

# Syncopations



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Syncopations is an analysis of the sustaining vitality behind contemporary American poetry from 1975 to the present day by one of the most astute observers and critics in the field. The 12 essays reflect Jed Rasula's nearly 30 years of advocacy on behalf of "opening the field" of American poetry. From the Beats and the Black Mountain poets in the 1950s and 1960s to the impact of language poetry, the specter of an avant-garde has haunted the administrative centers of poetic conservatism. But the very concept of avant-garde is misleading, implying organized assault. Incentives for change can be traced to other factors, including the increased participation of women, critical theory's self-reflection, and a growing interest in the book as a unit of composition. Syncopations addresses these and other issues evident in the work of such poets and critics as Clayton Eshleman, Marjorie Perloff, Ronald Johnson, Clark Coolidge, Nathaniel Mackey, and Robin Blaser. Its chapters range in modes and include close readings, sociological analysis, philosophical-aesthetic meditations, and career appraisals. By examining both exemplary innovators and the social context in which innovation is either resisted, acclaimed, or taken for granted, Rasula delivers an important conceptual chronicle of the promise of American poetry.

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目录:

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