

The tricky-to-parse last line hints at the more daring ways in which visual placement, including the stretching, snipping, and splicing of words, will be utilised later on in the text, becoming a vessel for trans-semantic play. Rhythms and rhyme-patterns start to emulate jazz music, while language seems to reach for the essence of a visual scene, as if relaying its emotional and cognitive import beyond its material components and grammatical trappings. Here is the opening of the catachresis-speckled 'Epilogue':

F O L L O W I N G T H E C A L M H A R K E N I N G C R Y S T A L S S P R E A D T H E I R L I G H T G O N E W A S
S W E P T A W A Y T H E O T H E R S W A N D E R E D O N

“Gone was swept away:” throughout Pritchard’s work, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions become nouns, while qualifying statements are offered without a prior subject: “the others wandered on.” It is perhaps this mirage-like physical detail which leads some critics to speak of Pritchard’s work as religious in tone.

Between 'Signs' (1965-67) and 'Objects' (1968-70), the second and third sections of *TheMatrix*, Pritchard seems to have seized on a kind of revelatory repetitive quality, carried through to the more boldly visual poetics of *EECCHHOOEESS*. The long-form 'Aurora,' the final work in 'Signs,' serves as a threshold piece, stringing a single, gnomic phrase – “there are only pebbles now, soft beneath our feet, & the hour is knew and the lights few, though somewhere isn’t that horn a matter that scorn is worn....” – over dozens of pages, through incantatory recurrence, and across oceans of white space, until it gradually disperses in a foam of letters and words.

It’s not clear if 'Objects' and *EECCHHOOEESS* were composed in more direct response to the international concrete poetry movement, but sequences from the latter, such as 'Frog,' pull out all the typographical stops. Words are printed backwards, fill unmarginated double-spreads, are blown up, strung out in vertical and horizontal bands. At the same time, pieces like 'carbon' probe new depths of gnostic introspection:

eitwa hen heli sneat lethe this ta heta ubur heno heno purte kanda gews

Is there a demotic African-American register buried in these verses? Are these charged anagrammatic codes of some kind?

That the potential cultural and political subtexts of Pritchard’s experiments – the marginalisation of black experience in the American-English lexicon, or, as Reed notes, the unswerving essentialism of some mid-century black-activist thought – are never brought to the surface does not mean they are not there, as deep presences within his work. Perhaps the five-word vertical poem 'Point' gets close to the point:

AN ESSENTIAL SUCH AS ISN'T