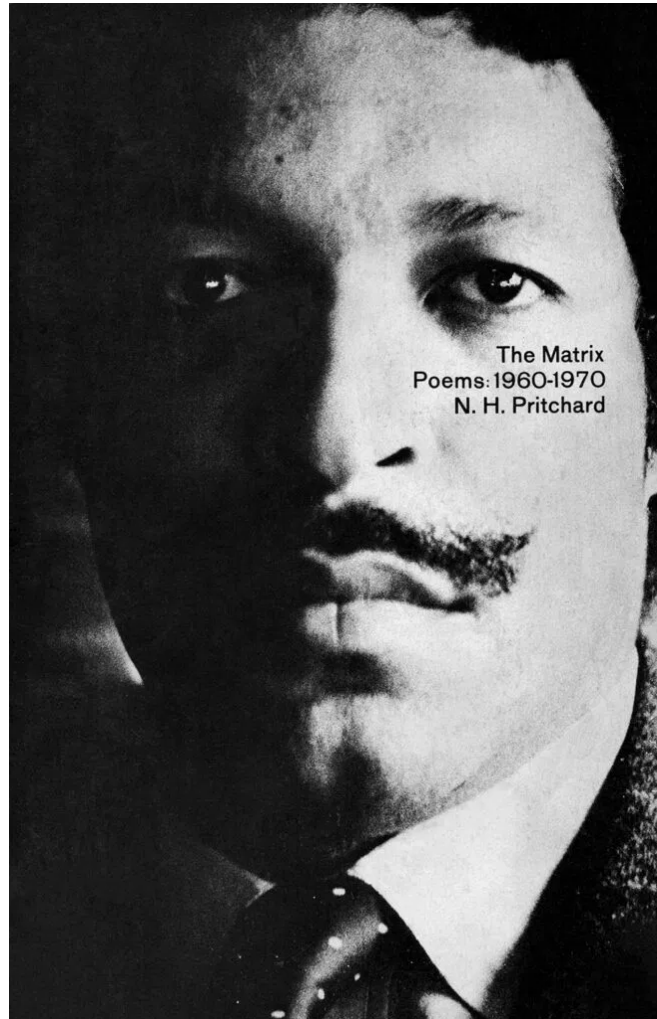


REVIEW: THE MATRIX – N.H. PRITCHARD (PRIMARY INFORMATION and UGLY DUCKLING PRESSE)

 thepoetryquestion.com/2021/03/09/review-the-matrix-n-h-pritchard-primary-information-and-ugly-duckling-press

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Words by N. H. Pritchard in *The Matrix* — first published in 1970 by Doubleday and co-published again in 2021 by Primary Information & Ugly Duckling Press — are meant to be read, seen, heard, and experienced. The collection is ultra-visual, a singing arrangement of offerings that has eyes of its own, old eyes that gaze at us from source, unblinking, revealing nothing (and everything).

All of the poems in *The Matrix* which can be read aloud should be. *Feelings in the mouth*, they're rich on the tongue and teeth, slow in the throat, absurdly natural on the breath. Try this verse:

*Weary was when coming on a stream
in hidden mist the amber adornment
of fall's birth
here near edge
a rippling soundless
leaves and eddy eyes
with trickling forest thighs
in widening
youthful nipping
scenic creakless...*

The consonants attack and sustain while the vowels set the tone, each one precisely placed in the sound matrix — a new jazz of velars, plosives, and fricatives, instruments sounding for certain deeper realms of the psyche. But with each page, the poems grow both more uncanny and possibly ridiculous. A line of brackets along the bottom of the page? And on the next page, a twin line of brackets? Small letters, big sounds, nonsense and invented words, a final entry that screams — perhaps with a violent desperation — to fill space with peace. Or so I read.

Or so *I* read.

New readers like me will find *The Matrix* fresh. As with the best avant-garde art, its explorations challenge the conventions of its genre just as much as they break down our habitual methods of perception (expanding our perceptive capacity — or maybe just boiling us alive in a great big pot, for the sake of the soundscape).

Implicitly, reading *The Matrix* is an act of asking. What's the reality of our meaning-making? What is its process? On an infinite loop of evolution and revolution, the collection invites us to explore such mysteries. Its republication is an excavation which asks *us, now*, to put the collection to the test. I wonder what we'll make of it.

Great works of art can poke and pinch at us, offending us at worst and opening a doorway to the sublime at best. *The Matrix*, if we let it, will deliver on connection, the primary promise of human communication. In other *words*, if we're open to the meaning of the thing, we will find that it is there — gazing at us with anticipation. Wise readers won't look away.

To read more information about both *The Matrix* and N. H. Pritchard and to acquire a copy, [click here](#) or [here \(free excerpt available\)](#).

— Samantha Martin