In my dissertation *Modernist Authors, Postmodernist Writers: Joyce, Beckett, Rushdie*, I analyze Joyce and Beckett in an attempt to expose the problematic tension that appears in the interstitial space between their private behavior as writers and their public behavior as authors. In my introduction, I use the theoretical programs of several important poststructuralist thinkers to map out an interpretive grid through which I study how the liminal space between writing and reality is dealt with in the prose of Joyce, Beckett, and Rushdie (whose *Midnight's Children* I discuss as a case-study in the perils of writing in a postmodernist world). My goal in this exploration is to question the actions of the artists themselves — how do they deal with the texts that they create once these texts are unleashed into the cultural field? And how does this behavior affect our understanding of the texts themselves? What is at stake in this discussion, apart from how it affects our understanding of Joyce and Beckett, is the way that we view the interaction between the writer, working in private to create texts, and the author, working in public to fashion those texts into culturally significant books. At a time when traditional notions of books are being replaced by other ways of consuming text, it is important to keep these questions in mind, to examine continually methods of control and authority. I begin my introduction by using Barthes and Foucault to address issues of authority, and then I move on to Derrida and Jameson, who I use to work toward creating a language for asking these questions. Finally, I move to Brian McHale’s analysis of postmodernist fiction to help answer the prickly questions — can we reasonably expect artists’ private treatment of their writing and their public treatment of their writing to be the same? And what happens when these functions of an artist — as private writer, as public author — are at odds with one another?

Using close readings, I discuss Joyce’s *Dubliners* and Beckett’s trilogy as postmodernist texts, with the intention of showing how Joyce and Beckett were interested in demonstrating the impossibility of maintaining authorial control over language and writing. These texts are postmodern in the sense that they embrace a lack of control, an important facet of postmodernist writing; consequently, I argue that Joyce and Beckett are postmodernist writers because their texts are concerned with an artist’s inability to control language and textuality. However, in contrast to the postmodernity of their writing, Joyce and Beckett bring different sensibilities to issues surrounding the presentation of their texts — Joyce is concerned with the bibliographic code of the published work, while Beckett’s concern lies in issues of performance. In the real world, when it comes to questions of publishing their texts, they are obsessed with maintaining the authority in their lives that they so determinedly question in their texts. It seems natural and logical that texts written to show that the author has no real authority over his texts should be treated in a way befitting their content once they are unleashed into the world. In other words, texts written espousing this postmodern view of the textual condition should, once they are published, be allowed to do what they argue that texts will do — grow, change, evolve. Instead, however, Joyce and Beckett continue to exert their authority over their works, trying to control every aspect of their publication and their reception in the cultural field. In this context, I discuss Joyce’s treatment of *Ulysses* and Beckett’s treatment of his plays in performance as sites where their concern with maintaining authorial control is made manifest.

Finally, in my chapter on *Midnight's Children*, I show how Rushdie composes a text that is about this interaction between writing and reality, a text that deals explicitly with the division between the inside and the outside of writing, a text written consciously in the wake of Joyce and Beckett in which he deals with the tension of being a writer in a postmodernist world. Saleem’s dual roles as writer and author illustrate the impossible tension that this causes in a postmodern world, as he attempts to exert his artistic control over both his writing and his life, ultimately failing at both. This reading provides a fitting capstone to the discussion, since *Midnight's Children* positions itself along the faultline of this dialectical tension.

With the proliferation of new kinds of metatext (particularly the many ways in which the internet is changing our understanding of how we engage with texts), the lines continue to blur between the private writing process and the public consumption of text. Recently, I have applied the paradigm used in my dissertation to the work of Zadie Smith, drawing out a tension in her fiction between the modernist structures and the postmodernist content contained within them. In addition, I am interested in asking similar questions about texts in other media, particularly popular television series including *Veronica Mars*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *The Sopranos*. My work on Joyce and Beckett and the paradigm I’ve created have proven useful in my examination of popular culture and alternative media; conversely, my recent work on popular culture has proven helpful as I revise my dissertation for publication, and I hope to build upon this work in the future.