"Modernism asked how we know what we know, but Postmodernism asked what we can know."
-   Brian McHale[15]

I define myself as a reader. No, I mean a Reader. And a writer… but not an Author. I think. To be honest, a year spent in the throes of Postmodernism has left me unsure of the validity of any definition, or whether much is left sacred. My Extension 2 English Major Work *'Dear Reader;',* is a Fictocritical pastiche that intends to critique the dominance of literary theory and the untouchable position of the omniscient Author, by reinstating the Reader as the destination of a text. *'Dear Reader;'* considers the inextricable complexity of the Author-theory; but ultimately, its purpose is only as much as the Reader speculates.

My enquiry into Authorship began with Roland Barthes' *'The Death of the Author'*[16], which became integral to the conceptual undercurrent of my work. Yet it was Michel Foucault's essay '*What is an Author?'*[17] that revealed the complex discourse surrounding the Author-theory. Thus, *'Dear Reader;'* directly embodies the elaborate dialogue that seeks to determine the origin of meaning within the continuum of reading and writing. Additionally, studies of literary theory in the Extension 1 English Common Module - Literary Worlds, manifested in my analysis of the reader-response theory, and investigation of Louise Rosenblatt's theory.[18] Although not realised at the time, this research was a hunt for the voices that would feature in my final composition.

As a self-confessed work of playfulness, my Major Work revels in the realm of Postmodernism. Described by Nicol, Postmodern literature *"favours bricolage or pastiche to original*

[15] J. Lindas, 'Engaging with Postmodernism: An Examination of Literature and the Canon', Undergraduate Honors Theses, University of Colorado, Boulder, 2013, pg. 5.
[16] R. Barthes, 'The Death of the Author'*, Aspen,* no. 5-7, 1967.
[17] M. Foucault, 'What is an Author?, Collège de France' [lecture], 22 February 1969.
[18] J. R. Davis, 'Reconsidering Readers: Louise Rosenblatt and Reader-Response Pedagogy', *Research and Teaching in Development Education,* vol. 8, no. 2, 1992.

production" and involves *"the mixing of styles and genres."*[19] Thus, while originally inclined towards a critical response, my work developed a distinct Postmodern style following my reading of Pattinson[20] and Gibbs[21], as an introduction to Fictocriticism. Defined by a fusing of genre and style, Fictocriticism lacks a *"blueprint"*[22]; providing the space for experimentation. The purpose of Fictocriticism is to *"undertake its own critique, provide its own process of self-reflection, and work… to make an active intervention into a field of argument."*[23] In this way, not only does *'Dear Reader;'* resound at a conceptual level, seeking to illuminate the Author-theory for the purpose of celebrating the Reader; my Major Work boasts a revolutionary play on literary form. Yet, despite my excitement in discovering a form wholeheartedly suitable to my purpose, initial drafts lacked experimentation, reading as essays with half-hearted attempts at creativity.

Upon further investigation of Postmodernism, I became fascinated with the concept of playfulness, deriving from Jacques Derrida's concept of 'play'.[24] This is described by Sharma and Dr. Chaudhary as *"central"*, and rendering *"the actual achievement of order and meaning… unlikely."*[25] It was this discovery; of the importance of fluidity and lack of order, that paradoxically enabled me to strengthen the construction of my Major Work. Thus, while defined as Fictocriticism; the prime descriptor for my Major Work, is 'play'. Playfulness speaks directly to the conceptual basis of *'Dear Reader;',* which encapsulates the ambiguity of absolute meaning, demonstrated in Atwood's witty tweets: *"Or are things always happening? Do things exist outside of the scope of human sight? What is the purpose of these things if no one ever*

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[19] J. Lindas, 'Engaging with Postmodernism: An Examination of Literature and the Canon', Undergraduate Honors Theses, University of Colorado, Boulder, 2013, pg. 5.

[20] Ibid.

[21] A. Gibbs, 'Fictocriticism, Affect, Mimesis: Engendering Differences', *The Journal of the Australian Association of Writing Programs* [online journal]*,* vol. 9, no. 1, 2005, <http://www.textjournal.com.au/april05/gibbs.htm>, accessed 12 April 2019.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] R. Sharma & P. Chaudhary, 'Common Themes and Techniques of Postmodern Literature of Shakespeare', *International Journal of Educational Planning & Administration,* vol. 1, no. 2, 2011, pg. 189.

[25] Ibid, pg. 190.

knows of their occurrence?"[26] Thus, the *"unlikely"[27]* realisation of meaning is integral to *'Dear Reader;',* which asks the Reader to think; autonomously, personally, and of their own accord.

From playfulness emerged a Major Work unbound by form and self-reflexive in nature. *'Dear Reader;'* is divided into three closely related sections. Part I, *'The Writers' Symposium'* functions as an introduction to the Author-theory, followed by Part II, the *'Eulogy to the Postmodern Author'* which expounds on this theory through a Barthian critique of Ali Smith. Part III, comprises of two blog posts by 'The 21st Century Writer', addressing the Reader in an ironic reflection on Authorship. This use of blog posts becomes a subversive comment on the nature of writing in the 21st Century, in which every person finds a platform to contribute to discourse. Yet playfulness is most pertinent within the authorial intrusions, the 'tweets' or 'blog comments' that function as a reflexive contemplation of the work itself. Inspired by the concept of 'mimicry' explored in the Extension 1 English Common Module - Literary Worlds and Jean Baudrillard's 'simulacra'[28], I utilised intrusional comments to embody the lack of absolute meaning within the Author-debate, which is driven by personal conceptions of the Author. Despite each voice being grounded in reality, Barthes, Foucault, Rosenblatt and Smith, include elements of the fictional. However, as a distinguished writer in the 21st Century, I found Atwood's voice to be the most realistic, and challenging. Despite the fear of misrepresenting such a prominent figure, I reminded myself of my role as an experimenter, that I was merely *"wearing... a linguistic mask."[29]* This aligned with my experimentation of form, and maturation of my personal writing voice in the Advanced English Module C - Craft of Writing. Thus, Atwood's voice functions as an underlying comment on the changing notions of Authorship in the 21st Century. The flattening of hierarchical structures and the reduction of the *"single all-powerful storytelling authority"[30]* within Postmodernism is evident in the tweets, whereby

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[26] Major Work, pg. 22.
[27] R. Sharma & P. Chaudhary, 'Common Themes and Techniques of Postmodern Literature of Shakespeare', *International Journal of Educational Planning & Administration,* vol. 1, no. 2, 2011, pg. 190.
[28] Ibid, pg. 189.
[29] D. Felluga, 'Modules on Jameson: On Pastiche', *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory* [website], 31 Jan 2011, <https://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/theory/postmodernism/modules/jamesonpastiche.html>, accessed 29 June 2019.
[30] Ibid.

Margaret Atwood converses with *'The 21st Century Writer'; "@21centurywriter You underestimate the power of your Readers…"*[31]

My reading of *'Negotiating With the Dead'*[32] further characterised Atwood, as a modern explorer of the Author-Reader discourse. Therefore, what began as an expositional essay in my work transformed into an interview panel, *'The Writers' Symposium',* hosted by Atwood herself. This required extensive experimentation, as I pushed the maturation of my writing style. Each voice assumed a distinct identity: Barthes and Foucault engaged in an arrogant debate, Rosenblatt signified the 20th Century in which she resided, and Atwood, the intelligent yet witty voice that would guide the discussion; her curiosity matching that of the audience. While initial drafts lacked the vitality of human beings, the introduction of stage directions improved the readability and characterisation of each voice; *"[Margaret Atwood stands to face the audience, tapping her hand against her leg, she begins:]."*[33] Thus, almost of its own accord, playfulness emerged in the form of performance.

In Part II, I attempted to emulate the critical tone of Barthes' *'The Death of the Author',* implemented through the direct and indirect quotation of his original essay. The introduction replicates Barthes' consideration of *'Sarrasine'* by Balzac,[34] through introducing Smith's novel *'How to be Both'* with a series of questions; *"Who is speaking in this way?.... Is it the woman Smith, with her personal experience of artistry? Is it the Author Smith, expressing "literary" ideas of identity?"*[35] Through engaging with Barthes, *'Dear Reader;'* ironically resurrects the theorist, who observes the manifestation of his rhetoric. Atwood herself, comments of the fun of this in her tweet, *"Isn't Postmodernism such fun! Quite ironic really; Roland puts the Author to death yet he himself is resurrected before our eyes. But what is death for that matter, in the literary world?"*[36]

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[31] Major Work, pg. 18.
[32] Ibid, pg. 123.
[33] Major Work, pg. 6.
[34] R. Barthes, 'The Death of the Author'*, Aspen,* no. 5-7, 1967, pg. 1.
[35] Major Work, pg. 11.
[36] Major Work, pg. 15.

The Fictocriticism of Muecke, particularly *‘The Fall’* contains second person engagements with the audience, as *“you”*.[37] This added another voice to my work - an ironic ‘me’, or the archetypal ‘21st Century Writer’, who sits in the audience of the symposium, reads Barthes’ critique and then writes of her own accord. Addressing Atwood’s ‘Dear Reader’: the ideal, yet invisible Reader,[38] this writer asserts their authority as the omniscient Author; *“For, Dear Reader, every story is a creation that starts with the one who writes.”*[39] I struggled in my endeavour to create a character both arrogant and likeable, thus I employed notions of textual representation, as explored in the Extension 1 English Elective - Reimagined Worlds, generating an initially excitable character through whom the audience, may experience the symposium; *“I can’t believe I got a seat… this is the writer’s dream! #TWS2019”*[40] Through the use of irony, I instill the ignorance of ‘The 21st Century Writer’, who disregards the Author-theory in favour of an egotistical stance of personal authority; *“Exactly! This theory is interesting, but it simply doesn’t account for great writing, which always has an Author attributed. Thus, I aspire for the world to know my name, because if they do, I have created a masterpiece. #TWS2019”*[41] Through textual representations, I expose the potential arrogance and self-righteousness of writers in the 21st Century. When in the end, the writer cannot display their work as they have; *“reached the end of my limit, my word limit”*[42], I reinforce this critique, by suggesting that the writer’s obsession with theory stunts the creative process. Playfulness is used to *“awaken the academic reader to the present.”*[43]

‘Dear Reader;’ is a Fictocritical pastiche,[44] combining interview, essay, blog posts, tweets and epistolary forms, my Major Work involves *“the cannibalisation of all the styles of the past, the*

[37] S. Muecke, ‘The Fall: Fictocritical Writing’, *parallax,* vol. 8, no. 4, 2002, pg. 108-110.
[38] M. Atwood, ‘Communion: Nobody to Nobody’, *Negotiating with the Dead,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, pg. 134.
[39] Major Work, pg. 25.
[40] Ibid, pg. 2.
[41] Ibid, pg. 13.
[42] Ibid, pg. 27.
[43] J. Lindas, ‘Engaging with Postmodernism: An Examination of Literature and the Canon’, Undergraduate Honors Theses, University of Colorado, Boulder, 2013, pg. 29.
[44] D. Felluga, ‘Modules on Jameson: On Pastiche’, *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory* [website], 31 Jan 2011, <https://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/theory/postmodernism/modules/jamesonpastiche.html>, accessed 29 June 2019.

play of random stylistic allusion, and… the increasing primacy of the 'neo'".[45] For this reason, the intended audience of *'Dear Reader;'* are those engrossed in the literary world, perhaps a literature student, critic, or a real aspiring writer. Due to their multifaceted nature, a journal such as *'Granta'* or *'Kill Your Darlings'* would be a suitable platform for my Major Work; to ensure it reaches the 'ideal reader,'[46] one capable of recognizing it's Postmodern engagement. Yet, I hope *'Dear Reader;'* is accessible to all who appreciate the reading process, as a reminder that their role is favourable to the Author.

'Dear Reader;' is the product of perpetual revision, development and personal enlightenment, crucial to attaining an efficacious response. My final composition represents an amalgamation of ideas and experimentation with form; a year's worth of work that I believe satisfies my initial aim: to subvert the reign of the Author by dignifying the Reader, to present my personal plight as a Reader-come-writer.

<div align="center">...</div>

Yet, I must stop myself here, I have said too much already. Or have I said anything at all? Really, the purpose of my reflection statement is simply requirement; don't think too much of it!

If you thought *'Dear Reader;'* was about me, if you thought it was about the Author, the writer, the Reader or even the 21st Century; you are - not correct - but vindicated. But if you thought it was about you -

I'll leave that up to **you** to decide.

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[45] Ibid.
[46] M. Atwood, 'Communion: Nobody to Nobody', *Negotiating with the Dead,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, pg. 134.

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