

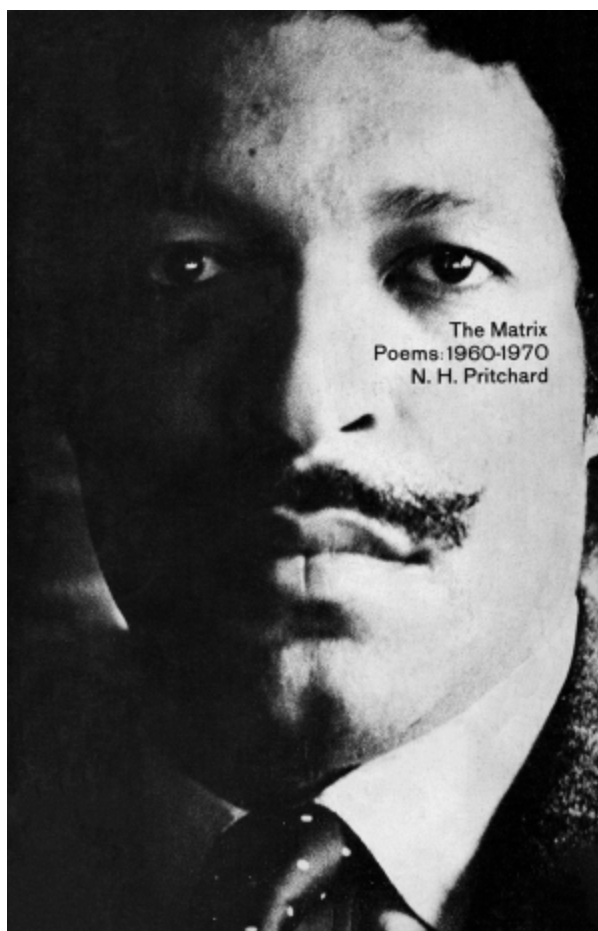
# This Be the Verse: Our Favorite Poetry Books 2021 (Mostly)

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***The Matrix: Poems 1960-1970* by N.H. Pritchard (Ugly Duckling Presse / Primary Information); *EECCHHOOEESS* by N.H. Pritchard (DABA)**

The exuberantly experimental poems of N.H. Pritchard—in particular, the volume titled *The Matrix*—were first published in the early '70s; shortly thereafter his work ceased appearing in print. As a result, his significant contributions to the African American literary tradition as well as to postmodern poetry have gone unrecognized for decades. This reissue, along with another republished collection titled *EECCHHOOEESS*,



*The Matrix: Poems 1960-1970* by N.H. Pritchard, Ugly Duckling Presse, 2021

bring a neglected poet back into wider view. A member of the Umbra poets, a group of Black writers who congregated in the East Village beginning in 1962, Pritchard manipulated

typography, typeface, lineation, and repetition to create uncompromising work that today remains provocative both for its formal ingenuity and its obliquely pointed exploration of Black racial consciousness. “Totemic” gives some small indication of his skillful joining of Lewis Carroll-like linguistic play and themes of strife and reckoning:

There  
where  
the  
bare  
edges  
mellowed  
snears bedecked the forest’s call  
and the noon was wrecked  
and the moon was heckled  
and an end foretold a nation’s fall

Looming  
there  
where  
drums beat upon a plain  
and fumes of arrows amid the glooming waned  
doom spoke silently proclaiming without song  
the omen given by gabled quirk of wrong

However belated (Pritchard died in 1996), this recognition via fresh publication restores the author to his proper place in the avant-garde lineage that includes Concrete poetry, typewriting, and Visual Poetry. In addition to that important fact, having these books is an opportunity to experience the sheer pleasure of an elegantly venturesome mind at serious play.

—AM

Albert Mobilio is a poet, critic, and co-editor of Hyperallergic Weekend. He is the recipient of an Andy Warhol Arts Writers Grant, MacDowell Fellowship, Whiting Award, and the National Book Critics... [More by Albert Mobilio](#)

## John Yau

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John Yau has published books of poetry, fiction, and criticism. His latest poetry publications include a book of poems, *Further Adventures in Monochrome* (Copper Canyon Press, 2012), and the... [More by John Yau](#)