



**READINGS
WEEK
ONE**

1. The Library of Babel, Jorge Luis Borges, trans. Andrew Hurley

Wonderful allegory about the magic of books & language.

2. The Book of Sand, *ibid.*

...Borges spent his last years as a (blind) librarian in Buenos Aires.

3. one page of "Introduction," from *Imagining Language*, an anthology we'll be seeing more of edited by Jed Rasula and Steve McCaffrey. Just a taste to round out a certain feeling for literature.

4. The Poetics and Ethnopoetics of the Book & Writing

from your text: *A Book of the Book*. The first essay works by way of introduction. Just thought we'd get started.

5. My Life as a Book, Ann Waldman.

from the same text. Short lines make for easy reading, no?

6. The Artists' Book as Idea and Form

again, from one of your texts, *Century of Artists' Books*, which will be in copy-form in the bookstore soon. but I wanted to give you an early taste of Drucker, where she's coming from, as it summarizes a good deal of where this course comes from. Drucker's work is crucial; get used to her style and thought process.

7. At the Threshold of the Book, etc, Edmond Jabes

Jabes poetry, referred to in some of the above and quite commonly in these sorts of literary circles, is difficult, to say the least. We won't necessarily read any more of it this quarter, but I wanted you to hear a complex poetic, in some sense spiritual, voice addressing the concept of the book as deeply as he does. Jabes is an Egyptian Jew, forced to leave his country at the start of World War II. After the holocaust, the theorist Theodore Adorno exclaimed "No lyric poetry after Auschwitz!" (something to that effect). How, indeed, could artists continue to create beautiful things in the wake of such destruction? What guarantee could they have that their work was not founded, ultimately, on the same principles and failures of civilization that led to the genocide of the war? Jabes is often hailed as the answer to this question (ironically, his masterwork is a dense three volume text titled "The Book of Questions"). Jabes, immersed in rabbinical inquiries and generally the Jewish connection to the Book as the source of law, divinity, and wisdom, provides a poetry that is both lyrical and cryptic, hopeful and drowned by disaster. The "book" is one of his central motifs. Enjoy. Read slowly.

8. Surfiction, Raymond Federman

Here, a writer/critic arrives through literature to a craving, unwittingly, for something like the art of the book. Federman may be a little aggressive in his manifesto, but he opens up interesting possibilities.

9. Kostelanetz's hypotheses

...have a similar effect as Federman's piece and are from the same anthology, *Surfiction*, (edited by Federman)