

“I can make you a star”: Commodified Transmedia and its Effect on Young Adult Readers and Writers

Young adult literature has become the base of media empires, spawning much more than just bestsellers. This spectacle has had a huge impact on the way that big publishers pick, produce and market their YA titles. While the disastrous feedback loop of phenomenon like the “love triangle effect” have made criticized shockwaves in YA criticism, much less noise has been made on how big publishers are co-opting the online habits of their young adult readership to craft and propagate their new bestsellers. Mimicking the habits of these users also allows publishers to artificially hype a new release, creating a cultural object before it is even released.

However, the internet has also become a place where avid readers make their voices heard, as with the case of Sarah J. Maas. This has allowed a space for authors who are outside of the feedback loop to prove that their titles have a following and would therefore not be a monetary risk for publishers.

In this paper I explore some of the effects of commodification of YA literature and the online habits of teens that are being manipulated by big publishing houses to artificially create the next big franchise using the studies of Margaret Merga, Marianne Martens, Leonie Rutherford and others. While I contend that the feedback loop discourages innovation, I also hope to show how avid readers are using the corners of the internet to fight back.