



# Nobody's Business: Twenty-First Century Avant-Garde Poetics

*Brian M. Reed*

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Since the turn of the new millennium English-language verse has entered a new historical phase, but explanations vary as to what has actually happened and why. What might constitute a viable avant-garde poetics in the aftermath of such momentous developments as 9/11, globalization, and the financial crisis? Much of this discussion has taken place in ephemeral venues such as blogs, e-zines, public lectures, and conferences. *Nobody's Business* is the first book to treat the emergence of Flarf and Conceptual Poetry in a serious way. In his engaging account, Brian M. Reed argues that these movements must be understood in relation to the proliferation of digital communications technologies and their integration into the corporate workplace.

Writers such as Andrea Brady, Craig Dworkin, Kenneth Goldsmith, Danny Snelson, and Rachel Zolf specifically target for criticism the institutions, skill sets, and values that make possible the smooth functioning of a postindustrial, globalized economy. Authorship comes in for particular scrutiny: how does writing a poem differ in any meaningful way from other forms of "content providing"? While often adept at using new technologies, these writers nonetheless choose to explore anachronism, ineptitude, and error as aesthetic and political strategies. The results can appear derivative, tedious, or vulgar; they can also be stirring, compelling, and even sublime. As Reed sees it, this new generation of writers is carrying on the Duchampian practice of generating antiart that both challenges prevalent definitions of art and calls into question the legitimacy of the institutions that define it.

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