

Nate Pritts // <http://www.natepritts.com>

INTERVIEW :: Kalamazoo Gazette, March 2010

Conducted by Simon Thalmann

A life of poetry, in a roundabout way: Two poets describe how the craft found them

KALAMAZOO — Kalamazoo's [Old Dog Tavern](#) will play host Saturday to readings from a pair of poets who came across their chosen field after abandoning prior academic pursuits.

Ohio-based poet Matt Hart, who pursued poetry only after quitting a year into graduate studies in philosophy at Ohio University, will read with New York poet Nate Pritts, who began his undergraduate studies at the State University of New York in Brockport with the intention of becoming a novelist. The pair will begin reading at 4 p.m. Saturday at the tavern, 402 E. Kalamazoo Ave.

Hart and Pritts met in the late 1990s while pursuing master's degrees in fine arts (in poetry) at North Carolina's Warren Wilson College. For Hart, it was the culmination of a journey through language that was born of punk rock and the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

"I studied the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, and his whole thing is, 'If-you-understand-me-you-quit philosophy because you realize that philosophy is a neurotic tendency to make problems that don't exist,'" Hart said during a recent phone interview. "So I sort of bought it hook, line and sinker and quit."

After quitting his graduate studies in philosophy, Hart, who had played guitar in bands since he was 15, played in bands for about six years before going back to school for his fine arts graduate degree. He decided on poetry partly as a product of being involved with music for so long; some friends at his undergraduate school, Ball State University, had taken a poetry workshop and he thought it would help him write better lyrics.

"So I took this poetry workshop on a lark to try and write better song lyrics and just totally fell in love with poetry," said Hart, who since has co-founded the literary journal "Forklift, Ohio: A Journal of Poetry, Cooking & Light Industrial Safety." He serves as the journal's editor-in-chief, and has authored several chapbooks and two collections of poetry.

"The music was downhill from there, but poetry became my life," he said.

Pritts set out as an undergrad to become a fiction writer, but in order to graduate on time he needed an advanced writing class. His school wasn't offering an advanced course in fiction, so he settled on a course in poetry, and he hasn't stopped writing it since.

"I think it was a little bit to do with the process of writing it," Pritts said during a phone

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interview. “With poetry, I feel like I’m putting down my thoughts directly on the page, whereas with fiction I had to find someone else to present my thoughts to the reader. ... I feel like poetry gets a little bit closer to what I’m actually trying to say, and so it to me seems a more pure way to present the kinds of things that I want to present.”

Pritts, who also boasts a Ph.D. in British Romanticism from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, has authored three full-length collections of poetry, as well as a number of chapbooks. *H_NGM_N*, the literary journal he founded and of which he is principal editor, will publish Hart’s forthcoming poetry collection, “Wolf Face,” later this year.

link:

http://www.mlive.com/entertainment/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2010/03/a_life_of_poetry_in_a_roundabo.html