic technologies aren't marshaled in a war against them. At least to my eyes, everything is working together.

There are so many exclusively online journals (*Blackbird*, *typo*, *DIAGRAM*, *octopus* & *storySouth* to name just a few from my browser's 'Favorites' tab) that consistently present some of the freshest & liveliest writing out there. Even though there are some weak online journals, nothing inherent in their form makes them better or worse. There are lots of weak online journals but there are many weak print journals too. The only proven spinach out there, to make these journals stronger, is good work & I do feel as if the proliferation of online journals has done one very good thing—by providing more venues, the internet has brought a lot more of us out of hiding. And, on a personal note, it's nice to save on postage once in a while.

*As online magazines increase in popularity, do you think they change the dynamic between author/audience at all? In other words, how is it different reading work on a screen than on the page, or is it? Does this change the way writers approach writing? I suppose in simple terms, do you think some pieces are better suited for a screen and others for the page?*

I think there is a perception that some writing is better suited for the screen than the page. I'm going to leave visual & hyper-text work out of this discussion, not for any aesthetic reason but simply

because I haven't been exposed to enough material & have never thought about it. I don't work in that factory.

For me, reading something online ups the immediacy quotient & this can be good or bad. The work feels more of the moment & so can move me, emotionally or intellectually, more quickly. I guess this is something inherent in the form—although this may just affect me. However, the downside is that it feels provisional, temporary, revise-able. Something that is presented "in process" runs the risk of feeling disposable. But I should make it clear that I feel that this is one of the challenges of online writing; being devastatingly handsome might get you in the door but what happens when you open your mouth? Online writing may initially seem more process-oriented to me but reading the work proves if it takes advantage of my initial reactions, or runs counter to them. And of course, just because you publish in print doesn't mean your work can't be process-oriented.

I'm imagining reading Berryman's *Dream Songs* online, watching the series build, & I imagine something in that process would reinforce the process outlined in the poems. The same with Berrigan's *Sonnets*. Imagine reading some of Frank O'Hara's *Lunch Poems*—you'd think you just intercepted somebody's email! Imagine a site where Robert Lowell could post up the daily & obsessive revisions of his later journal poems.

Everyone is going to have a different answer for this; I can imagine many writers at the forefront of web-writing shaking their heads sadly in my direction, saying that I'm part of the problem. But I think the web, & online journals in particular, are just another venue for all the good writing that we're enjoying these days. This from a guy whose own online work (some poems in journals, a chapbook) are not web-enhanced in any way at all. Maybe I'm still just too naïve to see the possibilities.

*I understand what you mean about online work being "of the moment." Even with publications like Poetry Daily or Verse Daily that archive their work, it often seems to me like I need to "catch" the poem on its selected day. As a last issue, how do you feel about the role of the archive in online literature? I know some people feel uneasy about having their work out there, easily viewed, for what could theoretically be an eternity. Old print magazines seem to get lost on the shelf, used to balance a table leg, etc. The great triumph of online work, I think, is that it's free. Do you see any eventual problems, though, with the growing archive of literature on the net?*

I'm with you on this. My initial response to your question is a quick "No." There's no real problem with this—& I'm thinking as an editor & as a writer. We're creating this vast library that no Alexander can burn down & that kind of permanence makes me feel secure. The very word 'archive' brings a smile to my face.

I can't imagine what reason someone would have to feel uneasy about their work being available online. Are they worried that people will judge them on early work that they've moved beyond? I'm shrugging my shoulders at that notion. That seems like a workshop worry.

Consider this: I like to watch Peter Jennings every night but taping the Monday night broadcast & watching it on Thursday just doesn't fire the same cylinders as it would have if I had watched it on Monday. You're out of the process, right? There is a new quality to the broadcast-inevitability. But that allows a new drive—not the quest to learn something new, but to understand the workings of

something in existence. It becomes part of the permanent record. I would think that's something we all hope for.

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