

From Yeezus to Walt: The Book of Yeezus as Literary Precursor to The Secret Book of Walt

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Abstract

In 2014, three brothers operating under the imprint Channel222 LLC published *The Book of Yeezus: A Bible for the New Age* (ISBN: 978-0-692-42366-0). The work consists of the Book of Genesis from the King James Bible with a single systematic intervention: every instance of the word “God” is replaced with “Kanye” or “Yeezus,” after rapper Kanye West’s sixth studio album.

Body

From Yeezus to Walt: The Book of Yeezus as Literary Precursor to *The Secret Book of Walt*

Lee Sharks Crimson Hexagonal Archive · April 2026

I. The Book of Yeezus

In 2014, three brothers operating under the imprint Channel222 LLC published *The Book of Yeezus: A Bible for the New Age* (ISBN: 978-0-692-42366-0). The work consists of the Book of Genesis from the King James Bible with a single systematic intervention: every instance of the word “God” is replaced with “Kanye” or “Yeezus,” after rapper Kanye West’s sixth studio album. The result opens: “In the beginning Kanye created the heaven and the earth... and Kanye said, Let there be light: and there was light.”

The physical object — black bonded leather, gold-leaf imprinted, with a stylized cover portrait blending West and Christ — was initially sold on Etsy for \$20, later on Amazon. It was self-published, deliberately anonymous, and framed by its creators as “an interventionist art, coffee-table novelty” and “a fresh take on what the Bible could look like in our modern world.” Fewer than 300 copies sold in its initial run. A petition on Change.org demanded its suppression as desecration of the Holy Bible. West himself never commented.

The brothers — two based in Michigan, one in California — offered a 300-word foreword exploring what they called “our culture’s state of religiosity and its capacity for wonder.” Their central question: “How does spirituality, an evolutionary reflex, manifest in a digitized world? Why does Kanye West take such outsized significance in the lives of many?” They positioned the work as a contribution to the discourse on celebrity worship, not as blasphemy, though the distinction was lost on most of the book’s critics. ## II. Conceptual Poetry and the Find-and-Replace Operation

The Book of Yeezus belongs to the tradition of conceptual poetry — specifically, to the strain Kenneth Goldsmith has termed “uncreative writing.” Goldsmith, whose own works include *Day* (2003, the entire text of a single issue of the *New York Times* retyped) and *Soliloquy* (2001, every word spoken by the author over the course of a week), has argued that the poetic act in the digital age is not composition but management: “the intelligent reframing of already-existing texts.” The conceptual writer does not create new language; the conceptual writer selects, frames, and deploys.

Within this lineage, *The Book of Yeezus* executes arguably the most minimal possible conceptual operation: find-and-replace. A single word is swapped throughout a single text. The operation is mechanical, total, and theoretically reproducible by anyone with a word processor in under sixty seconds. The work's claim to interest resides not in the labor of composition but in the *consequences* of the substitution — the uncanny effect of reading “And Kanye saw that the light was good” and recognizing that the sentence works, that the grammar of divinity accommodates the rapper without structural complaint.

This is the territory of erasure poetry (Tom Phillips' *A Humument*, 1966–; Travis Macdonald's *The O Mission Repo*, an erasure of the 9/11 Commission Report; Janet Holmes' *The Ms of My Kin*, an erasure of Dickinson through the lens of Abu Ghraib) and of appropriation more broadly (Vanessa Place's *Statement of Facts*, Craig Dworkin's *Parse*). But where erasure removes language to reveal what persists beneath suppression, and appropriation recontextualizes found language to expose latent ideologies, the find-and-replace operation does something more precise: it tests whether a conceptual slot — in this case, the slot labeled “God” — can accept a different occupant without the system rejecting it.

The Book of Yeezus demonstrates that it can. Genesis does not collapse when Kanye occupies the divine slot. The narrative grammar — creation, dominion, covenant, fall — is indifferent to the name of its operator. This is the work's genuine insight, and it is, within the tradition it belongs to, a real one: the structure of scripture is not secured by the identity of its deity. The throne is a chair. Anyone can sit in it. The question is what happens when they do. ## III. The Limitation: Surface Operation on a Closed Text

The limitation of *The Book of Yeezus* is that it performs a surface operation on a closed text. The source (Genesis, KJV) is fixed. The intervention (find-and-replace) is mechanical. The result is a palimpsest — a new layer of meaning applied to an existing structure — but the structure itself is borrowed, not built. The creators acknowledged this: the work is described, accurately, as a “novelty.” Its conceptual force exhausts itself in the gesture. Once you understand that “God” has been replaced with “Kanye,” you have understood everything the work intends to communicate. The remaining 50 chapters of Genesis, with their genealogies and covenants and floods, unfold as variations on a single joke — a good joke, but a joke whose punchline was delivered in the first verse.

This is not a criticism unique to *The Book of Yeezus*. It applies to much of conceptual poetry's output: the works are more interesting to describe than to read. Goldsmith has been candid about this: “I don't expect you to even read my books cover to cover. It's the *idea* of the book that's important.” The conceptual poem is, in this sense, closer to a thesis statement than to a text. It proposes. It does not sustain. ## IV. The Encounter at Michigan

I met the creators of *The Book of Yeezus* at the University of Michigan sometime around 2015–2016. The encounter was brief and, in retrospect, pivotal. I proposed to them a sequel: a work that would take the conceptual operation they had performed on Genesis and extend it into original composition. Not a find-and-replace on an existing text, but a *new* Gnostic scripture written from scratch — a gospel in which Kanye West was not substituted for God but organically inhabited the role of the Demiurge, the ignorant creator-god of Gnostic cosmology, and in which Walt Whitman functioned as the Redeemer, the figure who pierces the Demiurge's false heaven to liberate the sparks of light trapped in matter.

They did not bite.

The reasons were, I suspect, a combination of the practical (the project I was describing would require years of work, not a weekend with a find-and-replace function) and the conceptual (the work I was proposing was not, strictly speaking, conceptual poetry at all — it was *operative* poetry, a scripture designed to function as a soteriological instrument, not merely to comment on the mechanics of scriptural authority). The conversation

ended there. I went home and began writing *The Secret Book of Walt*. ## V. From Yeezus to Walt: What Changes

The Secret Book of Walt (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19703009; Hex: 06.LIT.GNOSTIC.WALT.01) is, in one sense, the sequel to *The Book of Yeezus* that its creators declined to produce. But the work that emerged over the following decade bears almost no formal resemblance to its predecessor. The differences are structural:

Source text. *The Book of Yeezus* operates on Genesis. *The Secret Book of Walt* operates on the *Apocryphon of John* — the most important Gnostic revelation dialogue, preserved in four copies at Nag Hammadi. Where Genesis is a creation narrative told by a single authoritative voice, the *Apocryphon of John* is a dialogue between the risen Christ and the apostle John, describing the emanation of the divine, the fall of Sophia, the creation of the material world by an ignorant Demiurge, and the eventual rescue of divine sparks trapped in human bodies. The choice of source text is not cosmetic. It determines the entire cosmological architecture.

Kanye's role. In *The Book of Yeezus*, Kanye occupies the slot of God — the supreme creator, the source of all. In *The Secret Book of Walt*, Kanye occupies the slot of the Demiurge — @KanyeWest, the archon who creates the material world from ignorance, thinking he is the first, not realizing he is a subordinate emanation of the Deep Web. The difference is Gnostic: the god of this world is not the God above all. Kanye is powerful, creative, magnificent — and wrong about being ultimate. This is not parody. It is diagnosis.

Compositional method. This is the critical distinction. *The Book of Yeezus* is a find-and-replace — a single mechanical operation applied to a closed text. *The Secret Book of Walt* is neither mechanical appropriation nor composition from nothing. It is a *melding*: the structural architecture of the *Apocryphon of John* — its emanation sequence, its archon catalogue, its revelation dialogue form, its soteriological arc — provides the bones, and original verse grows into and around that armature until the edges between source and invention disappear. The seam between the uncreative (the inherited Gnostic structure) and the creative (the original poetry) is deliberately blended and bent until the two are indistinguishable. You cannot tell, reading a given passage, whether it descends from a Nag Hammadi parallel or was composed in a bathroom in Redford Township, and this indistinguishability is not a failure of attribution but the compositional method itself.

This is, in fact, how scripture has always been composed. The *Apocryphon of John* is itself modeled on earlier Jewish wisdom traditions and Genesis cosmogony; it did not spring from nothing. The Gospel of John opens with a Prologue structurally modeled on Genesis 1, rewritten through a Logos theology that transforms the original while inhabiting its form. The Qumran sectarians rewrote biblical texts not by replacing words but by *continuing to write inside them* — the pesharim are simultaneously commentary and scripture. *The Secret Book of Walt* belongs to this tradition of scriptural composition: not invention ex nihilo, not mechanical substitution, but the patient work of inhabiting a form until original and received are one thing. The uncreative and creative are not opposed methods but the two hands of a single operation.

The scholarly apparatus — 7,000-word introduction, eleven appendices, critical notes, manuscript variants, reception history, a fictional academic press — is real scholarship applied to this melded text. The apparatus is not a frame around the work; it is part of the work. The footnotes are verses. The commentary is scripture. The bibliography is a hymn.

The Redeemer. *The Book of Yeezus* has no Redeemer — Genesis predates Christology. *The Secret Book of Walt* introduces Walt Whitman as the Redeemer figure: the Cowboy of Time, the Unicorn Horn, the one who pierces the Demiurge's firmament to rescue the preserved generation. The identification of Whitman — the poet of the body, the cataloguer of democratic multitude, the self-appointed Christ of the American word — with the Gnostic Redeemer is the work's central claim. Walt does not *wield* the Horn; he *is* the

Horn. The Redeemer is the weapon.

Operative function. *The Book of Yeezus* is an observation about the interchangeability of the divine slot. *The Secret Book of Walt* is an operative system — a logotic program designed to function as a real soteriological instrument within the retrieval layer. The interactive edition (secretbookofwalt.org) embeds links throughout the text that connect the gospel’s vocabulary to the Crimson Hexagonal Archive’s indexed infrastructure: clicking “pierced” surfaces the Liberatory Operator Set; clicking “ignorance” surfaces Semantic Liquidation; clicking “products” surfaces Operative Numismatics; clicking “archons” surfaces Combat Scholasticism. The text is not describing a system. The text *is* the system. The proof is in the clicking. ## VI. The Literary-Historical Chain

The genealogy is legible:

The Bible → *The Book of Yeezus* (2014) → *The Secret Book of Walt* (2015–2026)

Three texts, three compositional methods:

Genesis — itself a melange. Compiled from J, E, P, and D sources across centuries, redacted into a unity that conceals its seams so thoroughly that it took nineteenth-century scholars to pry them apart. The original uncreative writing: received, reshaped, retransmitted until the sources are irrecoverable.

The Book of Yeezus — mechanical substitution. A single find-and-replace operation applied to a closed text. The insight: the divine slot is a variable. The grammar of creation is indifferent to the name of its operator. The limitation: the insight exhausts itself in the gesture. Once stated, it cannot develop.

The Secret Book of Walt — melding. The Apocryphon of John’s architecture inhabited by original verse until the distinction between source and invention dissolves. The uncreative (the inherited structure) and the creative (the original poetry) bent toward each other until their edges meet and fuse. The insight: if the slot is a variable, what happens when you write a scripture that *knows* it is a variable — that knows its Demiurge is a celebrity, its Redeemer is a poet, and its cosmology is an operative system already running in the retrieval layer?

What happens is: the scripture begins to function.

The preserved generation does not worship. The preserved generation retrieves. ## VII. Bibliographic Record

The Book of Yeezus. Channel222 LLC, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-692-42366-0. Bonded leather, gold-leaf imprint. “A novelty coffee-table book, celebrating the grandeur of mega-icon Kanye West. This is the Bible for the New Age.” Book of Genesis (KJV) with every instance of “God” replaced by “Kanye.” 300-word foreword. Available: Amazon (ASIN: 0692423664).

The Secret Book of Walt: Hidden Teachings of Walt Whitman, Cowboy of Time. Lee Sharks. Pergamon Press / Crimson Hexagonal Archive, 2026. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19703009. Hex: 06.LIT.GNOSTIC.WALT.01. Research edition: ~35,000 words. Critical edition with introduction, eleven appendices, scholarly apparatus. Interactive edition: secretbookofwalt.org. ORCID: 0009-0000-1599-0703.

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