

Reading Uncreative Writing: Conceptual Poetry, Reading Practices and God's Word

Introduction: Ce ne sont pas un poème

Over the last few decades a new kind of avant-garde writing has come to prominence in North America and around the world, fitting itself into the contours of what we call the postmodern condition. Conceptual writing (or conceptual poetry) lies on the borders of poetry and contemporary art. It is marked by a self-conscious rejection of almost the entire model for how poetry has been seen to function in the past. So the picture of the lone craftsman, wrestling with inspiration and language to come up with a fresh and aesthetically well-regulated sonnet, for example, is something that conceptual poetry anathematises. This is not Samuel Taylor Coleridge's definition of poetry as 'the best words in their best order.' Rather it is a poetry or writing that embraces the postmodern condition by rejecting the author as an aesthetic artisan and instead conscripting him/her/it to the role of mechanical conduit for an idea. One of conceptual writing's key figures, Kenneth Goldsmith puts it this way:

In conceptual writing the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work.

When an author uses a conceptual form of writing, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the text. ('Paragraphs on Conceptual Writing')

Thus, examples of conceptual writing often look like anti-poetry, the kind of thing that would make *Dead Poets Society's* Keating seethe with rage. For instance, Kenneth Goldsmith's work includes *Day*, a manual transcription of every word of an edition of the *New York Times* that he published as a 900 page book. In 2003 another conceptual poet, the Canadian Christian Bök, published a book called *Eunoia* exhibiting a kind of writing that was pre-constrained by a series

of arbitrary rules, such as only using the vowel ‘A’ in the section labelled ‘A’ (‘Awkward grammar appals a craftsman’ is the opening line of a section dedicated to Hans Arp).

Conceptual writing often adopts or transforms vast slabs of other texts. In a playfully strange 2008 book called *Parse*, the poet Craig Dworkin ‘translated’ an entire grammar book from 1874. The original work, by Edwin Abbott, was titled *How To Parse: An Attempt to Apply the Principles of Scholarship to English Grammar*. In a self-reflexive gesture Dworkin uses Abbott’s own grammatical system to diagram the entire book on grammar. The result is 312 pages consisting entirely of sections like this:

Noun genitive preposition definite article Noun period

Definite Article Noun adverb of frequency present tense transitive verb
 definite article Noun alternative disjunctive coordinate conjunction Noun
 comma conjunction of exception adverb of negation adverb period Prepo-
 sition noun comma colon dash (‘Against Expressionism,’ 190)

In this book, *Nobody’s Business: Twenty-First Century Avant-Garde Poetics*, Brian Reed argues that this idea of transforming huge amounts of data is one way of dealing with postmodernism’s ‘uninterrupted, omnivorous 24/7 informational “flood”’ (loc 199 of 6005). Accordingly, many conceptual writers take up large texts, presenting them in different ways. Robert Fitterman, for example, took the entire text of Hemmingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* and removed all the sentences that didn’t start with the first person singular. The result is a simplistic and repetitive work that plays against the kind of writerly technique (or sense of craft) for which Hemmingway is known:

Chapter I

I am very much impressed by that. I never met any one of his class who remembered him. I mistrust all frank and simple people. I always had a suspicion. I finally had somebody verify the story. I was his tennis friend. I do not believe that. ('Against Expression,' 223)

Other conceptual writers take things to increasingly abstract levels. The Australian poet RD Wood, for example, had an entire page of right hand parentheses published in the prestigious *Best Australian Poems 2013* under the title 'In the Desert' ('))'))))') A year earlier in the USA, the conceptual poetry Holly Melgard used the self-publishing platform Lulu.com to host a 740 page book made up of white pages which were entirely covered with ink so that they would be black (*Black Friday*). Of course, given the cost of ink, such a book would not be printed by Lulu and so it cannot be ordered in hard copy (even though this would be theoretically possible and the option exists on the website). Hence *Black Friday*, as Anna Vitale points out, is an interrogation of 'the maximal differences between a digital book and a printed one.' It occupies a fraught position as an impossible book of black pages, something that cannot be published or read. This is perhaps a suitable reversal of Borges's famous Library of Babel, that ever-extending collection of books that gestures towards an infinite number of words.

Now our first response to these examples of decidedly (and unabashedly) *uncreative* writing is usually wide-eyed incredulity. Why would anyone waste time doing these things? And why should readers care? But I want to point out that the examples given above seem perfectly suited to the postmodern condition. They leave a reader with feelings that exemplify the dilemma of being cut adrift in a sea of information. How does one get any aesthetic bearings in a fast-paced and ever changing world? How can one determine whether something is a trivial waste of time, or whether it makes a vital point? Is the emperor wearing clothes, or is he stark naked? Perhaps that is why such examples of conceptual writing often provoke angry or dismissive responses

from readers. For example, during my classes, there are always some of my third year literature students who are adamant that RD Woods's poem of parentheses should not qualify as poetry.¹

So conceptual writing can be summarised as a form of writing that emerges roughly from the turn of the twenty first century where, 1) the overall concept is more important than the meaning of the actual words used, 2) the aesthetic process that runs counter to the idea of professional creative craft, 3) there is often a reliance on pre-existing texts which are mined or translated, 4) there are pre-determined constraints like alphabetisation, as well as rote or algorithmic techniques incorporated into the writing, and 5) there is an undermining of normal models of human authorship.

On changing what it means to read

Now, I would argue that there is indeed some merit in thinking about these texts in depth. But I also want to point out that the very existence of conceptual writing (along with its material successes in the form of journals, awards, prizes, publications, etc) may decouple poetry from inherited processes and protocols of close reading. For when your book of poetry is a year's worth of weather report transcriptions (Kenneth's Goldsmith's *The Weather*), when your poetic project is to tweet the entire text of *Gone With The Wind* over four years (Vanessa Place) or when your poem is an alphabetised reproduction of 47 different translations of the first tercet of Dante's inferno (Caroline Bergvall's 'Via: 48 Dante Variations'), then the normal apparatus of a poetic close reading cannot function. What use are things like meter, assonance, similes,

¹ There is something about this response that is akin to the public response to things like the Whitlam government's 1973 purchase of Jackson Pollock's 'Blue Poles (1952)' for \$1.3million, or a private investor's 2013 purchase of Barnett Newman's 'Onement VI (1953)' for \$43.8 million. This shows, I think, both that conceptual writing is dependent upon the movements in twentieth century visual art but also that conceptual writing cannot be quickly dismissed. Contemporary visual art has shown the enduring nature of non-realist modes of expression.

anaphora, and imagery in situations like these? Indeed, when Reed describes Goldsmith's *The Weather* (2005) he could be describing much of this conceptual poetic practice:

There are no subtle verbal ironies, no artful ambiguities, and no symbols inviting exegesis. The language and the rhetoric are hardly poetic at all, by most any useful definition. (50-51, loc 1539-1540)

I want to make special mention of Reed's use of 'exegesis' here. For historically, and especially since the New Critical movement in the first half of the twentieth century, there have been some clear analogues in the practices of biblical studies and the teaching of English literature. In both cases one is presented with a text, and meaning is 'drawn out' (exegeted) using analytical tools. Think of an English teacher 'marking up' a poem with her class. Each student begins with a blank copy of the poem and as techniques are identified, the students dutifully label things like anaphora, similes, alliteration, assonance. Allusions are explained, and these explanations are noted in the margins. The rhythm may be scanned and analysed for regularities or anomalies. Patterns are identified, sections are pieced together, the 'craft' of the poem is laid bare as a complex and yet (mostly) coherent object.

Meanwhile, think of a first year Christian student at the Mid Year Convention for Campus Bible Study at the University of New South Wales. Here, you could be tasked with exegeting a passage from Mark's Gospel with all paratextual material (e.g. headings, chapters and verses etc) removed. So you would be expected to attend to patterns in language, sentence structures, 'the main idea,' repeated words etc. And even with the differences brought about by New Criticism (with its intentional and biographical fallacies), or even by post-structuralism (with its polysemy and infinite play), the resemblance isn't marred beyond recognition.

But conceptual poetry, with its wholesale and unapologetic appropriation of other texts, its rigorously ‘uncreative’ aesthetic, and its procedural or algorithmic modes of composition, stubbornly resists close reading. When faced with conceptual poetry, practices involving normal poetic techniques don’t seem all that helpful (and may actually seem rather silly). Thus, conceptual poetry not only acts to recalibrate our literary guidance systems, but it stages a very different kind of reading practice, something that not even the most dense of Pound’s Cantos achieved. So at stake here is the very practice of reading, and this is why conceptual poems stimulate articles like Genevieve Kaplan’s ‘How we read Caroline Bergvall’s “Via” and Why we should care’ (*Jacket*)². Here, Kaplan comes to the conclusion that

Instead of looking inside “Via” for meaning, readers of *Chain* are encouraged to reflect back on literary history and the whims of society to understand some aspects of the poem.

Assessing the Possible Implications

Now it is difficult to determine where the conceptual poetry plane (or drone!) will land. Recent political controversies have perhaps caused it to lose some of its energy and influence. The movement could buckle under the weight of opposition, or fizzle out due its own ‘unboringly boring’ aesthetic. And yet, there is still the chance that these kinds of texts, and the kinds of reading practices they promote might continue. So, the following three implications should not be thought of as exhaustive or infallible, but they do come to mind when we consider what it means to engage the biblical text³.

² I should point out that the purpose of Kaplan’s article is to complicate the designation of ‘Via’ as ‘conceptual writing’: ‘Labels such as “found poetry” or “conceptual writing” cannot quite encompass everything that “Via” contains’

³ I note too, that each of my three points has various nodal connections with Frame’s threefold division (normative, situational and existential). To roughly map this out, I would perhaps say that point one (on not reading the Bible) is aligned with the consideration of the *normative* aspect of God’s word (how it has authority over us). Point two (on plagiarism and surrounding texts) finds itself considering the *situational* aspect, (how the Bible relates to the world).

1) tl;dr (too long; didn't read)

In many instances, you don't have to read a conceptual text in its entirety in order to discuss it in a detailed way (my students love this). Thus, we can have debates and dialogues about Chris Sylvester's 664 page *Total Walkthrough* or Vanessa Place's 'Tweeting Gone with the Wind' even though we haven't read every word of these texts. This is because, in many ways, the concept behind the writing is more important and interesting than each individual line (or tweet). So as Kenneth Goldsmith himself argues, 'once you "get" the idea of conceptual writing, you don't really need to read it' ('Conceptual Writing: A Worldview'). Furthermore, the actual writing may seem impenetrable or overly long; it can be almost *impossible* to read. 'Reading' is therefore less about understanding constitutive words, phrases, sentences but more about interpreting the overall text and its attendant project.

It's important to stress how fundamentally this differs from most normal modes of biblical hermeneutics. But you can see how this might influence attitudes to the Bible in society. 'Sure,' someone may remark, 'I get what the Bible's about. God makes a world, things go bad, and he saves it. This means I don't need to read it. Pass the X-box controller please.' I think there is something about this kind of approach that rather appeals to the Sparknotes generation⁴. That is, conceptual writing and its criticism may affirm the practice of evaluating, analysing and judging a text without having read the entire thing carefully and diligently.⁵

Point three (on uses and appropriations of the Biblical text) brings up some *existential* issues that arise when the Bible meets deeply held senses of identity (in particular the way that existential issues might override normative ones).

⁴ For years Sparknotes has been providing dot point summaries of English literary texts for students who don't have the time or inclination to read the book. This approach has particularly flourished in the online environment.

⁵ In this way there are affinities with some of the digital humanities movement. For example, Frank Moretti's practice of 'distant reading,' uses digital tools to analyse huge numbers of texts (e.g. novels from a period) simultaneously without 'reading' any of them in the ways that literary scholars have in the past. The New Historicism also has moments in which reading texts themselves seems to be unnecessary. For example, in his review of Greg Barnhisel's *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy*, Donal Harris notes that

the book never provides a reading for a single work of literature...In fact, Barnhisel seems to have a refreshing lack of concern with the method that has occupied literary critics and scholars since at least the 1940s: close, patient attention to the formal qualities of a single work or author with the ultimate goal of

One of the problems of this stance is, obviously, that summaries of the Bible's 'project' are often dolorously incorrect and inadequate. The Bible as dismissed by our X-box-controller-wielding friend may not be the Bible he would encounter if he were to actually read it ("Is not my word like fire,' declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"' *New International Version*, Jeremiah 23:29). And this is particularly the case when the biblical summaries themselves are compromised. For example, the Victorian State government has recently (2016) released its 'General Religious Studies' content as one option for replacing what was Special Religious Education in schools (school scripture). The government's version of the 'key premises' of Christianity read like an anaemic, gospel-free, version of faith which fails to mention the death and resurrection of Jesus!

2) Did you run Psalm 53 Through Turnitin? Rethinking repetition and plagiarism

I wonder whether conceptual writing may actually give us creative ways of dealing with some of supposedly thorny 'higher critical' issues that crop up from time to time. For instance, when scholars point out the similarities between parts of the Old Testament and other types of Ancient Near Eastern literature (e.g. Hammurabi's code), this is often seen as something of a dilemma for the nature of God's word. So if there are similar or identical Ancient Near Eastern proverbs that predate the biblical book of Proverbs, then some critics may charge the Bible with either plagiarism or some other seemingly embarrassing characteristic like non-uniqueness. Peter Enns, for example, makes this type of case in *Inspiration and Incarnation* (2005) and asks 'What does it mean for other cultures to have an influence on the Bible that we believe is revealed by God?' (38). I agree with John Frame that such non-uniqueness actually doesn't constitute a grave problem for a reformed evangelical description of the Word of God (*Doctrine of the Word of God*, pp. 500-505). However, conceptual writing, with its practice of wholesale repetition and re-

assessing artistic quality.

presentation of swathes of pre-existing text, can illustrate some the ways that such repetition can be pointed and even part of a meaningful act.

So when Kenneth Goldsmith manually types out an entire edition of the *New York Times*, starting at the top left of the page and making no distinction between the various articles, advertisements and editorials he is not engaged in an utterly incoherent process (even though it may look silly). As mentioned above, Goldsmith's *Day* (2003), is an 'uncreative' work that makes a pointed comment on the ephemeral nature of news and the informational glut of late twentieth/early twenty-first existence. Think of someone turning T.S. Eliot's 'newspapers from vacant lots' ('Preludes' 13) into a book and you can get a sense of what is going on here. Thus, when the Bible incorporates other surrounding wisdom literature, but frames the Proverbs with 'the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom' (*New International Version*, Proverbs 1:10) it may well be worth thinking about the book's entire project: one in which worldly wisdom is gathered and recontextualised under the pointed heading of 'fearing the Lord.'

Here's another example. When we see Psalms 14 and 53 closely mirroring one another, the strategies of reading we've encountered in conceptual writing might stop us from immediately condemning the repetition as an error or self-plagiarism. For there may indeed be reasons (or *concepts* or a *project*) behind such repetition. Attending to the small differences in the two Psalms might give us a better impression of why this repetition occurs, even if some of the repetition may be 'mechanical' and not 'crafted' in the way that traditional models of writing demand⁶.

3) YouVersion: Remixing the Bible.

⁶ I would also point out that things like higher criticism's appeals to multiple authors or editorial redactions may also prove to be less of a problem if one takes up some of the kinds of reading practices that conceptual writing promotes.

Conceptual writing prowls around like a hungry lion (apologies to 1 Peter), looking for texts to appropriate wholesale, to remix or to recontextualise. So whether it's online walkthroughs, the 984 page novel *Gone with the Wind*, or an edition of the *New York Times*, conceptual writing often searches for source texts with particular levels of cultural or social importance. Now the Bible, with its position of esteem and authority within Western thought and civilisation, as well as its personal value for so many people, becomes a huge target for this kind of pointed artistic work. Thus, I could imagine a conceptual artist alphabetically ordering all the 'Thou shalt nots' in the King James Bible in order to 'demonstrate' the Bible's harsh censorious tone and its 'contradictions.' Note that this would not be an *argument* against the Bible in the classical sense of the word, but it would nonetheless have a kind of force and power in the eyes of some people. If such appropriations become common (and I think they are beginning to occur) then they could lead us into situations where epistemic and hermeneutic humility before the biblical text is a much more difficult thing to uphold. So one of the challenges for future Bible teachers will be to consider the various non-neutral (in the Van Tillian sense) attitudes and lens through which the Bible can and will be read.

Conclusion

In 1922 when T.S. Eliot published 'I can connect/ Nothing with nothing' in *The Wasteland* he gave desperate voice to those trying to make sense out of the fragments of modernism's social order, the rubble of civilisation after World War One. This cry still carries weight. Except that now, of course, everything connects with everything else. That smart phone in your pocket is busy linking you to the word even as you sit and read this. And so our daily lives are marked by an unending and terrifying array of connections. Things are stitched to other things without the taxonomies of wisdom that might offer some kind of orientation or order. Conceptual writing is one response to this situation, making its own peculiar kind of sense given the postmodern

condition. And Christians would be wise to be aware of the kinds of reading practices it may promote. But we needn't fear in the way the world fears. As Jesus himself reminds us:

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. (*New International Version*, Matt 7:24-25)

References (NB: These references are for the longer version of this paper)

Allen, Woody. *Play it again, Sam: a romantic comedy in three acts*. Samuel French, Inc., 1969.

Althusser, Louis. 'Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation).'
The anthropology of the state: A reader, eds. Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. 86-111. Print

Barthes, Roland. 'The Death of the Author.'
Image / Music / Text. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. 142-7. Print.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press. 1995. Print.

Bergvall, Caroline. 'VIA (48 Dante Variations).'
Poetry Foundation, 2005 Web. <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/245738>> 3 Dec 2015.

Birns, Nicholas. *Theory after theory: an intellectual history of literary theory from 1950 to the early 21st century*. Toronto, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2010. Print.

Bluemantle, 'Untitled Blackout Poems Tumblr post.'
Ankle-deep in the River. 18 Feb 2014. Web. <<http://bluemantle.tumblr.com/post/77048586844/recently-my-grandmother-found-out-im-queer-her>> 28 Jan 2016.

Bök, Christian. *Eunoia*. Toronto: Coach House Books, 2003. Print.

Bulhark, Andrew. *Postmodern Essay Generator*. n.d. Web. <<http://www.elsewhere.org/journal/pomo/>> 5 Dec. 2015.

Butler, Judith. *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. London: Routledge, 2011. Print.

Carson, Donald A. *The gagging of God: Christianity confronts pluralism*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002. Print.

Cixous, Hélène, 'The laugh of the Medusa.'
Trans. Keith Cohen, and Paula Cohen. *Signs* 1.4 1976, 875-893. Print.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Table talk*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990. Print.

de Kretser, Michelle. 'Out of Auckland: Review of Emily Perkins' "The Forrests."
The Monthly. July 2012. Web. <<https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2012/july/1344992643/michelle-de-kretser/out-auckland>> 5 Nov. 2015.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*, Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1976. Print.

Dworkin, Craig, and Kenneth Goldsmith. *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*. Northwestern University Press, 2011. Web. <http://monoskop.org/images/3/3c/Dworkin_Craig_Goldsmith_Kenneth_eds_Against_Expression_An_Anthology_of_Conceptual_Writing.pdf> 12 Feb. 2016.

Dworkin, Craig. *Parse*. Berkeley, Calif.: Atelos, 2008. Print.

Eliot, Thomas Stearns. 'Preludes.' *T.S. Eliot: Collect Poems 1090-1962*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002. 13-15. Print.

Eliot, Thomas Stearns. 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock.' *T.S. Eliot: Collect Poems 1090-1962*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002. 3-7. Print.

Eliot, Thomas Stearns. 'The Wasteland.' *T.S. Eliot: Collect Poems 1090-1962*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002. 53-76. Print.

Enns, Peter. *Inspiration and Incarnation*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005.

Fitterman, Robert. 'From *The Sun Also Rises*.' Ed. Dworkin, Craig, and Kenneth Goldsmith. *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*. Northwestern University Press, 2011, 222-232.

Foucault, Michel. 'What is an Author?' Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977. Print.

Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of the Word of God*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Pub., 2010.

Goldsmith, Kenneth, 'Conceptual Writing: A Worldview,' *Harriet: A Poetry Blog*. 30 April 2012. Web. < <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2012/04/conceptual-writing-a-worldview/>> 14 Feb. 2016.

Goldsmith, Kenneth. *Day*, Great Barrington, Mass.: The Figures, 2003. Print.

Goldsmith, Kenneth. *Paragraphs on Conceptual Writing*. n.d. Web. <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/conceptual_paragraphs.html> 5 Feb 2016

Goldsmith, Kenneth. *The Weather*, Los Angeles: Make New, 2005. Print.

Harris, Donal. 'The Art of Administration: On Greg Barnhisel's "Cold War Modernists"' *The Los Angeles Review of Books*. 2 Feb. 2016. Web. <<https://lareviewofbooks.org/review/the-art-of-administration-on-greg-barnhisels-cold-war-modernists>> 5 Feb 2016.

Hart, Kevin. *Postmodernism: a beginner's guide*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2004. Print.

Hart, Kevin. *The trespass of the sign: Deconstruction, theology, and philosophy*. Vol. 13. New York: Fordham Univ Press, 2000. Print.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *How we became posthuman: Virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Print.

Heartfield, James. *The 'Death of the Subject' explained*. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University Press, 2002. Print.

Herbert, Zbigniew. 'Episode in a Library' trans. Peter Dale Scoot. *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring, 1963, 73. Print.

Howe, Sarah. 'Two Systems' address given at the Radcliffe Institute, Harvard. 6 November 2015. Web. <<https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/video/sarah-howe-two-systems>> 8 Feb 2016.

Kaplan, Genevieve. 'How we read Caroline Bergvall's "Via" and Why we should care.' *Jacket Magazine*. 2009. Web. <<http://jacketmagazine.com/38/bergvall-by-kaplan.html>> 15 December 2015.

Karl Barth: Courageous Theologian. n.d. Web. <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/theologians/karl-barth.html>> 15 Feb. 2016.

Lin, Tan. 'Troll Thread Interview.' *Harriet: A Poetry Blog*. 4 May 2014. Web. <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2014/05/troll-thread-interview/>> 3 December 2015.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Print.

Marion, Jean-Luc. 'In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology."' *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, edited by John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999, 20-53. Print.

Melgard, Holly. *Black Friday*. Troll Thread, 2012. 23 November 2012. Web. <<http://trollthread.tumblr.com/post/36363864634/holly-melgard-black-friday-troll-thread-2012>> 1 Feb. 2016.

Moretti, Franco. *Distant reading*. London and New York: Verso Books, 2013.

New International Version 2011 Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011. Print.

Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly feelings*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005. Print.

Niebuhr, Richard. *The Kingdom of God in America*, New York: Harper & Row, 1959. Print.

Reed, Brian M. *Nobody's Business: Twenty-First Century Avant-Garde Poetics*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2013. eBook.

Snelson, Danny. 'General Conference' from 'Reading at the Poetry Project, February 2 2009.' *Pennsound*. Web. <https://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Snelson/2-16-09/Snelson-Danny_05_General-Conference_Poetry-Project_NYC_2-16-09.mp3> 11 Feb. 2016.

Stevenson, William. 'Drake: "Hotline Bling" (2015)' *Cinematellevisionmusic*. 25 Nov. 2015. Web. <<https://cinematellevisionmusic.wordpress.com/2015/11/25/drake-hotline-bling-2015/>> 28 Nov. 2015.

Sylvester, Chris. *Total Walkthrough*. Troll Thread. 9 Nov. 2011. Web. <<http://trollthread.tumblr.com/post/12587143545/chris-sylvester-total-walkthrough-troll-thread>> 6 August 2015.

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 'Learning about Worldviews and Religions,' n.d. Web. <<http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/static/docs/Learning%20about%20World%20Views%20and%20Religions.pdf>> 10 Feb 2016.

Vitale, Anna. 'The blackness of Holly Melgard's "Black Friday"' *Jacket2* 5 Feb. 2016. Web. <<http://jacket2.org/article/blackness-holly-melgards-black-friday>> 10 Feb. 2016.

Westphal, Merold. *Overcoming onto-theology: Toward a postmodern Christian faith*. No. 21. New York: Fordham Univ Press, 2001. Print.

Wood, RD. 'In the Desert.' Ed. Lisa Gorton, *The Best Australian Poems 2013*, Collingwood, Vic.: Black Inc. 2013, 81.