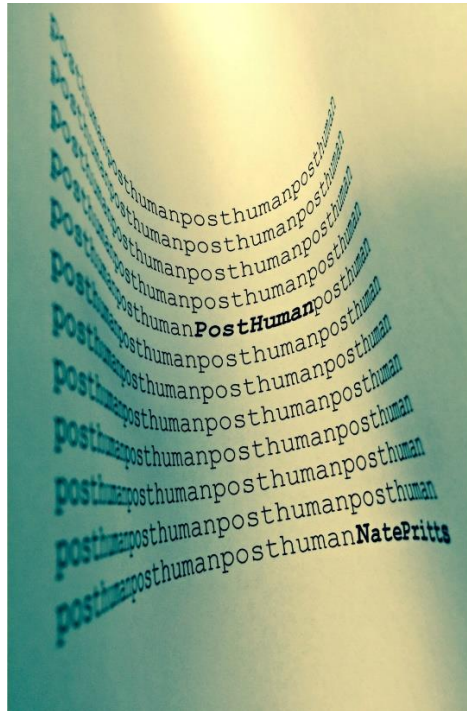


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Rotting in the Age of Aquarius: A Review of Nate Pritts' *Post Human*



According to the study of astrology, as the Earth rotates around the sun it also moves slightly backwards- with every 2,100 years signaling the passage of the Earth through a new zodiac sign. Each zodiac shift represents a new age that quote impacts mankind and the planet in different and dramatic ways unquote. And if you've seen the musical *Hair* more than once or have spent more than ten minutes actually listening to the hippy-dippy ramblings of your New-Age aunt, you know that we're in the Age of Aquarius. This is the age defined by:

Harmony and understanding
Sympathy and trust abounding
No more falsehoods or derisions
Golden living dreams of visions
Mystic crystal revelation
And the mind's true liberation- Aquarius

Or so the song goes... Nate Pritts' newly published collection of poetry titled *Post Human* is centered on life in the Aquarian Age, but it is certainly no ode to it. *Post Human* is a dysphoric, unsettling, and complex look into what it is to be human in the 21st century. It's what happens when you put that Aquarius vinyl on a turntable expecting melodies, only to find out age has scratched it to shit and it won't stop playing the same 3-second loop hauntingly over and over and over.

Pritts is the author of seven books of poetry, the two most recent being *Right Now More Than Ever* (published by H_NGM_AN BOOKS in 2013) and *Post Human* (published by A-Minor Press this year in 2016). He is also the Director and Founding Editor of H_NGM_N, an independent publishing house, and Associate Professor at Ashford University.

Post Human is broken up into four separate sections, each tackling existential and introspective topics through different poetic forms. For example, the second section *No Filter* is sort of a free form, stream-of-consciousness collection (hence the name). The third section *Ship of Nails* is modeled after Viking funeral odes, and therefore given much more of a tidy and structured feel than the former. This variance gives *Post Human* a chapter-like feel. At first glance, this might imply a sense of internal cohesion in *Post Human*, but what the reader finds inside is a disjointed and dense splattering of content.

The cover of *Post Human* is strikingly minimalistic. It features nothing more than a paragraph of repeated computer text, the title of the collection (posthumanposthumanposthuman), behind a glowing off-white and baby blue background. The paragraph is warped heavily upwards along the sides, which forms an optical pit the reader eyes fall unwillingly into.

This in a way mirrors the ambiance and entire experience of *Post Human*. The reader can't help but fall into the entrapped mindset Pritts shares with us regarding the internal and how it relates to the external of "this present age"- mainly because it is so damn relatable in the worst way possible. Pritts' begins his collection with a simple, somehow familiar admission:

I forget myself/but I remember the morning/radio news the contradictory/forecast of high clouds and sun.

Truly not that uncommon of an occurrence in the day-to-day; and what comes off as perhaps overly-melodramatic in Pritts' writing soon turns tangibly uncomfortable. There is something imbued in the pages *Post Human* that draws the reader out of their protective shell to compare and contrast experiences, and what is brought to the table is eerie, evocative, and hard-hitting. Maybe it's the effect of Pritts' stark, self-reflective voice- one that reads a lot like a personal journal does:

I lay on the couch for fifteen minutes/& feel guilty about it because nothing/is accomplished & I don't feel better.

Or maybe it's the tortured transparency of Pritts on the page himself, leaving nothing to the reader's imagination regarding his fractured insides:

I pretend/to concentrate so I don't have to/wave at my neighbors/who are all smiling & expectant/& don't understand.

What seems to be clear from it all is that the voice in *Post Human* is of an individual troubled by the Aquarian age and its implied effects on humanity. Technology, whose communicative powers astrologers believed would unite the earth during the Age of Aquarius, brings nothing but painful distance and isolation for Pritts. The practice of information collection, which was

also believed would enable intellectual enlightenment for individuals, does nothing for Pritts other than muddy what exactly it is that matters to him.

*Every person that I ever loved
Is just a trace on the screen today
Just a ghost in my soul
So I need to know
do I feel what I feel
When the machine tells me to?*

Touching on everything from Google Maps, to coffee & supplements, to grocery store visits and brief dips in Eastern philosophy, *Post Human* is a collection that is aligned with minutiae of the now. It is also dangerously persuasive. It will induce anxiety about the future. It will strap you aboard a rollercoaster full of emotional dips, dives, and lows. And it will probably singlehandedly cause you to delete at a bare minimum at least one social media platform. That in itself is the real strength and beauty of this collection: nowhere does Pritts mention or even attempt to convince you that this is how *you* also unknowingly operate. He keeps the subject strictly about himself (to the point where he essentially the only character mentioned in the 100 page book), yet the further you read in, the further Pritts' quick, scattered jabs of sad clarity make sense. *Post Human*, therefore, is a true accomplishment- not just because it convinces you the world of Aquarius is falling apart, but because Pritts isn't even trying when he does so. All he seeks to do to is "create something [he] can understand".