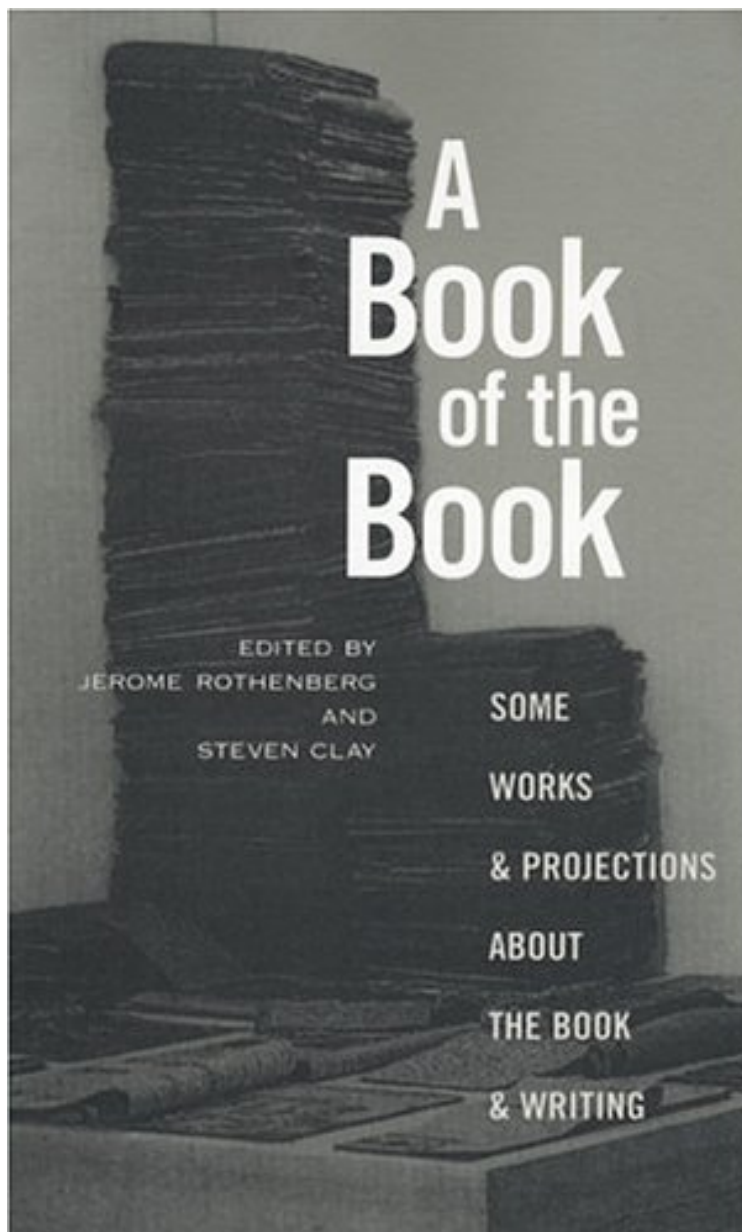


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A Book of the Book: Some Works and Projections about the Book Writing

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3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A rich overview of new visions of the book By Jeff Abell Jerome Rothenberg is a tireless (and often brilliant) anthologist of all things literary and poetic. His 2-volume "Poems for the Millennium" is an astonishing collection, and his revelatory "Technicians of the Sacred" should be in the library of anyone interested in the connections of modern literature and world culture. "A Book of the Book," edited with Steven Clay, assembles a fascinating collection of articles about books and writing, ranging from Keith Smith's "The Book as Physical Object" to Jacques Derrida. Then he goes on to explore experimental works that exploded the notion of writing and the book, from Gertrude Stein to F.T. Marinetti, from Blaise Cendrars to Sonia Delaunay's "Trans-Siberian" (included in full-color facsimile) to Max Ernst's collaged "novel" and Marcel Duchamp's "Boite-en-valise." From theorists like Roland Barthes to "artists' books" by Tom Phillips, Dieter Roth, Alison Knowles and many others, this anthology presents the book as both thing and idea. This anthology will be of interest to writers and artists alike.

"A collection for the general reader and the specialist, A Book of the Book is an accessible and erudite set of readings on the book as a mythic and material object. These texts comprise a vivid exploration of the poetics of the book, a multifaceted study nurtured by the literary and ethnographic scope of its editors' vision, that argues compellingly for the continued survival of this most mundane and metaphoric of artifacts. In a moment when irresponsibly inflammatory ravings about the demise of print rage through the cultural landscape, this collection offers serious reflection upon the real profundity of the book as a symbolic force within the poetic and spiritual imagination that remains the wellspring of human culture. Drawn from diverse realms-of avant-garde art, anthropology, textual criticism, literature, and speculative thought-this will be the definitive collection for decades to come-a volume whose very physical presence in the hand performs the rhetoric of its pages in offering its riches to the reader." - Johanna Drucker A Book of the Book is broken down into four sections: "Pre-faces" includes work by Rothenberg, Steve McCaffery, bp Nichol, Keith A. Smith, Michael Davidson, Anne Waldman, Jacques Derrida, Edmond Jabs (translated by Rosmarie Waldrop), among others; "The Opening of the Field" includes work by Gertrude Stein, William Blake, Susan Howe, Maurice Blanchot, Marjorie Perloff, Andr Breton and Jerome McGann among others; "The Book is as Old as Fire Water" includes work on Guruwari designs, novelty books, pattern poetry, celestial alphabets, among others, while "The Book to Come" presents work by Tom Phillips, Johanna Drucker, Alison Knowles, Charles Bernstein, Jess (a complete re-issue of his 1960 work 'O!'), Ian Hamilton Finlay, Barbara Fahrner and many others.

From Publishers Weekly From Blake, Breton, Whitman, Khlebnikov, Blanchot and Duchamp to Artaud, book artist Johanna Drucker and poet-critic Charles Bernstein, this massive collection houses a trove of essays, poems, prose text, illustrations and photographs that ponder just what a book is, isn't or can be. All are provocative. Poet and ethnologist Rothenberg (Technicians of the Sacred) and publisher and book dealer Clay present Derrida writing on Edmond Jab s, examining the differing sources of writing and speech and the role of inscription; critic Richard Sieburth on Mallarm and the latter's contention that the world exists to be in a book; Bernstein proposes language as the technology behind all technologies; and Jorge Luis Borges finds "the cult of books" evidenced in the world's religions. Generous excerpts from Jess Collins's O!, Tom Phillips's A Humument and many non-Western texts make this collection an eye-ful, including the spectacular carved fonts in an imaginary language by Xu Bing. And bound into A Book of the Book is a gatefold on glossy stock of a poem by Blaise Cendrars, illustrated by Sonia Delaunay. Rothenberg and Clay have intelligently structured their book, allowing the reader to move through the four sections and become increasingly grounded in an understanding of what the book qua book has become over two millennia. Just as wisely, they stay away from reducing this great effort to an appeal for recovering a tradition. (Dec.) Forecast: Every piece here deals in one way or the other with the book as object-whether phenomenological, cultural, historical, technical or aesthetic- at a moment in history when the demise of books as we've come to know them is more than just cocktail-party chatter- it's boardroom chatter. If sought out and handsold, this book could be a hit with any literate reader; it will certainly find its way onto syllabi. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. Booksmight be called our cultural cornerstonethis collection might be considered a primer in the field [book arts criticism and theory]. -- Rain Tax, Spring 2001 --Charles Alexanderthis book could be a hit with any literate reader; it will certainly find its way onto syllabi. -- Publishers Weekly, November 13, 2000, Volume 247, Number 46 From the Publisher EDITORS FOREWORD The predecessor to the present book elsewhere described was The Book, Spiritual Instrument, co-edited by one of us and published by the other. It was in its aftermath that we felt the appeal of expanding the work both in size and range and in the recognition that the physicality of the book was a necessary concomitant to Mallarm's proposition of the spiritual book that we were still eager to further explore. And we were aware too that the hegemony of the material book as a conglomerate of cloth and paper and ink and leather and glue and thread was in some danger of being superceded by that of the virtual non-book much as the book and writing had challenged the dominance of the oral technologies that came before them. It is those key terms-oral, material, virtual, spiritual-that underlie the discussions in the pages that follow. Set in the context of a turning from one century into another indeed of one millennium into another they encompass the full range of human languages that makes an ethnopoetics the underpinning for any still viable poetics. A more substantial pre-face from the editors perspective heads off the rest

section of this gathering a section in which we extend the privilege of prefacing to a number of other interested parties. We do this as a way to move beyond our limits and to recognize some of those who have thought long and hard about the practice and problematics of the book and writing. In much the same way we were aware that our book whatever its size cannot do justice to all of the book artists and writers to whom, as writers and readers ourselves, we were clearly beholden. For some of this we would like to mention not only those with pieces listed in our table of contents but those also whose works are cited or included within the anthologized selections. While we were satisfied that the book is ample in its inclusions, we want to point out always that a gathering like this can only scratch the surface of what the past and present have given us to work from. The selection of course is also personal, reactive of our own experiences and needs, while hopeful that these will prove of use to others. We have moved forward in the hope that our readers will be able to construct a kind of narrative from these otherwise disparate pieces. To intensify the sense of a narrative or a series of such narratives we have taken the liberty of removing footnotes and bibliographic references unless, from our perspective or that of the authors, they added greatly to the story being told. We have also modified the number of illustrations for certain pieces eliminating some or adding others and where we have selected a section from a larger work, we have eliminated references to material included elsewhere in that work but absent from our own. On the other hand, we have been exible about stylistic features, particularly those that distinguish American from British written usage or, still more crucially, those that represent deliberate or contrarian moves on the part of the authors. We have tried in this way and within the limits imposed on any material book to be faithful to the intentions of those whose works were including. And we've also attempted to present our readers with gifts like the facsimile of the Cendrars/Delaunay *La Prose du Transsibrien* or the complete reprint of *Jess's O!* not for their economic feasibility but for the pleasure it gives us to do so. In the course of putting the work together, we are indebted to all those artists, writers and publishers whose work has come into our enterprise. If Mallarmé was right about the spiritual book the book that all of us are writing it may be possible to see each generation or overlap of generations as one chapter in that common (or communal) volume. Among those of our time who have most affected us separately or together in our thoughts about the book and writing, are Robert Duncan, Timothy Ely, Barbara Fahrner, Walter Hamady, Dick Higgins, Edmond Jabs, Sherman Paul, Ian Tyson, and Tony Zwicker to any one of whom this book could well be dedicated. Others who shared the work with us include, most notably, Philip Gallo (as designer and assembler) and Amber Phillips (as organizer and reader), whose attentions moved us along from concept to material object. And finally, but centrally, we have also shared time and thoughts with Julie Harrison and Diane Rothenberg some of it in New York, some in California, and some in Paris and we have learned between ourselves as co-makers to work together on that adventure in writing and reading that forms so crucial a part of all our lives. Jerome Rothenberg Steven Clay
1999/2000