

Conducted by J. Bradley

Prolific poet and editor Nate Pritts has [a fine series of poems](#) in the February issue. He speaks with us about the construction of poetry, where words crash, and what he wants to hold hands with.

1. What's with poetry's laziness about spelling out oh?

It's not laziness – the “O” is the closest the poet can come to a purely ecstatic utterance, which is maybe the failure of meaning making (which spelling is a component of). So in that moment, the purest expression of the build-up of complex FEELING mixed with intellectual SATISFACTION is O! Not to say that this is always a positive expression – it just represents the only animal sound I can make that carries with it the right tinge of the divine, of the charged & revealed moment of connection.

“Oh” is of the body or of the mind; “O” is in response to a moment that combines both of those things, with the Soul thrown in as well.

2. Who was the last person you wrote a letter to? What was in that letter?

I write letters pretty much every day; my emails, also, are letters since I tend not to write one line or two line things that create the illusion of dialogue, but mostly tend to favor regular exchanges of a more detailed & lengthy variety. But my press, H_NGM_N BKS, is reissuing Paul Violi's second book, IN BALTIC CIRCLES, & I just sent him a letter the other day talking about some of the great poems therein, asking some questions, sending the contract, etc.

3. Where do you want your words to crash?

My instant reaction to your question is to choose between HEAD or HEART. Luckily, I don't have to choose! I want both – so maybe a better way of clarifying this is to use my own words from the poem – “I want my words to crash land / on YOUR planet” bringing news of me from my planet. I want our planets to be in synch & I want the aftershocks to reverberate in your head & heart, like they do in mine.

4. How does constructing the poems as one long stanza affect the pacing and craft of the poems?

It has something to do with the nature of the utterance. Early in composition, I can tell if a poem's emotional logic needs stanza patterns (either as an organizing principle, or as a tension to push against). Writing in a single stanza I hope creates a unified rush, a single passionate linguistic instance. I want the speed & I want to create & enforce a field of gravity that won't let you go until it's done with you.

5. What concept would you hold hands with?

Many of my poems wrestle with the very real & physical reactions we can have to abstract concepts & ideas. We beat ourselves up over things that can't be touched, or even fully understood. So, in answer to your question, I think I would like to hold hands with ANY concept, any IDEA, any grand pronouncement – because that would be my way of making it real, & immediate, & physical.

6. Who are these letters written to?

When they were first written, these letters were indeed written directly to a specific person. But through revision, & through time, I realize that even though they were written to a particular person, the speaker is very much in dialogue with himself. He's hoping & constructing, he's imagining & predicting. He's rehearsing all the rhetoric he knows about love & connection so as to be READY when the time comes to put those theories into practice. In many ways, they were a warm-up. The letters were also written to convey certain information to that other person, but at this point their function as "letter" has faded into the background as I've worked to craft them to be poems that operate like a letter. So, if pushed to answer your question on aesthetic grounds, I'd say they were written to me.

link:

<http://www.pankmagazine.com/pankblog/interviews/ask-the-author-nate-pritts/>