

Abstract

This thesis explores how the presence of authors on social media sites influences the way that fans perceive their work. The main goal of the analytical part was to determine, whether and primarily how the presence of an author on social media sites changes the relationships of readers with a complete (and therefore no longer open) text, as put forth by Roland Barthes in his *The Death of the Author* essay. The theoretical part of the thesis starts out by exploring the historical evolution of what an author is, differentiating between time periods and dominant theoretical approaches, with focus on postmodern authors such as Roland Barthes or Michel Foucault. The theory then focuses on the digital revolution, technological determinism and the rise of social media influence, including its impact on literary marketing and the concept of the celebrity author. Lastly, the theory summarizes studies that analyze the relationship between fan communities and current authors, specifically when it comes to the authors and their social media presence, focusing on the Harry Potter fan community and J. K. Rowling.

The analysis itself is done through looking at semi-structured interviews conducted with fans of the Harry Potter saga. The analysis begins with focusing on the early relationships of fans with the saga, their personal history with it, and then the analysis moves onto how fans perceive the presence of J.K. Rowling on social media and how this presence impacts their perception of her work. The main conclusion is that when it comes to the presence of J.K. Rowling on social media, most fans cannot separate her person and her work fully, and therefore project her person and statements onto the already complete work. Her continual additions to the closed canon also serve as a tool which keeps the work open for further interpretation in the eyes of the fans, which legitimizes their fan activities. *The Death of the Author* is a concept that the fans unknowingly use to try and deal with the aspects of her persona that they deem problematic or else as a selective tool that helps them only acknowledge the canonical addition that they enjoy. This practice is deliberate on part of many of the interviewees. Their main motivation was identified to be the determination to keep the Harry Potter saga pure/innocent in their own eyes, which ties into its special position as a formative work that they connect to their childhoods. Another important factor was power and the perception of distributing it to the author through the means of capital.

