ABSTRACT

EMILY JO SCHWALLER. Twilight Fans and Anti-Fans: The Layers of a Fading Fan Culture.

(Under the direction of Professor Jennifer Nolan.)

The collective voice of fandoms has created a symphony of online communities surrounding different cultural materials. Rather than rallying behind a sports team, these vocal “geeks” have cheered books, television series, and movies, creating spaces for people to come together to discuss, share, and develop concepts and ideas surrounding their favorite stories. Many of these fandoms surround different book series, notably Harry Potter, The Hunger Games, Percy Jackson,and Twilight. The rise of online fandoms and devoted readers has created a new reading culture, one that promotes community and embracing terms like “nerd.”

However, as zealous as these fans are, there is an opposite extreme of anti-fans who generate massive amounts of discourse about why they hate, love to hate, or oppose these texts, especially Twilight. My research originally sought to understand why a large group of anti-fans (those who oppose the text) generate so much discourse about the series and use it as a large part of their identity construction. However, after sifting through these online communities of fan and anti-fan sites, new questions emerged. Most significantly: what happens to a dying fan culture and its community when it no longer generates new discussion? And can anti-fans exist and function without their adamant fan counterparts? What happens when we notice various forms of anti-fans, whose experiences and dependency with the text vary? Although originally framed as an ethnographic study of the experiences of these anti-fans, my research became a look into Twilight’s fading fan cultures and the reconciliation and attempts to understand what happens to them when a series is essentially “over.”

Key words: fandom, reading culture, Twilight, digital communities