


Reader

c o n t e n t s o f t h e

w	pages	titles/author	notes
1	1 - 15	Marcus, Ben, "Why Experimental Fiction Threatens...", from Harper's	A starting glimpse at some of the arguments as they are set forth today, much reduced, around theory, the job of writers, and the place of literature in society
2	16 - 38	Robbe-Grillet, Alain, "On Several Obsolete Notions," "A Novel that Invents Itself," & "New Novel New Man," from <i>For a New Novel</i>	...And then back to the middle of the century for some arguments toward a similar end, far more ideological this time; Robbe-Grillet was an early proponent of the "New Novel," at once a very general, catch-all impulse toward radical change in literature and, for Robbe-Grillet, a very specific ideological way of defining fiction. You may want to read this and the next three articles simultaneously, at least skim through them all, in order to see some of the repeating themes, terms, and so forth.
	39 - 54	Fletcher & Calder, "Introduction," from <i>The Nouveau Roman Reader</i>	Thorough context for thinking about the New Novel, or "Nouveau Roman," and its many forms.
	55 - 63	Sollers, Philippe, "The Novel and the Experience of Limits," from <i>Surfiction</i> , (ed. Raymond Federman)	Sollers was the editor of the journal "Tel Quel," the title of which is also used to refer to a movement of writers of the time: an aspect of the larger, less defined "New Novel" movement. Sollers's own novels are exceptional examples of the ethos of Tel Quel; he was a favorite of Roland Barthes's.
	64 - 81	Ricardou, Jean, "Nouveau Roman, Tel Quel," from <i>Surfiction</i> , (ed. Raymond Federman)	Yet more discussion of the New Novel. At this point, you may be feeling some redundancy or perhaps noting contradictions. Hopefully, the different perspectives help the concepts to sink in with a degree of complexity retained.
3	82 - 87	Barthes, Roland, "On Reading," from <i>The Rustle of Language</i>	This and the two other bits by Barthes give you some taste of his writing style as we work through chunks of the "Very Short Introduction." It's difficult to overestimate Barthes's influence on theory, on writers, on semiotics and related fields. More pointedly than most others, and in many ways definitively, Barthes gives attention again and again to the Reader, not the Author...
	88 - 91	Barthes, Roland, "The Death of the Author," from <i>The Rustle of Language</i>	...as this short essay certainly indicates. Barthes is not interested in the complete avoidance or ignorance of the author's existence, but in response to the long history of literary study that, with some exceptions, owes all of its assumptions and processes and values to the existence of a god-like author (interpretation being a kind of divination of the holy intention)... the opposite of the author, though, is not the reader: it is the writer.
	92 - 96	Barthes, from <i>S/Z</i> , excerpted in <i>Postmodernism and the Contemporary Novel</i> , Bran Nicol	<i>S/Z</i> is one of Barthes's works, a sustained (post)structuralist reading of a Balzac novel, <i>Sarrasine</i> . Balzac was often Barthes' whipping boy example of the "old" writing: his careful and productive reading indicates the significance of studying the reader's authority to create the text: <i>Sarrasine</i> becomes marvelous in Barthes' study.
	97 - 104	Barth, John, <i>The Literature of Exhaustion</i> , from <i>Surfiction</i> , (ed. Raymond Federman)	Barth, perhaps unwittingly—he consistently pretends to be unwitting, gives us some great terms to play with as we consider the process of literary experimentation; here he begins with "Exhaustion," something perhaps best exemplified by Beckett. After taking some flack for seeming to put a negative spin on the postmodern, he wrote a follow up, characterizing some of the same works and ideas as "Replenishment."
opt	105 - 125	Culler, Jonathan, Chapters from <i>Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction</i>	It would be a good idea to pick through some of the sections in this chapter. It may explain some of the things that have stymied you thus far.
opt	126 - 132	ibid.: appendix: Literary Schools, etc.	A handy reference. Not comprehensive by any means, it provides "thumbnails" of the various schools, movements, etc.

4	133 - 141	Markson, David, from <i>This is Not a Novel</i>	These two excerpts from Markson's books are just fun quick reads. They hold the position for me of work that is very good to have around when I need it, but I am less thrilled because of the feeling that it is a gimmick: they certainly exemplify work that "takes stock of theory," but that may be all they do.
	142 - 152	Markson, David, from <i>Reader's Block</i>	...
	153 - 163	Sarraute, Nathalie, from <i>Tropisms</i>	Well, we might have read the whole thing... but! Here're a few pieces to give a taste. Her introduction provides a stark alternative to some of the other theorizing around the new novel.
	164 - 170	Sontag, Susan, "Against Interpretation"	Sontag's essay is something of a landmark piece: highly accessible, precise, and wonderfully convincing as an argument for a certain ethos for reading and thinking.
opt		Selections from <i>Outside Literature</i> , Tony Bennett:	These optional pieces will primarily provide some historical sketches, a bunch of names to look up, condensations of theoretical modes and problems.
	171-179	Narrative, History, Politics	
	180 -185	Theories of the Novel	
	186 - 188	Literature Without Aesthetics	
5	196 - 197	Borges, Jorge, Prologue, from <i>Ficciones</i>	Borges you'll remember from John Barth's essay. These stories provide, I think, a good glimpse at certain kinds of "exhaustion" and "replenishment" in very short form; you might also want to think about Barth's other observation (about Borges and Calvino), that Borges masters both "algebra and fire" in his fiction. Algebra and fire aside, what's important is perhaps the management of great and terrible tensions.
	197 - 206	Borges, Jorge, "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," from <i>Ficciones</i>	--A rather difficult story: attend to the puzzling movement of the narrator's plot line (the narration has two distinct parts); more importantly, use the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity to understand the relation between Uqbar and it's fictional world, Tlon; consider what this tells us about how we relate to our fictions.
	207 - 212	Borges, Jorge, "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote," from <i>Ficciones</i>	This is a typical "literary idea" piece from Borges; as he discussed in his prologue, a piece that allows him to conceive of great works and not need to write them.
	213 - 216	Borges, Jorge, "And Examination of the Work of Herbert Quain," from <i>Ficciones</i>	Similarly, this work is a playground of literary ideas; one must wonder if Borges had not had some connection to the Oulipo by this time.
	216 - 221	Borges, Jorge, "The Library of Babel," from <i>Ficciones</i>	This piece is a tremendous way of thinking about language, poststructuralism, and reading. We'll do that.
	222 - 226	Borges, Jorge, "Funes, His Memory," from <i>Ficciones</i>	This makes a nice companion to the library of Babel, in some sense bringing the whole library into Funes's mind.
6	227 - 246	Calvino, Italo, "How I Wrote One of My Books," from <i>Oulipo Laboratory</i>	This will take a while to get the hang of, but it's worth some study as you read <i>If on a winter's night a traveler</i> .
	247 - 259	Calvino, Italo, "Cybernetics and Ghosts," from <i>The Uses of Literature</i>	Please give great attention to this one. It will contain and reflect a lot of what we're doing and, like the Barth, give us some phenomenal "big" ideas to play with.
	260 - 269	Queneau, Raymond, "Cent Mille Milliard Des Poemes," from <i>Oulipo Compendium</i>	Queneau's work was the impetus for the formation of the Oulipo.

opt	270 - 274	Mathews, Harry, "The Dialect of the Tribe," from <i>The Human Country</i>	Fun.	
opt	275 - 280	Mathew, Harry, "Remarks from a Scholar Graduate," from <i>The Human Country</i>	Fun.	
...6	281 - 287	Queneau, Raymond, "The Foundations of Literature," from <i>Oulipo Laboratory</i>	Another fine example of Oulipan play.	
opt	288 - 298	Motte, Warren, Introduction to Oulipo, from <i>Oulipo Primer</i>	Thorough, if somewhat silly, notes on the origins and interests of the Oulipo.	
7	361 - end	Hayles, NK, "Inhabiting House of Leaves" + Introductory material from <i>Writing Machines</i>	out of sequence -- sorry...	
8	299 - 303	Culler, Jonathan, "Towards a Theory of Non-Genre Literature," from <i>Surfiction</i>	Another big idea piece to play with. Culler is a big believer in our tendency to read "by convention," that is, not simply attuning ourselves to some pure form of the text. The possibility of getting beyond or outside of such conventions is a hallmark of the avant-garde and experimental sensibility. Regardless of the impossibility of Culler's ideal, it brings us back to that "experience of limits," the edge at which we need to work .	
	304 - 309	Federman, Raymond, "Four Propositions," from <i>Surfiction</i>	Federman is a bit excited and seems to skim over a lot, but his positions are motivating—great for argument if nothing else.	
9	310 - 317	hooks, bell, "Postmodern Blackness," from <i>Postmodernism and the Contemporary Novel</i> , Bran Nicol	These last four readings, as a group, represent some (almost-) contemporary reflections of all this theory, but from some very different perspectives than the threads we've been following. The questions and terms of these authors represent some of the added complexity and power latent in theory when it is decentralized. Hopefully these essays can launch you into some new ways of thinking about some of the intractable problems laid out by White and others.	
	318 - 334	Appiah, Kwame, "The Postmodern and the Postcolonial," from <i>Postmodernism and the Contemporary Novel</i> , Bran Nicol		
	335 - 346	MinHa, Trin T, "The Totalizing Quest for Meaning," from <i>The Moon Waxes Red</i>		
	347 - 360	MinHa, Trin T, "Unwriting/Inmost Writing," from <i>The Moon Waxes Red</i>		