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On books that sell 192-book study of the American YA fiction market showing particularly strong audience resonance in matters of race, gender and moral identity

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On Books that Sell:

192-Book Study of the American YA Fiction Market Showing Particularly Strong Audience Resonance in Matters of Race, Gender, and Moral Identity

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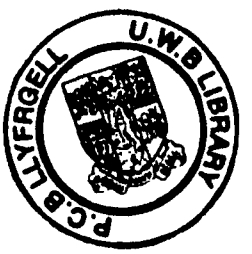

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A Narrative Dedication to Dr. Tyler J. Jarvis, My Old Calculus Professor

Early on in my PhD programme, all of the Creative Writing students were gathered into an ancient-seeming room. We sat at a very long table in chairs with very high backs. The air was musty—both too hot and too cold all at once. Faculty members sat calmly at one end of the table, while Graeme—my soon-to-be-advisor—paced up and down the room in his normal frantic way.

'Tell me...' He spoke in an Australian accent, but being utterly unfamiliar with accents and utterly unfamiliar with Wales, I thought that maybe he was English. 'What makes for a successful book?'

After a few moments of silence in which it became abundantly clear that Graeme wanted us to... *answer*... people began offering ideas.

'One that leaves you feeling fulfilled,' said a blonde woman from London. (She was, incidentally, married to a rock star.)

'One that's raucous and fun,' said a man from Scotland who looked equally as raucous and fun until he sighed and slumped in an obviously put-on despair as he said, 'Though I suppose you want me to say something about how it's lit'ary.'

There were a few more answers, and I could tell that there was one, possibly obvious, answer that no one seemed to be saying. I raised my hand, feeling tentative as I did because I half knew what would happen when I said it. Graeme called on me.

'Well...' My speech was halted as I began. 'I write young adult fiction... and YA is completely defined by rhetorical context... And if we look at it from a purely rhetorical stance... where you have the interactive relationship between the

author/audience/text... and you judge the value of the text based upon the success of the author/audience interaction...'

I closed my eyes.

'Then a successful book would be a book that... *sells*.'

One beat of silence.

And then least seven people erupted in protest.

One said something under her breath about 'American capitalists.'

Graeme got a wicked smile.

And I wondered: if authors want their books to sell (and most of us *do*), why do we all protest so loudly against the idea that the success or failure of a book has to do with the book, itself?

Simple answer, really: no one wants to be told they're rubbish.

Mix into that the fact that the sales of a book are ever so much more complicated than the quality of a book alone. We've all seen trash that hits the top of the charts. We've all read undiscovered gems.

What accounts for the difference?

Internalizing the protests of the room, my lingering questions about whether or not sales could be used as a measure of audience-resonance, and the wickedness of Graeme's smile, I decided that it might not be a bad thing to figure out.

The question: how?!

All of the theorists that I'd read up to that point seemed to approach the question deductively. There are certain *rules* of fiction: plot, characterization, action, pacing, etc. If you can quantify the rules, you can evaluate books based upon their adherence or departure from said rules. The problem with deductive thinking, of course, is that your ability to be right or wrong utterly depends upon how correct

your axioms and assumptions (i.e. rules) were in the first place. It's the problem noted by Stephen King when he proclaims that 'most books about writing are filled with bullshit' (King xvii). We might *think* we know why something is, but when we have to measure it against something as solidly quantitative as the marketplace, if we limit our theoretical frameworks to those that are largely deductive, we can't always make accurate predictions.

(Un?)Fortunately, however, before I began writing young adult (YA) fiction, I spent three years as an undergraduate engineering major—complete with hours upon hours spent in smelly laboratories wearing a stained lab coat with banana-shaped buttons. (The buttons seemed cool at the time.) My latent science instincts said that there might be a chance to make accurate predictions by utilizing something other than deduction. In other words, I'd have to look at books. I'd need a theoretical framework that allowed an *inductive* approach. Perhaps even one with a statistically-gathered sample, a blind process, a research procedure—i.e., one completely exhausting just to think about.

We creative writers aren't known for our affinity to the inductively procedural, but the idea that an inductive approach might be the one way to say something new, immediately applicable, and relatively conclusive on the subject of sales versus resonance, was something that I couldn't let go of. If I *really* wanted to know what makes a book sell, I was going to have to work within a theoretical framework that allowed a methodised observation of the book market. And that meant I was going to have to embrace the very thing I once rejected in favour of art: the scientific method.

[Go ahead and pause while we all shudder.]

The brilliance of the scientific method is the methodisation, itself. There is no making of pure guesses, no reliance upon emotion. And, ultimately, with the appropriate methodisation, you can study even emotion without becoming... well... emotional.

"Aw, crap." I thought to myself. "I might actually have to use that calculus I learned after all."

So that is why, Tyler, the critical portion of this thesis is dedicated to *you.*

Introduction to the Critical Portion of Thesis

Young Adult Fiction

The very definition of Young Adult Literature (or YA)—books that appeal to young adults, typically between the ages of 12 and 20—is one that requires a YA author to make consideration first and foremost of *audience* and *audience appeal*, a consideration that some might call a consideration of 'market.' It might seem, for example, that a book with a young protagonist (a textual trait) is likely to be YA; however there are many examples of adult books with young protagonists. Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (Kidd) or Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* (Sebold), to name a couple. It is whether the book with a young protagonist *appeals* to young people that makes the distinction. YA scholar and award-winning YA author, Chris Crowe, contends that YA literature is 'all genres of literature published since 1967 that are written for and marketed to young adults,' i.e. books that are '*intended* for teenagers' (Crowe, Young Adult Literature: What Is Young Adult Literature?, emphasis in original). But in fact, the definition may be even more narrow than this. Both Stephenie Meyer, author of the Blockbusting *Twilight,* and Shannon Hale, Newbury-Honour-winning author of *Princess Academy* and *The Goose Girl*, wrote and submitted their first manuscripts as adult books; it was their literary agents who decided to sell the books as YA (Hale)(Rabb 1). *New York Times* author, Margo Rabb, asserts that 'What makes a book YA is not so much what makes it as who makes it—and the "who" is the marketing department' (1). Chris Crow

agrees, saying that the YA label, itself, is something that 'exists mostly for marketing' (Crowe, The Problem With YA Literature 146).

Some writing scholars have objected to this connection between marketing and genre ontology as a sort of desecration. Jacqueline Rose's 1984 work, *The Case of Peter Pan or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, argues that 'there is no child behind the category "children's fiction," other than the child the category itself sets in place, the one to which it needs to believe is there for its own purposes' (E. Marshall 261). And such sentiment is not limited to the academy. It is not surprising to find in popular sources statements about stories intended for young people that mirror the opinions of *Entertainment Weekly's* Owen Gleiberman who bemoans a recent children's movie, 'Will kids eat up this cutely fractious claptrap? Of course they will. They'll eat up whatever you put in front of them' (58).

Are the critics right? Are young people devoid of their own opinions when it comes to literature? Will *any* bit of 'claptrap' succeed, provided it is marketed sufficiently? Are the gems of YA lit (and there are gems) valuable to the audience *only* if they are marketed like *Gossip Girl*?

This question is complicated, of course, by the fact that the buying market for YA literature is more mixed than the buying market for children's literature. Firstly, the book may or may not be read by young adults. In spite of assertions that 'Young people will find an adult book, but it doesn't work the other way' (Rabb 2), cases like Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (Meyer) and J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* (Rowling) have bolstered the idea that adult-appeal for a YA book can make a seller a mega-seller.

Secondly, while YA is often seen as a constituent of the children's market and children do not usually buy their own books, young adults may be more like

adults in that they may make more of their own purchasing decisions than younger audiences. But, nevertheless, they are probably still more prone than adults to have some of their decisions hijacked by well-meaning others like teachers, parents, and librarians. So when it comes to the *purchase* of a book, who is the most important to the marketers? Parents? Teachers? Librarians? Teens?

Regardless of who buys the books, a definitional assumption for YA Lit appears to be that young adults will be the primary audience. And there is some evidence that teens are reading as much, or even more, than they ever have. Teenreads.com, for example, gets more than 230,000 visitors a month and has a healthy Facebook following (Fitzgerald). In 2008 alone, while the rest of publishing floundered, sales of YA spiked 25% (Reno 1). Jim Milliot notes that of the 22.2 million teens in the U.S. (in 2007), 13.4 million are book buyers (Milliot, Looking At Who Buys What Where: Examining Book Consumers With Bowker's Pub Track). And finally, in this study's auxiliary library search of 37 libraries, more than 11,000 copies of the 192 sample books were checked out at the time of our inquiry (see appendix).

So while it could be argued that the category, YA, may have been created to serve a marketing purpose, there may nevertheless be a *real* purpose—one that should be considered in any critical examination of the literature therein.

With such a close interweaving between market and genre, questions about audience perception and opinion become central to an understanding of the field. Critical opinion on books may vary, but ultimately, 'adult readers are not the intended audience' (Glenn 35) and the final word on YA books comes, for good or ill, from young adults—from the *market.* The idea is so fundamental for writers of the genre, it could be said that it is very nearly one of the artistic 'rules' of the form.

Indeed, failure to follow this 'rule' may result in the re-shelving of a book to another genre. If a book does not appeal to young people, it is unlikely to be termed young adult fiction.

YA writers, then, have something of a choice to make: do I write for my audience? Or do I write for myself? And if I write for myself, am I a YA author? The conflict is not much different from that faced by *any* writer who wishes to publish—publishing is a profit-based industry after all, and it's the audience who wields the purse strings.

But who decides appeal?

Are young people's opinions swayed predominately by the whims of the marketers? Or are there consistent, quantifiable textual components to appeal?

The questions are interesting simply for the sake of casual inquiry and may even have larger applications to the field of creative writing, but when attempting to write the creative portion of this thesis—my YA novel, *Secrets of the Mami Wata*—they took on a greater urgency. If I want to be an author who works in the market, who do I write for? Do I write to impress the marketers who will sell the book? Or do I write to the *teens* who will (presumably) read it? While on the surface the answer seems obvious (writers typically write to *readers,* not marketers), is it naive to think that the intended audience will be primarily responsible for its market success or failure?

This study was designed to investigate this question.

The YA Fiction Market

The following study is a quantitative, statistical look at sales-based YA audience *resonance,* as indicated by both sales scores *adjusted* for marketing, and the sales scores of books that can be demonstrated to have performed *contrary* to the expectations of their marketing. This approach assumes that sales is both a function of book quality and book marketing; the term 'resonance,' is used as a proxy for the characteristics of successful books that cannot be attributed solely to marketing. In the world of the market, a 'resonant' book is, thus, one whose content appears to drive sales more than its marketing. A simplistic (but useful for conceptual purposes) formula to define resonance quantitatively is thus:

Resonance = Sales - Marketing

The intention of this study is first to identify the extent of marketing influence on book sales, and second to identify internal aspects of the sample fiction that seem to have connection to increased appeal—i.e. principles of resonance.

The opposite of resonance, 'dissonance,' is used to describe internal book characteristics that are related to a negative reaction or even rejection of a text. 'Dissonant' books would then be books whose resonance levels are indicative of books whose sales do not meet the expectations of their marketing.

Resonance (along with its opposite, dissonance) is what I understand to be the driving force behind academic ideas like those of Joseph Campbell's 'Hero Cycle' or Christopher Booker's *Seven Basic Plots.* Campbell claims that resonant stories are 'truth disguised' (vii) and Booker asserts that the sameness of stories is related to the fundamental question of '*why* we tell stories' (541, emphasis added), both theorists seeming to build upon assumptions of deep connection between audience, spirit, and

storytelling. And while Campbell, for example, has been criticized for his assertion that his proposed principles of resonance are universal when they are more likely the principles of resonance for a particular privileged group (as will later be discussed in detail), I, as a writer interested in appealing to an audience, cannot help but wonder whether or not there is any nugget of truth to his assertions.

Are there quantifiable and/or qualifiable principles of resonance? Textual traits that drive sales beyond the confines of marketing? And if so, what are they and can I apply them to my creative work?

On the Choice of an Inductive Approach with a Randomized Sample and Quantitative/Statistical Methodology

There are innumerable ways to address the question of what makes for good literature. Even in narrowing down to the relatively small focus of this study—a consideration of how literature appeals and sells to a young audience (specifically for the purposes of composing the YA novel presented in the creative portion of the thesis)—there are still myriad possible approaches. As noted, much of existing scholarship on YA is deductive in nature—that is, seems to evaluate literature based upon pre-existing theoretical frameworks. For example, in 'Are They Reading Us? Feminist Teenage Fiction,' Julia Bard looks at YA through feminism (Bard). In 'Young Adult Realism: Conventions, Narrators, and Readers,' Catherine Sheldrick Ross compares YA to the Cawelti concept of culturally-centred 'literary formula' (174). In 'Young Adult Literature: Finding Common Ground: Multicultural YA [...]' Chris Crowe looks at YA through the lens of race (124). And there are hundreds of articles that look at YA from the theoretical frameworks of pedagogy and education.

But however useful and/or informative existing deductive approaches are, I need to be able to use the results of critical inquiry in order to *write a YA novel*—and more than that, one that is intended to function in the market. As deductive analysis depends entirely upon the validity of primary axiomatic assumptions, unless the axiomatic assumptions of the chosen theoretical framework have close ties to the market (and I am not aware of any existing literary theoretical frameworks that do), it is not entirely practical to try deductive method after deductive method and to only then evaluate the validity of the theoretical foundation of each method. Indeed, it's the fundamentally pragmatic nature of needing to *write a book* that's behind my choice of a primarily *inductive* approach. Instead of beginning from theoretical constructs and moving then to textual evaluation, a sample of books—resonant, dissonant, and all levels in between—from the YA book population will be examined in a manner that is separate from pre-existing theoretical constructs. The traits of the sample might then be used to form new constructs from which to proceed. While the exercise may yield larger implications, the primary objective is to inform the creation of a text—specifically, the novel presented in the creative portion of the thesis.

In choosing to proceed inductively, a randomized sample becomes fundamental to the reliability of the outcome. Furthermore, a randomized sample provides one of the best ways to begin to decipher how principles of resonance, if they exist, can be integrated into creative work—especially work intended for the marketplace.

The reason behind the choice of a random sample is also one of the primary tenants of statistical epistemology, which will be addressed next: random samples mitigate the risk of skew. And while there is, in fact, scholarship that proceeds inductively in that it looks directly at YA lit in order to establish theoretical

frameworks, such scholarship may provide self-selected samples of titles and is, therefore, not only inconsistent with statistical norms, but subject to authorial skew. For example, consider Chris Crowe's 'Young Adult Literature: An Antidote for Testosterone Poisoning: YA Books Girls—and Boys—Should Read' (Crowe), Elizabeth Marshall's 'Stripping for the Wolf: Rethinking Representations of Gender in Children's Literature' (E. Marshall), and Wendy Glenn's 'Gossiping Girls, Insider Boys, A-List Achievement: Examining and Exposing Young Adult Novels Consumed by Conspicuous Consumption'(Glenn). All of these articles—and their quality is not disputed—present a sample of YA books to back up their argument and, in this way, they proceed inductively. But, due to the sheer quantity of books available for young adults (many good, many rubbish), a theorist is going to be able to find a sample of books to support any argument no matter what it is; any *overall* summation of YA literature that doesn't consider the totality of the genre is going to be skewed toward the preconceptions and prejudices of the one who compiled the sample. While this is not a problem for theorists who *wish* to look at literature through distinct lenses—indeed, it may be *useful* in such cases—it is not necessarily useful to the YA writer who is using the ideas to produce a text. And even less so to the writer who wishes to embark upon her (the vast majority of YA authors are female) endeavour with an informed opinion about exactly who it is she's addressing and how they wish to be addressed in the particular setting of the marketplace.

Representative—i.e. non-skewed—inductive methodology requires either the use of an entire population, or, alternatively, a random sample of sufficient size taken from within the population. In other words, it functions within statistical epistemology. As the entire population of YA books is vast, by randomizing the sample of books examined within the population, it is possible to avoid reading only

books that confirm preconceived notions. Most people (myself included) are deeply susceptible to sample self-selection that reinforces preconceived notions, thus attempting to approach the topic in a comprehensive way like Christopher Booker in his *The Seven Basic Plots* is not only impractical for the particular research aims of this thesis in terms of time—Booker spent more than half a lifetime compiling his research and such a timeframe is impractical in the PhD setting—but may ultimately yield results whose usefulness and/or applicability to the market setting is completely dependent upon *how* comprehensive, i.e. not susceptible to sample skew because it indeed represents an entire population, the sample ends up being. (And as there are hundreds of new YA books published every year, true comprehensiveness would be impossible, even if attempted.) To paraphrase an old statistics professor of mine, if you are going to study ice cream and you eat 200 flavours of chocolate ice cream, you won't be able to say anything about strawberry ice cream—even if you increased the size of the sample to 400 different flavours of chocolate ice cream. What we see depends utterly upon what we look at.

By ensuring that the sample is sufficiently random, I can ensure that it is sufficiently representative and the more representative the sample, the more practical the results gleaned from it.

In addition to the choice of a randomized sample, the choice of a quantitative/statistical methodology is a simple one. In order to attempt to find out something about resonance, there needs to be way to separate a book's marketing from its content. And the language of marketing is quantitative and statistical. For example, the marketers at Amazon and other online book retailers utilize algorithms—quantitative, not qualitative—to predict taste in their market. These algorithms can take seemingly daunting forms, e.g.:

$$U_{iqt} = \Gamma_{i,s\{iqt\}} X_{i,q,t-1} + \Phi_{i,s\{iqt\}} U_{iq,t-1} + \varepsilon_{iqt,s\{iqt\}},\ \varepsilon_{iqt,s\{iqt\}} \sim MVN\ (0, \Sigma_{s\{iqt\}}),$$

(Montgomery 585)

The key fact to note for this study's methodology is that, however daunting the form, it is fundamentally quantitative. When it comes to the marketplace, humans tend to behave in predictable ways. They follow what marketing analyst Robert Heiner calls 'behavioural rules' (Heiner 561). It is obviously of great benefit to writers—especially writers whose genre is defined by the market—to attempt to understand how and why these 'behavioural rules' apply to writing and the writing market.

A quantitative/statistical, controlled-sample, inductive study provides the best chance at understanding the fundamental connections between the *resonant* and the *marketed*, and, thus, provide me with the tools needed to inform the creation of a creative text intended for the marketplace.

Limitations of Study

Any study, of course, has limitations and this study is no exception, in spite of efforts to mitigate shortfalls whenever possible.

Firstly, whenever talking about a creating sample of books, certain parameters must be established for the population—time period, geography, genre, etc. For the reasons outlined later, this study is limited to a population of YA books from the relative present (2003-2008) and from the U.S. publishing market.

Secondly, the aims and scope of the study were wont to cause certain logistical problems. An attempt was made to address and mitigate these problems whenever possible, though any effort could not plausibly be completely flawless.

For example, the issue of consistency. As I am interested in a direct application of the critical conclusions to my own creative work, it makes the most sense for me to personally be the one to examine all books studied. However, with more than two hundred books to be read by the end of the study and with my own book reading speed capped at about five to seven books per week, logistics required the utilization of readers in addition to myself. Thus, thirty-six volunteers were recruited to read, largely without compensation (except for the promise of a single cupcake per book read), about 100 of the sample books. But do the 36 recruited volunteers evaluate texts in a fundamentally different way than I do? Do the volunteers evaluate texts differently from each other? And if so, could the data be skewed by the fact that half of the books were evaluated by a single person? In an attempt to mitigate the effects of this kind of skewing, the books that I read were carefully chosen so as to represent the most statistically influential/important books, while volunteers were asked to read books less likely to be of statistical importance. Does this completely address the problem of consistency? Probably not, and this should be noted.

Consistency, itself, causes some problems, however: most notably the problem of blindness. As the desire to apply results directly applicable to my own creative work mandated that I personally read as many of the sample books as possible, of necessity half of the sample then had to be evaluated by the same person who created the marketing/sales rubrics. Ultimately, there were bound to be certain times when true objectivity, let alone blindness—even if attempted—was not entirely

possible. There was no way to hide all indications of a book's receipt of marketing attention or author's previous readership without, for instance, removing the covers or other promotional or advertising copy which would have been cost-prohibitive and logistically implausible. A book might have on its cover or supplemental pages 'The *New York Times* Bestselling Author,' for example, providing clues about how the marketing of the book was initially scored, even if the data was kept separate from the evaluation process. And though such clues led to guesses that tended to be wrong as often as they were right (as demonstrated in the exercise later outlined), it is likely impossible to keep *all* preconceived notions out of the evaluation process, and, though the exercised method was the best way to provide me, as a writer, the experience and knowledge required to apply the results of this critical inquiry to *my own* work, perhaps others, who wish to use the results for application elsewhere, should take issues of blindness into account when looking at some of the weaker findings. (I expect, however, that the study was blind *enough* that the very strong findings will still stand in spite of logistical difficulties.)

Finally, quantitative measures allow the demonstration of correlation, but not causality (though they do not necessarily *rule out* causality). For example, the study discovers that books that contain racially offensive subject matter are more likely to sell than books that don't. Does this mean that being racially offensive is more appealing? A more probable explanation seems to be the possibility that books with racially offensive material are likely to have issues of race as a driving plot factor which is even *more* strongly linked to increased resonance. Even a very strong correlation between two variables does not ensure that there is not a third (or fourth or fifth) unknown variable that is the *cause* of the correlation.

Thus, interpreting study results with regard to the actual *creation* of YA fiction is more complicated than scanning through the lists of traits found to correspond with increased resonance and reproducing them verbatim in a creative work. It is the larger patterns that are important for interpretation. As the study's statistical advisor, Dr. Natalie Blades of Brigham Young University (ironically?) puts it, it's the 'story' the numbers tell that's important. Instead of looking at any one result and trying to draw conclusions, it's better to look at the overall picture of what might be going on across the sample.

Following is an outline of the specifics of the study.

Quick View: Outline of Study

Abstract

In order to determine the extent of book marketing on book sales and the principles of resonance that may be linked to sales beyond that predicted by marketing, a demonstrably random sample of 192 books from the population of Young Adult (YA) books available from 2003-2008 in the national U.S. market were scored with estimations of marketing influence and total sales. Three data analysis methods were used: first, a consideration of simple linear regression and variable correlation, termed the 'linear' method; second and third, the 'difference' and 'quadrant' methods, in which books with sales beyond what was predicted by their marketing scores were compared against books with sales below what was predicted by their marketing scores. In the 'difference' and 'quadrant' methods (the differentiation between the two methods will be discussed in detail later), statistically significant differences between the 'beyond' and 'below' sets of books were established as possible points of resonance or dissonance—i.e., key aspects of audience appeal or distaste. These aspects were then compared to the initial results from the 'linear' method and probable patterns of resonance were established. These patterns had important implications pertaining to issues of race, gender, and the belief-systems particular to teenagers. The nine main patterns established were: patterns of meaning/sophistication, patterns of emotion, patterns of estrangement, self-importance, gender, race, socioeconomic status and divine potential.

Three auxiliary studies were conducted first to identify the extent of cover-likeability as it pertained to sales, next to establish that young adults (and not their parents or other adults) accounted for the majority of resonance points observed, and finally to estimate the overall effectiveness of self-promotion among authors. Results indicated that cover likeability may increase sales by up to 14.5%, that young adults can reasonably be assumed to be the primary readers of texts, and that author self-promotion is not significantly connected to increased sales.

As a final exercise, the list of possible principles of resonance was used to evaluate the publishing industry's effectiveness at assigning marketing/promotion. Numbers indicate that publisher book marketing is disconnected with principles connected to sales somewhere between 3% and 55% of the time and a more accurate estimate may not be possible without another study.

The results of the initial study and the auxiliary studies were used in order to inform the creation of the novel presented in the creative portion of the thesis, *Secrets of the Mami Wata.*

Outcome Variables: Marketing and Sales Scores

In order to be able to factor out the effect of marketing/promotion on a book's sales, each book was given a marketing score and a sales score. The marketing score was calculated based upon the following criteria: 1) the actual price paid to the author for initial rights; 2) how many additional books the publisher committed to publish in the initial deal; 3) whether or not there was a bidding war among publishers that either ended in an auction or was circumvented through a pre-empt; 4) the relative fame and/or reputation of the author; 5) whether or not *School Library Journal* or *Booklist* (two of the most influential reviewers of YA fiction) gave a starred review; 6) Whether or not one of 50 major review sources gave the book a full-length positive review; and 7) whether or not there was potential for 'carryover,' e.g. books about vampires published shortly after the success of *Twilight.*

In order to make an estimate of sales, the following three variables were considered: 1) The book's Amazon ranking compared to how many standard deviations from the mean for the book's year of publication[1] ; 2) The book's BN.com rankings[2]; 3) The number of weeks the book spent on each of thirteen bestseller lists tracked by the PM database.[3]

When each book had a marketing and a sales score, the Pearson's Relationship Coefficient of the marketing-sales relationship was calculated to be 0.6, indicating a moderately strong linear relationship between marketing and sales. Linear regression provides the formula:

$$S = 0.63M + 2.58$$

By comparing residuals, assembling quadrants of sales vs. marketing, and considering differences between sales and marketing scores, the data were assembled into three basic categories: books that sold better than their marketing predicted, books that sold worse than their marketing predicted, and books that sold as their marketing predicted.

Independent Variables

Each of the 192 books was analyzed based on 150+ questions pertaining to plot, literary merit, morality, race, gender, and other categories of interest to YA

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1 This ranking was compared on two separate dates and then averaged. When there were multiple editions of a book, the highest ranking was recorded.

2 Also in factors of standard deviations from the mean for the year of publication, also averaged on the same two dates and favoring the highest ranking for each book.

3 It would have been preferable to use the point-of-sale data provided by Neilson Bookscan—a data source that has fundamentally changed the business of publishing. However, as we were unable to get Neilson to return our calls, we made due with sales estimations that, though not as good as Bookscan's, nevertheless give us a good enough idea about sales to draw useful conclusions.

authors. The aim was to identify book traits that may result in greater audience resonance/dissonance—specifically looking for important patterns of appeal and distaste.

Auxiliary Study One: Cover Likeability

149 students from a California high school (chosen because its demographics were analogous to the U.S. population at large) were shown pictures of each of the book covers from the sample. They were asked to quickly score each picture on a scale of 1-5, with lower scores corresponding to distaste. The average cover-likeability scores of books that performed better than their marketing predicted were compared to books that performed worse than their marketing predicted. Books that sold better than their marketing predicted had a cover-likeability score 11% (+/- 5%) higher than books that sold worse than their marketing predicted. This difference seems to be largely driven by the opinions of girls. When split into gender groups, the girls' cover-likeability scores for books that sold better than predicted were 14.5% (+/- 6.5%) higher than books that sold worse than predicted. The boys' responses showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups of books. The data indicates that a likeable book cover seems to help sales, but only if it appeals to girls. Considering that the vast majority of the YA fiction audience is female, this is expected.

Auxiliary Study Two: Library Data

In order to confirm that young adults were the ones primarily responsible for the purchase of YA books and, thus, that any data about trait resonance corresponded with young adult (as opposed to adult/parental) taste, 37 libraries from around the country were sampled. From each library the following was recorded: the number of each of the 192 books that the library stocked and the number of copies of those books checked out. The reasoning was that librarians (adults) were responsible for the stocking of books, and that books checked out were more likely to be checked out by young adults, themselves, than by their parents or other adults. The results showed a close correlation between all relevant groups. The number of books stocked mirrored the number of books checked out and both of these mirrored the number of books sold, indicating that divergent audiences of YA lit (teens, parents, librarians) either do not appear to have fundamentally different tastes or that all groups defer to the taste of the young adult reader.

Auxiliary Study Three: Effectiveness of Self-Promotion

An attempt was made to contact all authors of each of the study's 192 books. Authors were asked to rate the amount of time they spent on self-promotion as (0) none; (1) a little; (2) a moderate amount; or (3) a lot. Additionally, records were made about whether or not authors maintained blogs or book web sites. Self-Marketing scores were compared with sales. There did not appear to be a statistically significant relationship between sales and either web presence or self-reported self-promotion, though a more detailed study may be warranted to confirm these findings.

Final Results

Though the size of initial marketing was, by far, the strongest predictor of sales, results identified 36 distinct book characteristics that were linked to audience resonance/dissonance in all three data schemes ('linear,' 'difference,' and 'quadrant') and 117 characteristics that were linked to resonance/dissonance in at least one data scheme. The results had both gender and racial implications—audiences typically responding more favourably to books with female plot lines and diverse racial frameworks. Likewise, the results indicated that teens have strong belief systems, preferring, for example, 'deep' books, books that ask 'big' questions, and books that are more serious than comic. General writing traits were considered as well, notably with first person present tense narratives scoring higher than third person past tense narratives. Surprisingly, both originality and author writing skill were not linked to resonance in any of the data schemes.

Overall analysis indicates that many traits of resonance/dissonance may be linked to a mismatch between products and market demographics. As an example, only 5% of the books in the study featured a non-white protagonist while about 44% of the under-18 population in the U.S. is non-white. This demographic mismatch may be why books with non-white protagonists tend to sell better than their marketing predicts they should.

The nine main patterns of resonance established were: patterns of meaning/sophistication, emotion, estrangement, self-importance, gender, race, socioeconomic status, and divine potential.

These results were synthesized and the 'patterns of resonance' established were used to inform the creation of *Secrets of the Mami Wata.*

Part One: Research Procedure

Methodology

Having established the reasoning behind the non-traditional method of approaching the question of YA resonance quantitatively/statistically, inductively, and in such a way that utilizes market data, the next step is to outline the procedure for accomplishing the study, which will roughly take the form of the traditional scientific method.

All of us have a general understanding about what the scientific method looks like, but due to the general unfamiliarity with the quantitative in creative circles, this study will lay out the methodology in a more detailed and/or informal way than is typical. (Apologies to scientists.)

Traditional scientific methodology follows a series of steps that allow for methodical observation. For this study, the steps look like the following:

Step One: formulate a question. For example, 'What makes a book sell?'

Step Two: make a hypothesis. For example, 'I don't know; that's why I'm doing this. The plot, maybe?' (As the establishment of a hypothesis is essentially a deductive process, since it requires the knowledge of established theories, the inability to establish a more concrete hypothesis is not necessarily problematic.)

Step Three: formulate a means of testing the hypothesis. Which means a sample of books is needed. Which is more complicated than it might seem.

Which is going to take a while to explain.

Gathering a Sample

On Ensuring Appropriate Randomness

One of the biggest tasks in looking at the question of book sales inductively is the task of assembling a good sample from within a defined population. The biggest risk, as previously mentioned, is the risk of *skew*.

As discussed in the introduction, Campbell, Booker, and other major theorists assembled their theories based upon their readings of literally thousands of books and stories. Their kind of work is not only the kind of work that takes a lifetime, but whose *market*-applicability depends entirely upon how random (or, alternately, how comprehensive) the samples of books used ends up being.

A reader may have read a thousand books, but if they were only books that were astronomical bestsellers, books received as gifts, or books about crime/romance/aliens/vampires/etc., they won't necessarily be able to say something about *all* books in the market.

That kind of assessment and generalizability requires a *random* sample.

This study will not argue that Booker's or Campbell's samples weren't random, useful, or applicable—that would be an entirely different argument for an entirely different thesis. After all, Campbell's work was done in the first half of the 20th century and Booker's work, while more current, looks at stories in general, not at the specific relationship between sales and resonance. Indeed, both pieces of scholarship are seminal, foundational, and of a far-reaching scope—much more far-reaching than is possible within the span of a PhD programme, though the span of a

PhD programme is of perfect length to consider a different, more narrow, question. The question of randomness simply becomes terribly important when establishing a sample for a more narrow study about the YA book population.

On Narrowing the Sample

In order to get the kind of random sample that is workable, a few things about the statistical population must be narrowed down.

First, the geography. While it might be desirable to say something about book resonance and book sales in the world at large, that task is far beyond the scope of this thesis and the geographic market is among the traits that will need to be narrowed down. As I am primarily concerned with utilizing these critical explorations in my own creative work, and as I write and live primarily in the United States, the focus of this study is on that geographical market. While there may be cultural differences due to this narrowing, they will tend toward the purposes required for my own creative endeavour.

Next, the category. Comparing a picture book to a cookbook to a novel would be of limited use. So, again, population narrowing is done in favour of my primary creative work: YA novels. Further investigations of other genres—nonfiction, short stories, journalism, etc.—is recommended for other researchers who wish to answer questions about those genres.

Finally, the time period. As a writer working in the *current* market, a connection between critical and creative endeavour is best approached by examining the current market. Other researchers may wish to examine markets in earlier (or later) time periods as desired.

To conclude, the population focus of this study is on YA novels published in the current (specifically 2003-2008) United States book market.

The next obstacle is to account for the problem of marketing and promotion.

The Problem of Marketing

If a book fails to sell, is it because of the book? Or is it because the book hasn't been marketed? Authors who have had trouble with sales will likely favour the latter, and the idea makes sense: no matter what NYC agent Donald Maass tells us about the disconnect between promotion and sales (Maass 23-25), it seems intuitive that well-marketed books will generally sell more copies than non-marketed ones. But is a good book destined to sell *only* if it is well marketed? In his book, *How to Write Bestselling Fiction*, Dean Koontz—a bestselling author, himself—argues that 'not all popular novelists are good, but all good novelists are, sooner or later, popular' (13). Is he right?

First off, there is the question of what's meant by the term 'marketing.' Although the term 'marketing' indicates the relatively broad concept of getting the right product to the right person, a typical writer will generally consider 'marketing' to be a process that is *external* to a book. It is promotion, advertising, book-hawking, word of mouth, buzz, media presence, a slurry of external factors that an author has little or no control over.

Because so many people understand 'marketing' in the former sense—marketing as external—when the term is used henceforth, it is used to indicate this sense. When it comes to the marriage between right product and right person, the term 'resonance' is more appropriate and indicative of in-text qualities that are separate from promotion.

And when it comes to the distinction between resonance and marketing, the most important question is, can they be untangled? Can it be determined if a book is selling because it is resonant or because it has been well-hawked? Is there a way to factor out the external marketing (which authors might not have control over) and identify internal book characteristics (which authors have a lot of control over) that sell? Or even to answer the question once and for all: are the only books that sell the books that are well promoted?

One of the oldest enduring ideas about marketing was written about in a 1976 article by Shelby Hunt published in the *Journal of Marketing*. Hunt's article contains the admonition that marketers should 'cease evaluating new products solely on the basis of whether they *can* be sold' and to focus instead on evaluating from the 'societal perspective, that is, *should* the product be sold' (18). This idea highlights a simple fact about marketing: it is a manipulation of audience resonance. Note the lack of denial that marketing involves manipulation, but also note the sense that in order for marketing to be effective, audience resonance *must* be present.

In other words, marketers believe that a product can be hawked to death, but if the product is genuinely bad, it will probably not sustain long-term sales.

In this way, marketing, itself, has remarkable similarity to the rhetorical situation. Instead of Audience-Author-Text, Consumer-Marketer-Product. The question this brings up is with regard to the admonition of selling what 'should' be sold. This 'should' leans more toward the moralistic—or possibly the resonant—than the capitalistic and, thus, enters a realm of subjectivity not as simple as the question 'will the product provide a financial return on investment.'

But is the author/marketer really entitled to decide *for* the audience what is resonant or not? What 'should' be sold? Or will the things that 'should not' be sold

lack resonance anyway rendering the debate moot? Who gets to decide the question of resonance? And why?

To test this, a determination must be made about the extent to which marketing has affected sales of particular books in a particular, randomized, population sample. Estimations of both marketing levels *and* sales levels then need to be compared against each other. The expectation is that books with a lot of marketing translate to books with a lot of sales—but is this expectation founded? If it's possible to identify books that succeeded *in spite* of likely having no marketing and books that have failed in spite of likely having *much* marketing, it may also be possible to ascertain something about the products, themselves—something about resonance. Books that perform contrary to expectations may be the very books that reveal how to break through the confines of expectation.

And if it's discovered that books which break the expectations of their marketing don't exist, an altogether different question has been answered.

But how can the extent of marketing be determined? And then how can that information be used to build a sample?

What is known is that, in general, for any particular book, marketing (again understood to be deliberate 'selling' efforts external to the reading experience) comes *primarily* from four sources: the publisher, the bookseller, the media, and the author.

Considering first the first and last sources—publishers and authors—we are confronted with an issue of scope. Because there are thousands of authors and only a handful (by comparison) of book publishers, it is more practical to look at the effect of publisher-originated marketing than author-originated marketing. Indeed, as the later chapter on author-driven marketing, i.e. self promotion, indicates, author-driven

marketing seems to have very little effect on overall sales. Publishers are likely in a much better position to provide marketing.

The bookseller as marketing-source also needs to be considered. While there are thousands of book retailers, a large segment of the market is dominated by a few sources. In 2009, major 'brick and mortar' booksellers, like Barnes and Noble, Borders, and Wal-Mart, accounted for 22% market share while Amazon alone accounted for 14% market share (Milliot, New Report Examines Book Market, Buyers), meaning that among thousands of booksellers, more than a third of the market is controlled by fewer than ten outlets. Indeed, Jim Milliot asserts that this difference is even starker among the teen market: 'Three major chains,' he says, 'accounted for 46.3% of all units bought by teens [in 2007]' (Milliot, Looking At Who Buys What Where: Examining Book Consumers With Bowker's Pub Track).

The media as marketing-source can similarly be narrowed down into major players. For example, in the world of YA fiction, a starred review in *The School Library Journal* (SLJ), may have more sway than a glowing review in the *Washington Post*, though both should possibly be considered.

But can one of these sources provide us with a good enough estimation to result in representative data?

If any can, it is likely to be the marketing provided by the publishers. Publishers are a connection point: authors, booksellers, and media are all likely to end up in (or in contact with) a publishing house at some point. Indeed, as will shortly be discussed, close collaboration with booksellers is what often allows publishers to calculate the size of advances and scope of marketing plans. And it is the dogged effort of publishers to get advance copies out to media sources that allows books to be reviewed in places like the *SLJ*. If there is a way to estimate the size of a

publisher's marketing plan, it is likely to result in the most representative estimate of marketing influence in general. A bookseller is unlikely to market a book that a publisher hasn't, and a review-source can't single out its favourites unless it has the books to begin with. Thus, publisher-as-marketer should figure the most prominently in an estimation of marketing efforts.

But do some kinds of publisher-originated marketing matter more than others? Possibly, but while it might be illuminating to go through all of the possible iterations of a marketing plan, my purpose is not to examine the effectiveness of specific types of marketing, but to estimate the general, relative, effect which total marketing might have on a book (and thus, might have on *my* book). That is, a *lot* of marketing versus *not a lot* marketing as opposed to *television campaigns* versus *contests or radio campaigns*.

The most effective body of data, however—the specific relative sizes of book marketing budgets—is a trade strategy of publishing houses and so is essentially unavailable. Because the revelation of trade secrets would have imperilled those petitioned, my personal attempts to call publishers and obtain this information were less than fruitful.

However, in my conversations with publishers, there were bits of general information—foundational assumptions—that publishers were willing to part with, provided they remained anonymous, of course. And these assumptions can, themselves, be used to make estimations about the relative size of marketing budgets.

1. A book that receives a high advance is going to have a higher marketing budget from the publisher. Likewise, representatives-from/liaisons-to big bookselling companies (like Barnes and Noble) are often present at the acquisitions meetings of big publishers. Thus,

the size of an author's advance is sometimes calculated by how many copies the big booksellers believe they can sell. The more copies of a book a bookseller believes they can sell, the more they will market that book, so the size of an author advance is an indicator of how large the marketing behind that book is likely to be.

2. The more books from a single author that a publisher commits to, the more likely the publisher has a vested interest in promoting the books. Intentionally unnamed editors from Harper Collins, Random House, and Bloomsbury said that what will often happen is that when a deal is made for multiple books, the marketing budget for future books will be channelled to the first book, thus allowing an author to make a bigger initial impression upon the market.
3. Books sold at auction or in pre-empts (when a publisher bids high enough to end an auction early) are more likely to have better marketing plans because the marketing plan will be produced as part of the persuasive package for the author.
4. Books written by people who are somehow famous—either celebrities, winners of big literary awards, authors who have previously been bestselling authors (e.g. Stephen King), authors connected with something famous (like a blockbuster movie, a show like 'Gossip Girls,' a huge news/media event like the polygamy raids in Texas or 9-11, etc.)—will not only sell more copies because of their built-in audience but will have access to better marketing from the publisher.

5. When a book starts to garner impressive reviews—particularly multiple starred reviews in various influential YA book-review sources like *School Library Journal* or *Booklist*—the publisher will devote more money to marketing it.

An appropriate sample then, would be a random sample of U.S. young adult novels for which estimations of all of the above criteria are possible.

(Un?)Fortunately, the internet is full of people who are willing to share what some would consider an unseemly amount about themselves. Indeed, authors often will report most of the above items to a database maintained by Publisher's Marketplace (PM).[4] The question is whether the books whose authors report such data tend to be different, in general, from books that do not. In other words, is looking only at the books in the Publisher's Marketplace database, essentially like eating only chocolate ice cream cones? Does the drawing of the sample from a self-selected (and, hence, possibly skewed) database essentially destroy chances of randomness?

Thus, the first feat is to determine a way to rule out such contamination for a specific sample of books from the database.

Sample Collection and Verification of Sample Randomness

Since the year 2000, the Publisher's Marketplace database (hereinafter PM), has tracked more than a thousand YA fiction deals. A search through the U.S. deals that reported either 1) the size of the book advance or 2) the presence of an

4 URL: www.publishersmarketplace.com

auction/pre-empt, ruling out all books that were not yet in print or whose Amazon rankings were more than five standard deviations from the mean (outliers), resulted in a sample of 213 books. As this number is relatively close to the number of books needed to assure statistical significance, drawing a random sample from within it was not possible—the entire population needed to be taken as a sample. Verification of sample randomness needed to be done external to the sample, itself.

With the help of Brigham Young University Statistics Professor Dr. Natalie Blades, it was reasoned that making a comparison between the Amazon sales rankings of these 213 books to a random sample of YA books published from the same time period may allow a determination of the extent of the statistical skew of the sample.

In cases of rank, statisticians generally prefer to use the median as a comparison point; however, because Amazon ranks all books together—not just YA books or adult books—the median might not be an accurate representation of how a particular YA book is performing *in relation to other YA books.* Andrew Wheeler, a blogging 'Book Marketer,' advocates relying on more subject-specific rankings as the non-specificity of the general ranking amounts to little more than 'reading tea-leaves' (Wheeler) and there is reason to heed this warning. However, because Amazon classifies YA literature along with 'children's' literature, simply using the more genre-specific Amazon coding does not necessarily solve this problem in this particular case. Instead of the median, it thus seems more appropriate to consider the *mean* rank with considerations made for standard deviations from the mean. In this way, skewing from other genres can be eliminated as we are essentially considering the typical variances from a genre-specific mean.

Also, because Amazon rankings tend to change over time, the sample was separated into the various years of publication—2003-2008.

In order to attain a random sample of young adult books from each time period, the words 'Young Adult' and the year of publication were input into Amazon's search engine. After throwing out all books that were not truly YA (books that might have had 'young adult' in the title, for example, even though they were intended for adults), books that were not novels, and books that had a sales rank more than five standard deviations from the mean (outliers), the remaining, random, sample was 230 books in size.

The mean ranks and standard deviations by year for both the random sample and the PM sample are as follows:

Random Sample

YEAR	MEAN RANK	STANDARD DEVIATION	# Of Books In Sample
2003	671,798	436,448	34
2004	467,758	437,222	28
2005	416,894	433,164	30
2006	496,640	449,973	37
2007	411,642	522,379	73
2008	204,472	305,081	28
ALL	444,867	430,711	230

PM Sample

YEAR	MEAN RANK	STANDARD DEVIATION	# Of Books In Sample
2003	287,700	32,746	2
2004	590,629	557,444	4
2005	484,062	446,283	11
2006	478,918	399,367	51
2007	444,929	399,688	95
2008	227,292	282,942	50
ALL	418,922	353,078	213

Figure 1: Mean Amazon Rankings for Random Sample and PM Sample

Note that the overall PM mean rank varies from the overall random mean by about 6% and the standard deviation varies by about 20%. Thus, while there may be slight sample contamination in the self-reporting PM sample (authors that market themselves via PM being possibly more likely to market themselves in other ways and, thus, slightly increase their sales? Or PM, itself, providing an extra bit of

promotion?), a probable conclusion is that the sample is *free enough* from contamination that it can be considered relatively representative and an examination of the books therein would reveal something useful and/or interesting about resonance in the market-setting. And while *complete* randomness may not be possible, I feel sure enough about the validity of the sample to apply resulting findings to my own creative work. And because the ultimate aim is to inform creative work (other applications of the data not ruled out, though secondary) the 213 books from the PM Database can be solidified as the study sample and the next task is to make an estimate of the size of marketing on particular books within the sample.

Making a Numerical Estimate of Marketing Influence

To estimate the size of marketing influence for the population sample of the 213 advance-size-classified or auction/pre-empt-specified books (every advance-classified/auction-specified/pre-empt-specified deal that has been reported to PM in the United States since 2000 in the Young Adult market), the following data was recorded from the deal reports:

1. The size of the advance paid to the author for rights.

   PM classifies the size of an advance according to five categories:

'Nice':	$1-$49,000
'Very Nice':	$50,000-$99,000
'Good':	$100,000- $250-000
'Significant':	$251,000-$499,000
'Major':	$500,000 and up

Figure 2: Deal Classification Legend

2. Whether or not the deal was an auction or a pre-empt.
3. How many books were part of the deal.

4. Whether or not the author was famous (previously bestselling authors and winners of major awards counted as famous), had a strong connection to something or someone famous, or had a built-in audience of some kind.

For reference, here is a sample PM deal report, as recorded on June 5, 2008 in the 'Debut Fiction' category:

> *Robert Rave's SPIN, about a young man from the Midwest who is hired by a public relations dynamo and soon finds himself struggling to balance his own reality with that of her glamorous, high-intensity world, to Sarah Lumnah at St. Martin's, in a very nice deal, in a pre-empt, in a two-book deal, by Jason Allen Ashlock at Marianne Strong Literary Agency.*

Figure 3: Example of a PM Deal Report

From this deal report, the 'very nice deal,' the 'pre-empt,' the 'two book deal,' and the fact that there was no mention of the debut author's relative fame (fame is something often/usually noted in PM deal reports and when it isn't, lack of fame can be confirmed through a Google search) were all recorded.

Though in the scoring system the above criteria were most heavily weighted as they are the best available clues about the publisher's marketing, it was also recorded whether or not the book received a full-length positive review in one of about 50 major review sources (as tracked by the PM database), a 'starred' review in the YA-influential *Booklist* or *School Library Journal* (as recorded by the books' Amazon pages), and whether or not there was any potential for 'carryover' sales—e.g. books about vampires that would be more likely to sell based on the success of the *Twilight* series. Additionally, if there were multiple published sources verifying

the unusual remarkability of author self-promotion—this only occurred in two or three cases—this fact was also noted.

Once these characteristics were recorded, the book was given a marketing score according to the following:

Allocation of Marketing points
Nice deal = one point
Very nice = two points
Good = three points
Significant = five points
Major = six points
Auction = one extra point (if no deal classification listed, assume 'nice')
Pre-empt = one extra point (if no deal classification listed, assume 'nice')
Multi-book deal = one extra point
Famous author = three extra points
Positive/starred reviews = one extra point per five reviews
Potential for 'carryover' = two extra points
Unusually remarkable self-promotion = one extra point

Figure 4: Marketing Score Point Allocation

Because the built-in audience for famous authors skips so many steps in the marketing process and because 'carryover' allows a book to borrow the marketing of another, highly successful, book/event/factor, the presence of these traits were more weighted than other extra traits.

It may not be possible to know with mathematical certainty the precise extent to which marketing has affected the sales of a book, but in this scoring system books with low scores are *likely* to have had very little marketing behind them, while books with high scores likely had a great deal of marketing behind them. Though there will be, undoubtedly, flaws/inaccuracies for specific individual books in this estimation,

by focusing attention on trends that occur on the average, useful information and tendencies should be identifiable.

A complete list of the initial marketing scores for each book is available in the appendix.

Making an Estimate of Sales Levels for Sample Books

Databases like Bookscan—a system maintained by the Neilson Corporation and used throughout publishing—have fundamentally changed the way that the publishing industry has worked by keeping track of point-of-sale data for millions of individual books. While it would have been preferable to use data from such a database, neither I, nor my institution, were able to gain the kind of access required for this research.[5] Considering the fact that Bookscan numbers are an estimation themselves, however—reporting only between 25% and 65% of the sales for any given book (Zeitchik)—this may be a surmountable obstacle. Indeed, in their Publisher's Weekly article, industry analysts Steven Zeitchik and Jim Milliot list Wal-Mart, many independent booksellers, and a large conglomeration of Christian booksellers as booksellers that don't report to Bookscan, concluding that, 'the only reliable thing you can say about book sales trackers is that none are fully reliable.' So while Bookscan is an undoubtedly integral force in the publishing industry, and while the inability to attain access to its databases is regrettable, existing public data is sufficient to make a useful, if not as accurate as is theoretically possible, estimation of how well a book has sold.

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5 A current working theory is that as they assumed we would not be able to pay their fee, returning our calls was not warranted.

The most readily tracked information publicly and easily available is that corresponding to online retailers. And while online retailers only represent a portion of the market, the portion is an increasingly dominant one. In May of 2008, Publisher's Weekly predicted that by 2009, online retailers would be the leading sellers of books in the United States accounting for more than 30% of the book market share (Milliot, E-tailer's Market Share Grows). And, in fact, in 2008 Amazon became the leading U.S. bookseller with its 14% market share surpassing that of Barnes and Noble (Milliot, New Report Examines Book Market, Buyers).

While relying primarily upon numbers of online sales could result in some skew, 1) the skew is likely to be toward a younger audience, and since this study is considering YA literature (literature written primarily for an audience between the ages of 12 and 20), this is not as much of a problem as it might otherwise be; and 2) the potential skew can be mitigated by also accounting for a book's appearance on any one of thirteen major bestseller lists as tracked by the Publisher's Marketplace database. As the large corporations that produce these lists have better access to Bookscan, identifying books that are named as 'bestsellers' will give an even rounding to the rest of the data.

Thus, in order to make an estimation of book sales, the following data were recorded:

1. The Amazon ranking as compared to approximately how many standard deviations from the mean for the book's year of publication. The rankings were recorded on two separate dates (22 May, 2008 and 29 July 2008) and averaged. When there were multiple editions of a book (i.e. paperbacks versus hardbacks) the higher ranking was recorded.

2. The BN.com ranking also in factors of standard deviations from the mean for the year of publication, averaged on the same two dates.
3. The number of weeks spent on each of thirteen bestseller lists, all tracked in the PM database. (Including NYT, WalMart, Publisher's Weekly and other major lists, all available through PM.)

The following is the score allocation used for the publishing year of 2008:

Allocation of Sales Points for 2008
if AM rank = >500,000: one point
if AM rank = 250,000 to 500,000: two points
if AM rank = 1,000-250,000: three points
if AM rank <1000: four points
if BN > 100,000: one extra point
if BN<100,000: two extra points
if BN = NA: 0 extra points
if BN = one NA and one value: 1 point
if on 1-5 bestseller lists in PM megatracker = 5 extra points
if 6-10 bestseller lists = 6 extra points
if 11-15 bestseller lists = 7 extra points
if >15 bestseller lists = 8 points

Figure 5: Sales Score Point Allocation

The scoring system for other years varied only in the location of the Amazon/BN.com ranking mean and the standard deviations from the mean. Note that the standard deviations were rounded for ease and that Amazon rankings were given more weight as Amazon is the behemoth of the online book-retail market (Milliot, As Amazon Soars, Bookstores Creep: Media Sales at the E-tailer Jumped 104% in Five Years; Bookstores up 3%). Also note that because major bestseller lists not only note higher sales, they also *drive* higher sales, the appearance on major lists bumped the sales estimation up significantly.

A full list of the sales scores for each individual book in the sample can be found in the appendix.

Plotting Sales Versus Marketing

Once each book had both a marketing score and a sales score, the sales versus marketing scores for all books were indexed into an (x, y) matrix.

Figure 6 is the scatter plot for this data set, with recurrent data points jittered to show frequency (the line in the centre is the linear regression function for the averages, which will be discussed immediately after the chart):

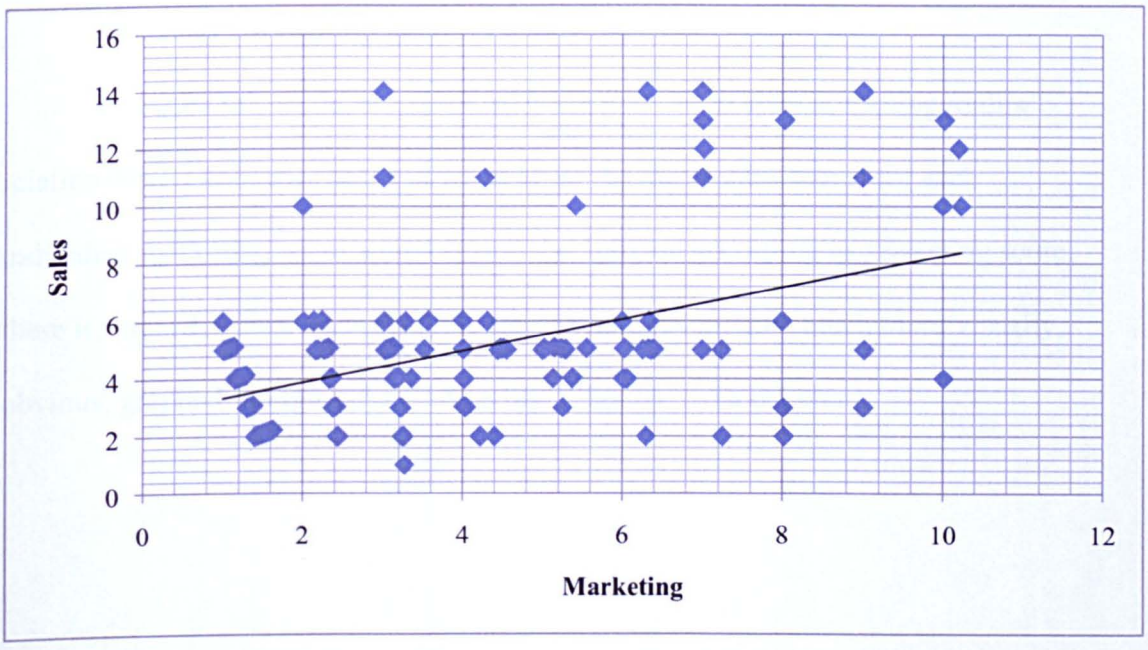

Figure 6: An Upward Trend with a lot of Variation

Due to the variation among individual book performances, a pattern indicating a relationship between marketing and sales is not immediately forthcoming through visual inspection. However by calculating the Pearson's Relationship Coefficient (PRC)—a measure that allows us to determine how likely a

linear relationship between two variables is—we arrive at a score of 0.6 indicating a moderately strong linear relationship. Though the Pearson's Relationship Coefficient does not allow us to rule out non-linear relationships, it does measure the extent to which one variable tends to increase as the other one does; the closer the score is to an absolute value of 1, the higher the probability that there is a linear relationship, though any score above 0.3 indicates that *some* sort of relationship is likely present.

With the likelihood of a linear relationship appearing solid, linear regression derives a sales/marketing relationship:

$$S = 0.63M + 2.58$$

(R-square for this regression is 0.34.)

But does this mean an individual book will sell exactly according to this relationship? Obviously not, but when all of the mean sales scores for each individual marketing score are taken and then plotted according to marketing score, there is, indeed, a clear and relatively linear relationship, now much more visually obvious, graphed in Figure 7 as both a line function and a bar chart:

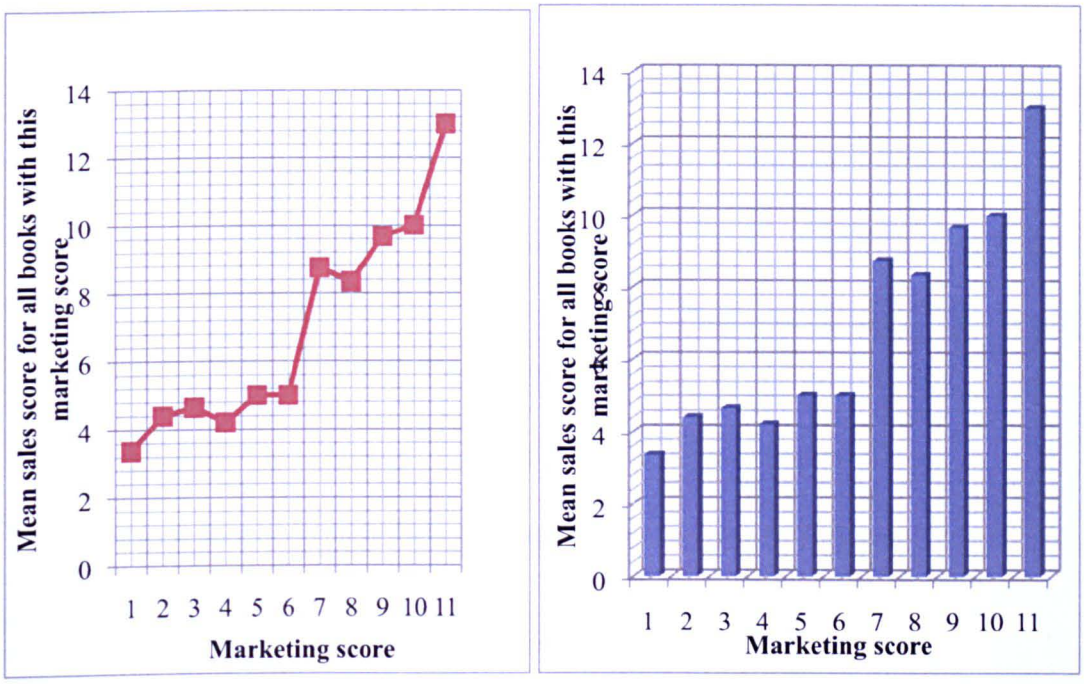

Figure 7: On the Average, As Marketing Increases, So Do Sales

This indicates that though the performance of individual books may vary, on the average a book can be expected to sell only as well as predicted by the size of the marketing score.

But, as noted by the frequency chart in Figure 8, the vast majority of books in the sample did not receive the kind of high-level marketing that results in mega-sellers:

Figure 8: Most Books Make Do With Comparatively Low Levels of Marketing

Because so few books in the sample received high marketing scores, the averages on the upper end of the spectrum are the least sure. Following is a chart noting the 95% confidence intervals for each point on the graph:

For a Marketing Score of:	Average Sales Scores:	Sample Size (Frequency)	StDevPop	95% Confidence Interval
1	3.31	59	1.17	0.30
2	4.27	26	1.70	0.65
3	4.59	36	2.25	0.73
4	4.64	22	1.94	0.81
5	4.94	18	1.75	0.81
6	5.01	15	1.65	0.84
7	8.67	4	3.77	3.70
8	8	4	5.52	5.41
9	9	2	4	5.54
10	10	5	3.35	2.93
12	13	1	0	NA*

Figure 9: Confidence Intervals by Mean Marketing Score

*For marketing score 12, a 95% confidence interval was not possible because there was only one book with such a score.

Interpreting the Data

Statisticians will tell you that for any dataset, there are literally thousands of ways to parse the numbers—each method providing a different view than the last. But as noted before, it's the overall *patterns* that are important. One number or another may or may not mean anything by itself, but patterns that repeat and assert themselves in different data parsings may be saying something.

By far the simplest method of interpreting the data is to calculate residuals—a statistical term used to describe the amount that a particular book's sales score differed from what was predicted by the derived linear formula. These residuals allow the assembly of sales scores *adjusted* for marketing. With a set of sales scores adjusted for marketing, it's then possible to draw up Pearson's Relationship Coefficients (PRCs) between these adjusted sales scores and multiple independent variables—the writing details that change from book to book, like plot structure, tense, protagonist race and gender, etc. While this scoring technically only notes the likelihood of linear relationships, non-linear relationships often have relatively high scores as the method calculates the tendency for one variable to increase or decrease as the other variable changes, and this kind of relationship is also noted in non-linear patterns. For example, note how even though the dataset in Figure 10 is obviously non-linear, a linear regression still notes a number of the plot points:

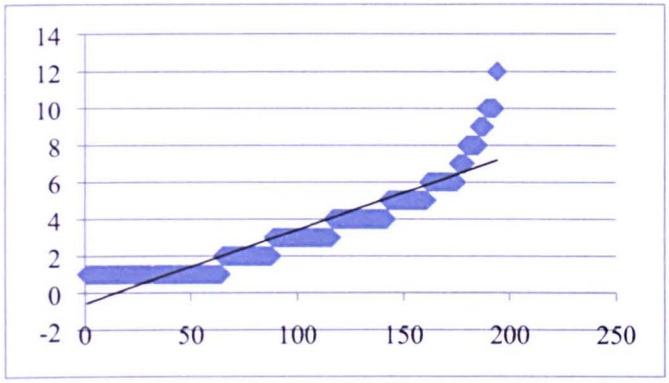

Figure 10: High Pearson's Relationship Coefficients Will Often Spot Even Non-Linear Relationships

Thus, though it isn't always possible to know the precise nature of a relationship, a high (close to 1 or -1) Pearson's Coefficient often allows us to know that some kind of relationship exists while a small (close to zero) Pearson's Coefficient tells us very little.

Of course, simply noting relationship does not necessarily imply causation. But, again, it doesn't *exclude* causation, and, indeed, there may be patterns that *imply* causation.

A bigger problem with this data approach is that, due to the sheer number of independent variables—this study recorded more than 150, but there are thousands more that are possible as each book is different from other books in literally thousands of ways—is that the relationships that emerge may not appear as strong as they might in a less complicated relationship. Generally, a Pearson's Coefficient with an absolute value less than 0.3 is said to be inconclusive and, certainly, because there are so many factors at play in a book, very few, if any, of the individual traits noted will achieve that kind of score.

The most advanced way to approach the problem would be to utilize statistics programs and computer algorithms in order to create a model—a list of variables

that, in combination, tend to increase sales. For example, factor analysis, structured equation modelling, and other kinds of statistical constructs.

However, because there is relatively little use of this type of method in existing creative writing research, it is more urgent to turn to simpler methods first. Simpler methods will not only provide useful information, but they are requisite in order to provide the discipline with a quantitative foundation that can be built upon at a later date.

Following is a description of the final two data-parsing methods utilized that, in combination with the simple linear approach, may reveal some of the driving forces behind audience resonance.

The Four Quadrant Approach

The reasonable and intuitive assumption that more marketing translates into higher sales appeared to hold up in the study sample. At least on the average and discounting statistical security due to small sample size on the upper-end of the marketing scale.

However, refer back to the scatter plot wherein each dot represents the (x, y)/(s, m) coordinates of an individual book:

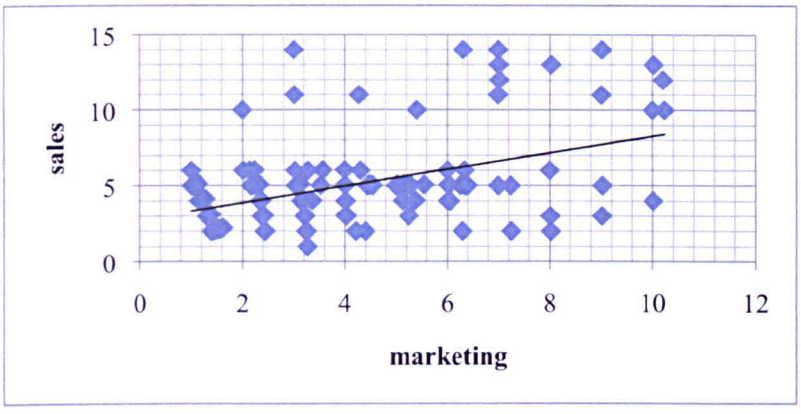

Figure 11: Scatter Plot

One cannot help but notice that there is a vast amount of variation among the performance of individual books.

In fact, it is possible to create four distinct quadrants out of this data.

1. Books with marketing scores below the mean (mean = 3.33) and sales scores below the mean (mean = 4.66). These books can be said to have performed 'as expected.'
2. Books with marketing scores below the mean and sales above the mean. These books could be called 'hits.'
3. Books with marketing scores above the mean and sales below the mean. These books could be called 'flops.'
4. Books with marketing scores above the mean and sales above the mean. These books could also be said to have performed 'as expected.'

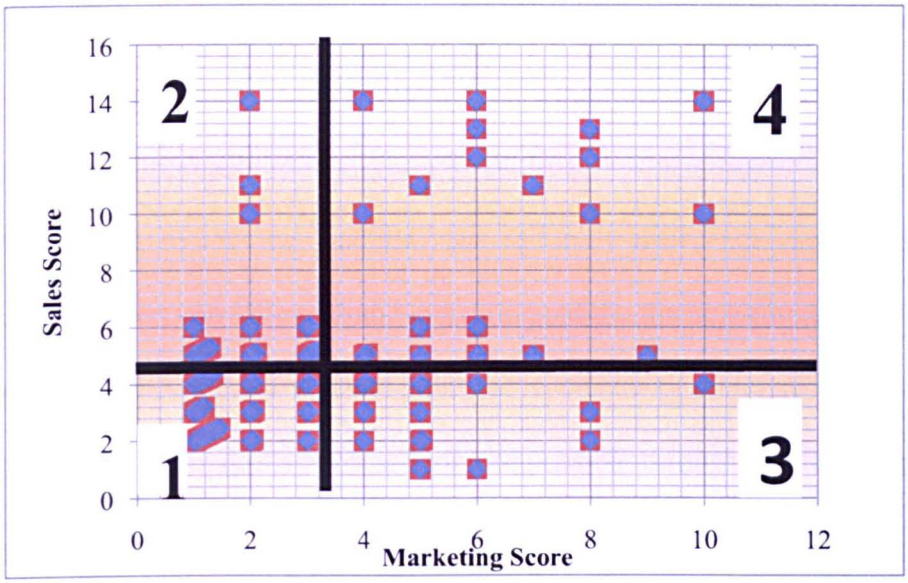

Figure 12: Jittered Scatter plot with Quadrants Marked

Quadrants two and three are the most statistically interesting, because they represent books that did not sell the way their marketing predicted. Because the books in quadrant two sold well without the benefit of marketing, there may be something about them that makes them more 'resonant.' Likewise, because the books in quadrant three failed to sell even with the benefit of marketing, there may be something about them that makes them 'dissonant.'

By focusing the investigation only on the books that broke ranks with expectation (quadrants two and three), a comparison between the traits of 'resonant' and 'dissonant' books may facilitate identification of traits that are of importance to YA authors.

Plotting the Difference Between Sales and Marketing: a Second Data Approach

Another way to look at these books is to look at the difference between the sales and marketing scores of each individual book.

This method is similar to the linear method, but allows a simpler distribution of books into 'hits,' 'flops,' and those performing 'as expected.' As in the quadrant method and different from the linear method, only the 'hits' and 'flops' will be considered in this approach.

If the trends in both the quadrant-view and in the difference-view are the same and these traits correlate with the indications of the linear method, there is a good chance that they represent actual points of resonance or dissonance and a simple model of what makes a book sell may be possible through examination of the patterns within the data.

When the difference between each book's sales and marketing score is graphed, the result clearly takes the form of a third-order polynomial. This form is consistent with bell-curve distribution if absolute values are taken:

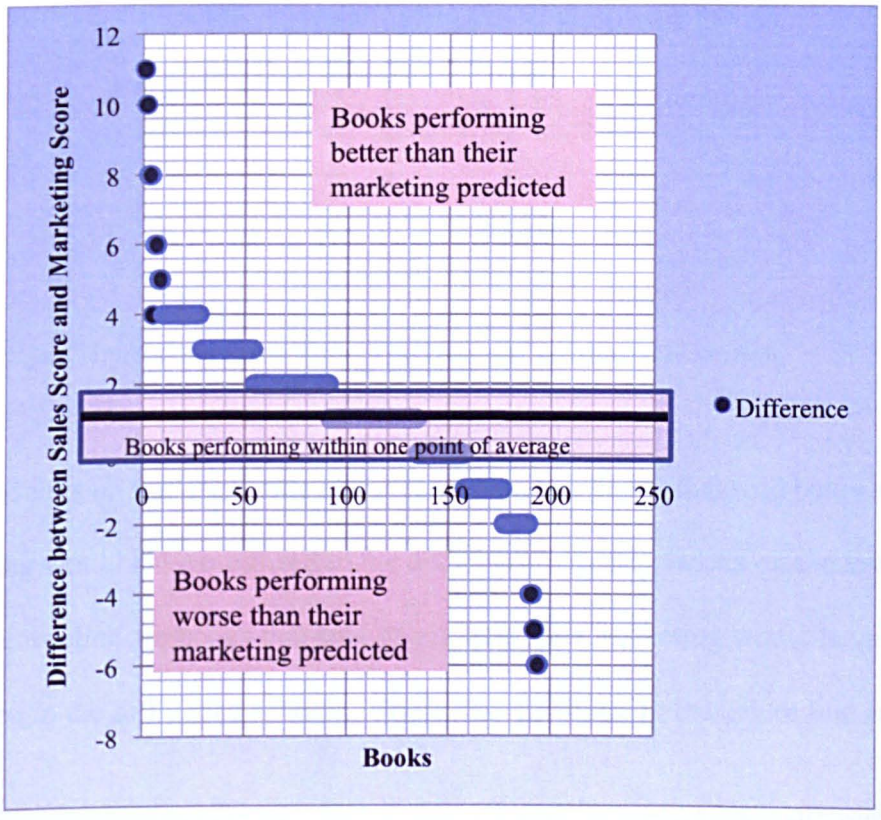

Figure 13: The 'Difference' Marketing/Sales Distribution

The clean polynomial presentation of this data is not entirely unexpected, as most things in the natural world at some point conform to the 'standard normal' distribution; publishing, despite the feelings of some authors, thus appears to part of the natural world. Some books will perform better than predicted, some books will perform worse than predicted, and most books will perform somewhere in the middle.

This dataset has a simple correlation to the (marketing (x), sales (y)) scatter plot:

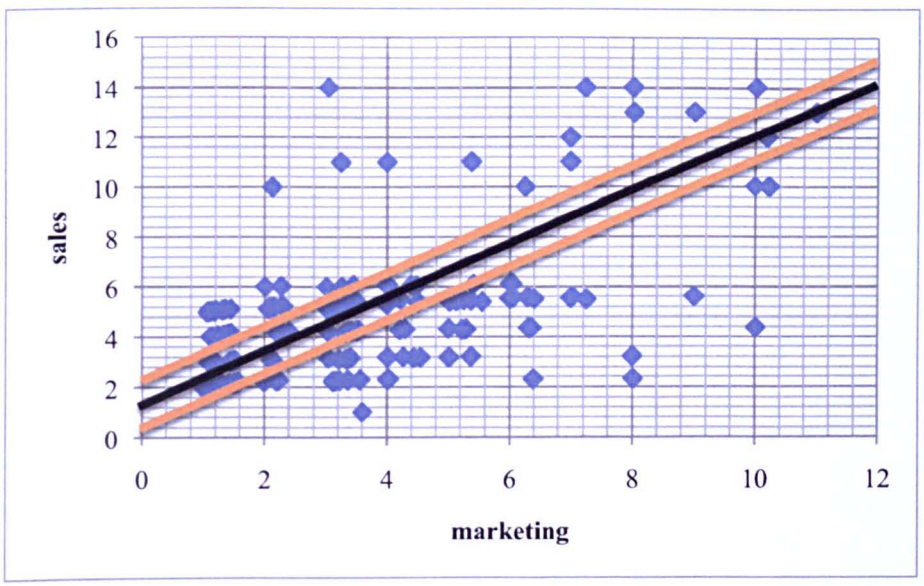

Figure 14: Data Correlation Between the Quadrant and Difference Methods

Books on the upper side of the centre line are books that sold better than their marketing would have predicted in the difference scheme. Books on the lower side of the centre line are books that sold worse than their marketing would have predicted in the difference scheme. Books that fall close to the centre line are books

that sold about as expected. The accompanying lines mark the one-point deviation[6] mark from the mean, identifying books that performed very nearly as predicted; in order to highlight the variables correlated with books that *break* expectation, these books will be thrown out for sample analysis.

This method, in addition to the other methods, should give indications of the kinds of book traits that have audience resonance.

The next task is to determine which of the books must be read.

6 The one-point deviation was used in place of the more customary one standard deviation because the high level of variability would have ruled out most of the sample.

Books Thrown Out of Sample

Depending on the particular method used for examining the established sample of YA books, different books must be read.

Some books are thrown out for simple statistical reasons and are not read in any method: books with sales more than five standard deviations from the mean (outliers), books published under multiple titles and thus improperly represented by the point-system, books not-yet-in-print, books mistakenly labelled YA when they were not, and books genre-non-conforming (e.g. graphic novels), leaving a final total sample of 192 books.

In the linear method, all 192 books are read and scored.

In the quadrant data set method, only books from quadrants two and three are read and scored.

In the difference data set method, only books with a sales/marketing difference more than one point above/below the mean are read and scored. Thus,

Linear sample: 192 books.

Quadrant sample: 68 books.

Difference sample: 115 books.

Typically, the larger the sample size, the more reliable the data; however, in this case, the datasets were each specifically chosen for certain characteristics, and we may, in fact, get more illuminating data from the smaller sample sets. In any event, book traits that show resonance patterns over all three datasets are likely to indicate the strongest resonance tendencies.

A complete list of the books and their quadrant/difference/linear specifications can be found in the appendix.

Accounting for Divergent Audiences in the Young Adult Book Market

Before reading these books to glean information about young adult taste that is applicable to the creation of a YA text (without excluding the possibility of uncovering general applicability), it may be prudent to rule out the possibility that the opinions of non-young-adults—like parents, teachers, and librarians—are the opinions driving sales trends. If teens are *not* the ones driving sales, the creation of a YA text meant for the *market* may become an act of appealing to the group of people who *are* driving sales. And even if I, as an author, am more interested in identifying patterns of resonance among my young target audience than I am in *selling* (which, all things considered, I believe I am), it is best to ensure that the method being used adequately represents the opinions of that audience.

On the surface, the difference between YA literature and adult literature is simple: books written to appeal to young adults and specifically marketed to young adults (generally between the ages of 12 and 20) are YA. Books written/marketed with the expectation that adults will be the primary audience—whether or not they have a young protagonist—are adult books. Steven VanderStaay cites G. Robert Carlsen's definition of the genre:

> Young Adult Literature is literature wherein the protagonist is either a teenager or one who approaches problems from a teenage perspective. [...] Though generally written for a teenage reader, such novels—like all fine literature—address the entire spectrum of life.
>
> (Vanderstaay 48)

But the question of resonance-as-indicated-by-sales in the YA market is complicated by the fact that the people buying YA books are not all young adults.

YA readers not only buy their own books, but books are bought for them by adults—primarily librarians and parents. This has the potential to cause problems with the evaluation of resonance because parents/other adults may be buying large numbers of books that they *want* their teens to read, but that is no guarantee that the books will be read. Likewise, to assume that all readers of YA fiction are between the ages of 12 and 20 is to make an unfounded assumption. Some adults may, in fact, prefer YA fiction and the success of a book might well have to do with how well a book breaks out of the YA market into the general market. (Consider both *Twilight* and *Harry Potter*.) So in order to fully understand how well the sales numbers obtained line up with the idea of resonance, the extent to which the readers of YA books match up with the buyers of YA books must be determined.

Publishers are well aware of the issue of divergent audiences. This can be seen clearly by looking at different cover art used to market the same book. Consider the sample-book, *Shug*. The cover art for the paperback edition—the cheaper edition possibly more likely to be purchased by young adults, themselves—looks like this:

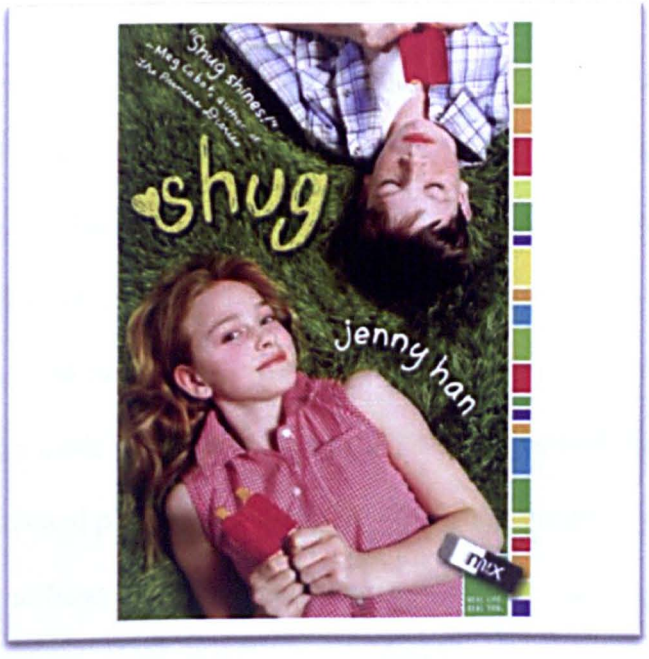

Figure 15: Cover Likely Intended for Young Adults

Meanwhile, the hardback version of the same book—the more expensive version possibly more likely to be purchased by an adult—appears with the following cover art:

Figure 16: Cover Likely Intended for Adults

We repeatedly see the same type of cover divergence among myriad YA books. Paperback covers are typically geared toward a younger, less affluent, audience and hardbacks geared toward an older, more affluent, audience.

But the greatest difference between various YA book buyers might not be in their access to funding, but in their motivations for buying books.

An adult buying and reading a YA book, herself, does not necessarily cause a large statistical problem for this study, or a strategic problem for an author. After all, if young-at-heart adults are a viable part of the YA market, their opinions matter to YA authors.

However, when adults buy books *for* teenagers, there is a question about whether or not resonance can be accurately measured by sales. A well-meaning parent or teacher, for example, might buy a book wanting their teenager to *learn* something and this desire may not be mirrored in the teen. Julia Bard cites Maurice Sendak: 'People think writing a children's book means you have to teach children something. The possibility that you just write a yarn to amuse them seems not correct... That's where I got into trouble, because nobody could figure out what the moral was. They were horrified' (Bard 45).

Does this suggest young adults prefer 'immoral' books? As seen in the 'results' section, the answer is not really. Their moral opinions seem to line up with adults' and in some cases there may even be reason to believe that young adults are (slightly) more prudish than their adult counterparts. As Donald Maass argues, good 'novels are moral' (Maass 246), even including the morality of a text as part of its quality, and young adults seem to basically agree with him.

However, as the low sales/marketing ratio for books from the sample with didactic tendencies—for example, *Mixed Bags: Carter House Girls*—indicates, there's also reason to believe that teens respond unfavourably to stories that *too overtly* moralize. But is it possible to be moral without 'moralizing' and be fun to read all at once? In spite of what Chris Crowe calls the 'traditional' view—that 'if something is entertaining, it certainly can't be worthwhile' (147)—he also asserts that it's absolutely possible. When adults object to YA lit because it 'corrupt[s] the young' or because YA books 'aren't the Classics' (146), they may be discounting the possibility that a novel might be able to be both a good influence and enjoyable. There is even some reason to believe the worry about classics is misguided, anyway, in that most of what we now call classics began as the blockbusters of their day.

Dean Koontz argues this very fact in his *How to Write Bestselling Fiction*, going as far as to call Dickens a 'hack' (Koontz 16). And whether or not Mr. Koontz was right, we can all probably agree that in 200 years *Harry Potter* is much more likely to be read by a teen than the latest Newbery winner.

At times, criticism of YA lit seems to appropriate a tone that might be characterized as 'curmudgeonly.' For example, in her article, 'Where Does Adolescent Literature Belong?' Holly O'Donnell paraphrases Ernest L. Boyer: 'Great literature [...] speaks to all people. However, many of the young adult novels marketed today speak only to the adolescent' (O'Donnell 86). Rhetorically speaking, however, Boyer's argument raises some questions. What is the definition of greatness? Is it Dickens (the hack)? Shakespeare? But what if the intended reading audience fails to make an emotional or intellectual connection with these authors? Perhaps from a rhetorical standpoint, 'greatness' may revolve more around the effective communication flow between the three pillars of the rhetorical triangle—and a successful interaction isn't necessarily limited to a positive reception from *all* audiences, but could be indicated by a positive reception from the author's *intended* audience? If a book that was intended for young adults appeals to young adults, isn't that *rhetorical* success, even if it's not success in the academic or literary sense? And isn't it true that while academic and literary success are certainly valid, an author who intends to write in the 'real' world—i.e. the marketplace—is not always able to satisfy both the rhetorical demands of the job and the academic/literary expectations of the day?

Sharon Stringer notes in her book, *Conflict and Connection: the Psychology of Young Adult Literature*, that the worlds of academia and the 'real' world can be disparate. She cites the *Journal of Research on Adolescence*: 'Very few researchers

make an effort to translate and disseminate their research to audiences outside of academia, leading to most empirical and social science knowledge never reaching the many audiences who might benefit it' (Stringer xiii). The reverse may be true as well: the popular may eschew the academic as 'out of touch' just as the academic may eschew the public for its plebeian taste. Indeed, Dean Koontz goes as far as to say that approval from the academy is 'the kiss of death' for a novel (Koontz 16).

Thus, in a consideration of YA literature and academic/literary expectations among teens, it is perhaps not unsurprising to discover teens who have little patience for adult academic or literary expectation. In her article, 'Feminist Teenage Fiction,' Julia Bard laments about a teenaged reader who had an 'unprintably rude' (47) response to a book she was asked to read. The book, Bard says, is one that 'as a parent, writer, and teacher [she] would have recommended as tackling fundamental issues of power and powerlessness, and as conveying a time, place and society unfamiliar to most readers' (47); in other words, the book was one with academic/literary merit. But literary merit alone was not enough to satisfy the rhetorical demands of her teen reader.

So how can sales numbers be used to evaluate audience resonance when it's not entirely clear who's buying the books or why they're buying them? Certainly some of the books sold are bought by teens, and some of the books are being bought by adults for *themselves* or because their teens have asked them to, but what about the possibility of (well-meaning) 'curmudgeons' skewing the market sample, say, by buying large numbers of books that are 'good for' the teenagers in their lives, even though these books may languish forever on the shelf, or under the shorter leg of the ottoman?

Ultimately, there could be a fundamental disconnect between the books that adults (parents, teachers, etc.) *want* teenagers to read and the books that teenagers themselves (and young-at-heart-adults) want to read. Any viable quantitative examination of the YA market, will have to, at some point, consider this disconnect. Especially an examination meant to culminate in the production of an actual YA text intended for the market.

In keeping with the foundation of an inductive approach, the following library exercise was conducted to address this issue.

Library Data as Support for YA Sales Demographics

The premise of the library exercise was that while a parent may be likely to buy a teen a book, a parent is less likely to check the same book out from the library for them. Likewise, part of a librarian's job is to determine the proper number of books to carry of particular titles at any given time. If the patterns of data obtained from the library mirror the patterns of data found from sales, it can be concluded that the sales numbers are likely good representations of teen taste, as there is agreement among all parties.

37 libraries were identified for this exercise. The libraries were chosen so as to correspond with population distribution and, hence, the likely distribution of the buying population.

The 2000 U.S. Census list of all cities with a population of 40,000 or more was obtained. (Cities large enough to easily have both a library and a bookstore.)

Graphing every tenth city on this list by population, the following logarithmic distribution is found:

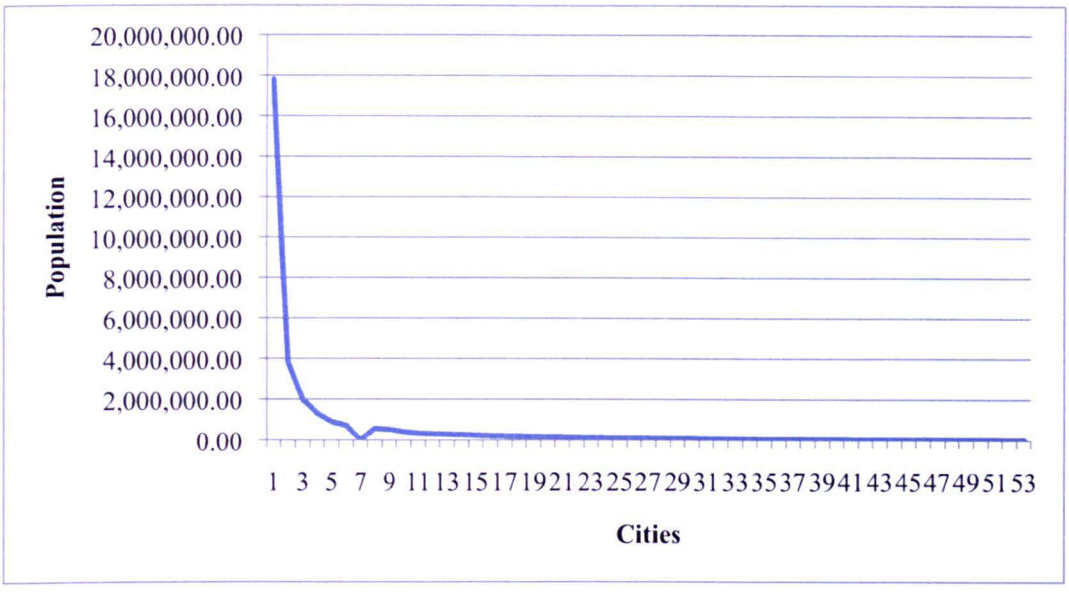

Figure 17: Population Distribution by City

Further consultation with the census confirmed that approximately 80% of the US population lives in an 'urban' setting, with the mean city population of the every-tenth-city sample residing at near 600,000, obviously skewed by the enormous populations of cities like New York City, which hovers around 18 million. Not coincidentally, the percentage of the population living in a city with a population above the sample mean was about 80% while the percentage living in a city below the mean was about 20%. By distributing city choices along an 80-20 split of cities both above and below the every-tenth-city-mean population of 600,000, cities were chosen to create a representative market population distribution. And while the population of young people might be abnormally skewed toward non-urban settings, the fact that the majority of chosen libraries were actually library 'systems'—a collection of related libraries that serve both urban and suburban areas—should mitigate the problem.

On the upper end of the list, all cities with populations above 2 million were recorded. For cities below the mean, the large number of small cities mandated that a simple sample be taken from within, thus, approximately every 30th city[7] was recorded. (The sampling diverged from the every-30th-city prescription when the 30th cities had no library or had libraries without an online catalogue and thus the requisite data was inaccessible.)

The cities included in the library study were:

1. New York City, NY
2. Los Angeles, CA
3. Chicago, IL
4. Philadelphia, PA
5. Miami, FL
6. Dallas, TX
7. Boston, MA
8. Washington DC
9. Detroit, MI
10. Houston, TX
11. Atlanta, GA
12. San Francisco, CA
13. Phoenix, AZ
14. Mesa, AZ
15. Seattle, WA
16. San Diego, CA

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7 It was noted at least once that the published (online) census city-list had slightly changed, so if a re-recording of every 30th city were to be done in the future, it may yield a slightly different list of cities. However, since the sample was a straightforward 'simple' sample, this shouldn't largely affect the results.

17. Minneapolis-Saint Paul, MN
18. Saint Louis, MO
19. Baltimore, MD
20. Tampa, FL
21. Denver, CO
22. Portland, OR
23. Cincinnati, OH
24. Sacramento, CA
25. Durham, NC
26. Salt Lake City, UT
27. Omaha, NE
28. Birmingham, AL
29. Tucson, AZ
30. Honolulu, HI
31. Akron, OH
32. New Haven, CT
33. Santa Rosa, CA
34. Kalamazoo, MI
35. Jackson County, IN
36. Wichita Falls, TX
37. Zanesville, OH

To ensure appropriate population distribution, a geographic map of these cities was compared against a population-distribution map from the US Census.

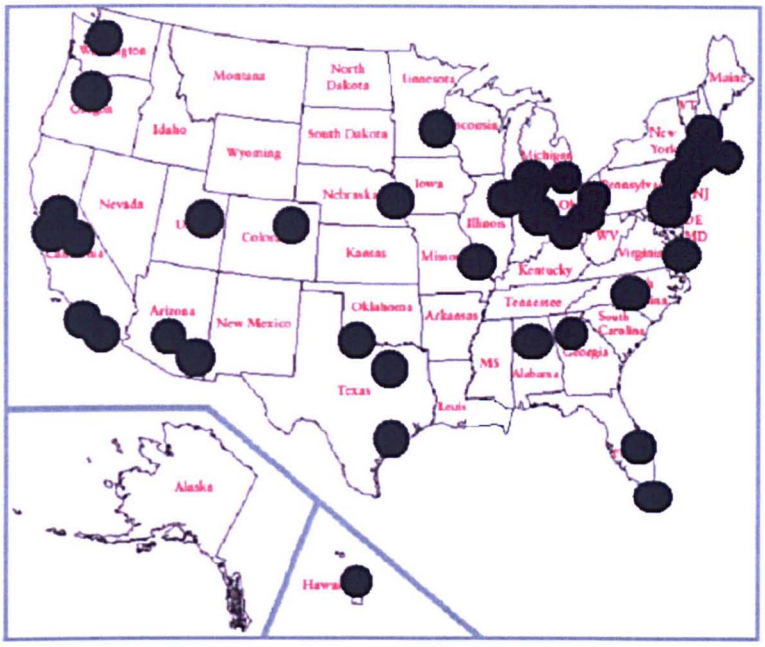

Figure 18: Cities Included in Library Study

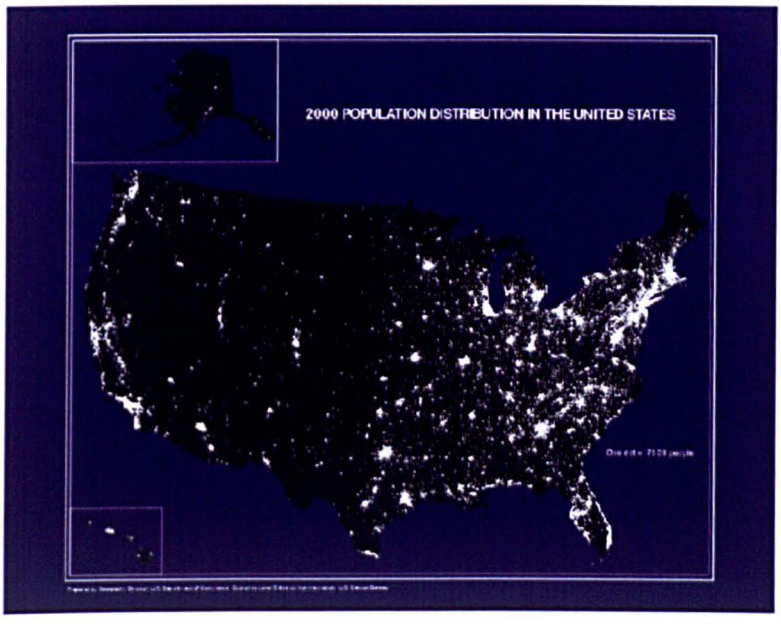

Figure 19: Population Distribution According to the 2000 US Census

The population of New York City tops the list, hovering as it does around 18 million, while the final city, Zanesville, has a population hovering just above 40,000, which was the lowest end of the city-population-consideration.

For each city on the list, both the number of books that the library owned (of each of the 192-book sample), and the number of books of each title that were checked out at the time of inquiry were recorded. (See the appendix for the table of totals.)

What was found was that both the number of copies checked out and the number of copies owned at/by each library roughly corresponded with both the distribution of the quadrant data and the difference schemes. This indicates that whatever principles of resonance/dissonance exist in each set of books, they are NOT likely to be skewed by who is doing the book buying. Either the tastes of teens, parents and librarians are all matching up, or one demographic group is deciding book fates for all. In the latter case, this is most likely to be the teens, themselves, though I suspect that with a few minor exceptions principles of resonance distribute themselves among all demographic groups.

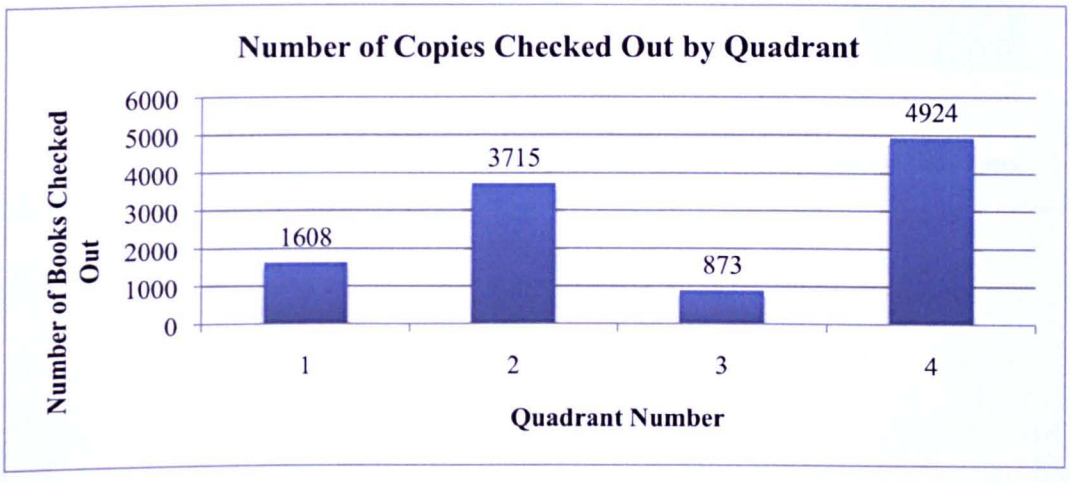

Figure 20: Books Checked Out by 'Quadrant'

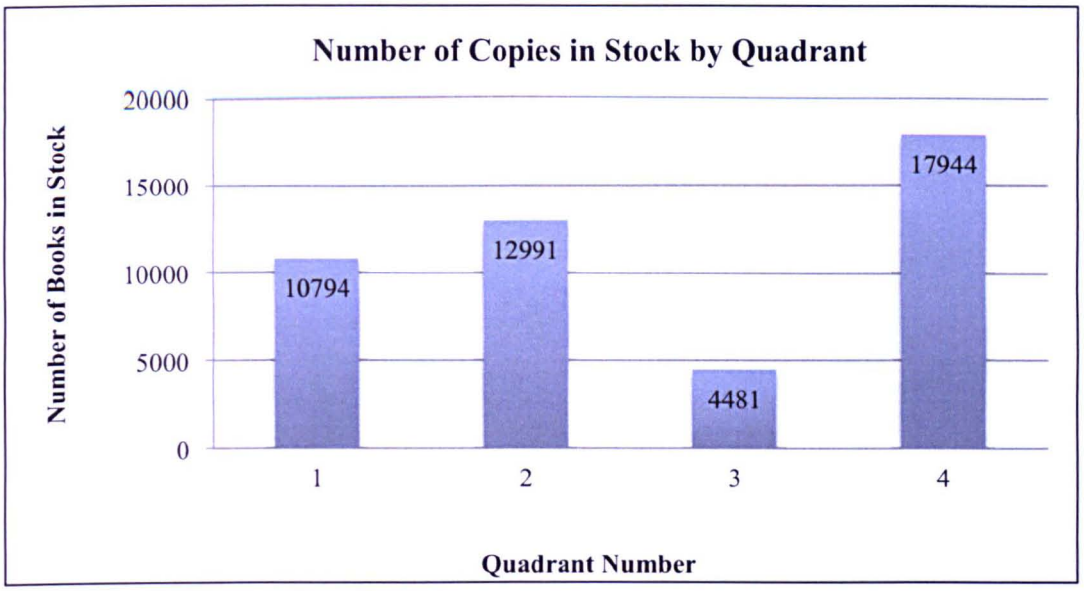

Figure 21: Books in Stock by 'Quadrant'

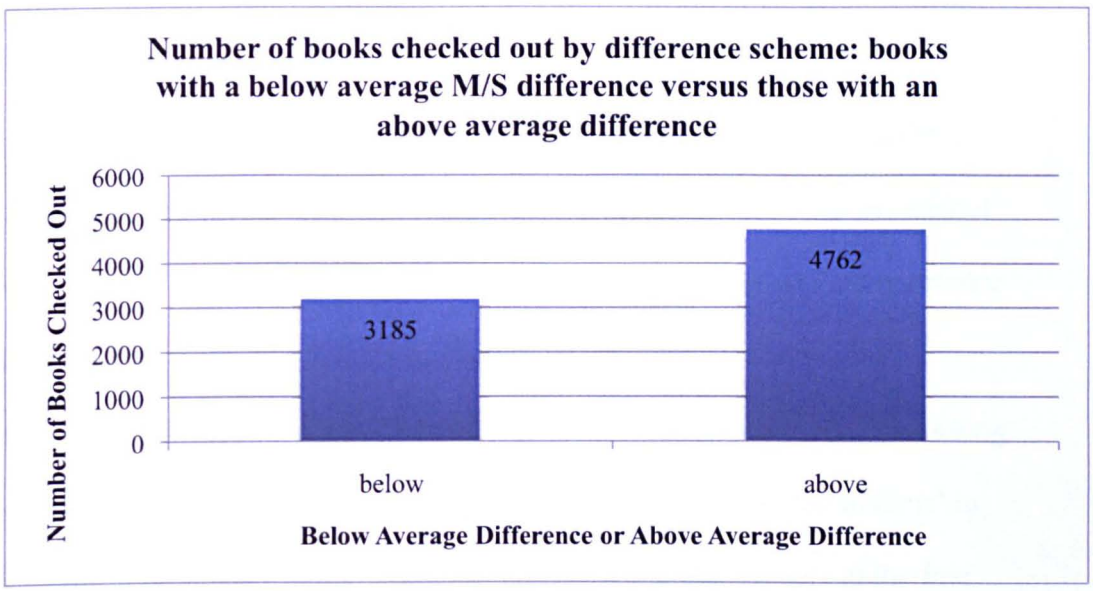

Figure 22: Books Checked Out by 'Difference'

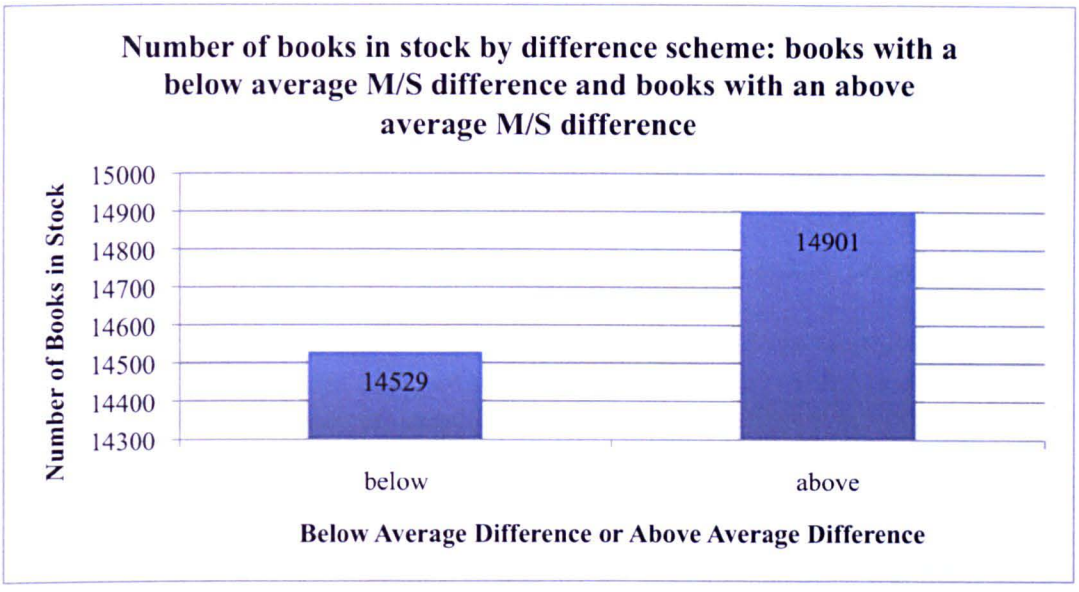

Figure 23: Books in Stock by 'Difference'

With regard to the 'curmudgeon' factor, it seems that either teens, parents, and librarians are all equally curmudgeonly, or that the loudest curmudgeons are not the ones buying YA books. Indeed, with societal weight being put on the importance of reading, it seems likely that parents and librarians are interested in buying whatever books teens want to read—even opting for the 'less literary' reading as long as it's reading. Louann Reid and Ruth Cline even argue that it's our 'addictions' to the books with 'little literary merit' (Reid 69) that grow literature lovers in the first place. Parents and librarians seem to agree.

Having established that the sales numbers may, indeed, be a good indication of young adult reading preferences, the next task is to read and evaluate each book in the sample.

On Reading 200 Books

By the end of this study, I personally read more than 100 of these books. A group of 36 volunteers read the remaining books. As previously mentioned, because the primary goal of the statistical exercise was to strengthen my own creative work, whenever possible, I read the books that were particularly statistically important—the 68 from the quadrant data set (quadrants two and three; 'hits' and 'flops') and the 115 from the difference data set (books with highly positive and zero/negative differences between their sales and marketing scores); there was some overlap between these samples. Some books ended up being discarded from the sample for the previously mentioned statistical reasons; the total number of books *actually* read was more than 200, though the examined sample was 192 books.

As previously discussed, because I was the one who read the vast majority of statistically important books, there is a potential for skew based upon the way that I personally read books and record/interpret data. And though my proclivity for YA fiction and general lack of maturity might attest to the contrary, I am not a 17-year-old girl and, thus, I may evaluate books differently than the general buying audience. However, again, as the primary reasoning behind the evaluation was to draw conclusions immediately applicable to my own creative work, this was unavoidable. Furthermore, the relatively blind procedure ensures that whatever skew is present due to personal opinion, it will not change which books actually sold and, thus, personal opinion has a limited potential to skew data.

Likewise, there is a potential for skew based upon the subjective: whether or not I or readers liked or disliked certain books for reasons unaccounted for by the

resonance variables controlled for could affect the way books were scored. However, the marketplace is likewise a subjective arena and the audience that is buying or not buying books is similarly making these decisions in a subjective way. As long as the process by which books are evaluated is blind *enough* and methodologically rigorous *enough*, the subjective evaluation of the books should correspond (as directly as is possible in a research-environment) to the real-marketplace.

In an ideal research environment there would be a very large random sample of books, a method of recording data that didn't vary between readers, and a large enough random pool of readers to assure a true representation of the market, but the evaluation of these books as done here should be close enough to the market to identify significant trends and important points of resonance.

Blindness: On the Subjective Nature of Book Evaluation and How to Prevent Unconscious Data Contamination.

Maintaining blindness—the assured inability of researchers to project their own ideas onto the resultant data—was not a problem with the 36 recruited volunteers. Most of the readers did not even know *what* was being researched, and certainly not how marketing and sales points were distributed. They were simply asked to read a book and then to fill out an online questionnaire including the questions found in the next chapter. Most volunteers were recruited via blog postings[8] and books were at first randomly assigned and then self-selected from a side-bar list when library availability became a problem. Once subjects were choosing their own books, there was some potential for skew based upon the fact that

8 URL: http://windmillwatching.blogspot.com/

they started to choose books that they thought they might like; however, this skew might be mitigated by the 'cover-likeability' data obtained and presented later. This data evaluated the match between cover-likeability and book sales, and, thus, gives us an idea about how well audiences are able to choose books that they will enjoy. (Spoiler: not as well as you'd think.)

When it came to the books that I, personally, had to read, blindness was somewhat more problematic in that, though the reading of books was kept separate from the scoring of sales and marketing points, the initial scoring rubric was created by the same person doing the book reading. In order to keep the process as blind as possible, however, books were ordered from multiple quadrants and multiple 'difference' groups, and then read simultaneously, without referring back to sales and marketing data. In order to estimate the size of skew due to blindness challenges, after several books were read, I recorded guesses about the home quadrants/difference groups of each book. I was wrong nearly as often as I was right, indicating that though there was a possibility of unconscious projection, such projection was equally likely to end up on either side of the quadrant/difference lines, meaning projections should largely cancel themselves out on the average.

Additionally, volunteer readers ended up being vastly similar to me demographically speaking. 81% of sample books were read by females; 97% were read by Caucasians; average reader age was 30.9; average number of children was 2.79; 83% of readers were affiliated with the LDS (Mormon) Church; and readers were overwhelmingly from the Western half of the U.S. By comparison, I am a 31 year old Mormon Caucasian female with two children living in the Western U.S. This may lead to generalizability concerns, of which persons using the data for

various purposes beyond the expressed purpose of this study (to inform the creation of the novel presented in the creative portion of thesis) should be aware.

Establishing a Collection of Independent Variables that Can Be Recorded into a Quantitative Format

The initial hypothesis noted was that once marketing was factored out, sales would be most affected by the plot structure.

After a sample of books was established and reading was underway, an expansion of this hypothesis evolved into a suspicion that, as approximately 80% of novel-readers are female (Weiner), 'resonant' books would favour a plot cycle more attuned to the female psyche than traditional (and traditionally male) plot cycles. Thus, the very first attempt at data recording consisted of logs of the presence or absence of certain plot characteristics, as advocated by traditional and non-traditional-but-gender-aware plot theorists. Shortly after reading and evaluating the first five or six of the books, however, it became clear that the answer to resonance was going to be somewhat more complicated than a simple look at plot structure, so the criteria were expanded to enumerate more than 150 independent variables. These criteria were established after consultation with multiple published YA authors and YA literature experts (including professors, publishers, editors, and literary agents) and attempted to represent the spectrum of existing informal theory on book content and audience-resonance. The expanded criteria were used as the criteria by which to evaluate all books in the sample.

Using an online survey[9] to complete most of the data-gathering, readers were asked questions about each book they read. They were asked to fill out the survey

9 URL: http://www.questionbuilder.com/console/TakeSurvey?id=54199

within about a week of reading their books and they were asked to fill out most of the questions without referring to the text (exceptions noted on the survey for concrete facts like number of pages, name of publisher, gender of author, etc.). Questions were not meant to be agonized over—gut feelings and quick responses were preferred so as to capture more dominant/visceral reactions. (So while the author of a sample book may argue, for example, 'but there *is* a Campbellian "call,"' if the existing 'call' was not remembered while readers were filling out the online questionnaire, it was unlikely to be a dominant book characteristic; this method keeps the data from being weighed down by minutiae and/or skewed by the imperfect memories of readers.)

The following were the questions asked:

1. Who published the book?
2. How many pages did it have?
3. Did you like your book?
4. Was your protagonist male or female? If there were multiple protagonists, how many of each gender?
5. Would you guess that the intended audience was male or female?
6. Does the author appear to attempt to appeal to *both* males and females?
7. Would you describe the book as character driven or plot driven?
8. Would you describe the book as literary or titillating?
9. Would you describe the book as literary or commercial?
10. Was the pacing slow, medium, or fast?
11. What was the genre? Realism? Fantasy? Sci-Fi? Romance? Other?

12. Was romance a driving plot factor?
13. Were there abusive and/or negligent parents who caused or contributed to the protagonist's troubles?
14. Was the worldview hopeful, neutral, hopeless, or nihilistic?
15. Was there potential for 'identity play?' (When a teen gets a chance to pretend they are someone else—often someone utterly unlike them and more interesting somehow. Spies, princesses, drug-addicts, rock stars, etc.)
16. Was the point-of-view first person? Second person? Third person?
17. Was the tense past or present?
18. Choose the best word: action, emotion.
19. Choose the best word: sex, desire.
20. Do any of the teenagers in the book have sex?
21. On a scale of 1-10, how emotive was the book? ('Emotive' refers to the *expression* of emotion in text; the feeling of emotion in the reader is scored later.)
22. Would you consider the protagonist a drama queen?
23. Did you like the protagonist?
24. Did the protagonist annoy you?
25. Would you consider the protagonist spoiled, ungrateful, or a whiner?
26. What was the race of the protagonist?
27. Did race play any important part in the plot?
28. Were any characters stereotyped along racial lines?
29. Were any of the characters stereotyped into gender roles?
30. Did the book seem to be aware of its own stereotypes?

31. Was the author a male or female?
32. Rate the author's writing skill at the paragraph level: good (3), acceptable (2), not great (1).
33. Did you enjoy reading the book? (Note that this is a different question than whether or not you *liked* the book.)
34. Was the world-building in the book believable?
35. Do you think the book was intended for older teens or younger teens?
36. Do you think that adults would read this book? That it has potential to cross over into the adult market?
37. Is the book 'experimental' somehow? (Written in verse, page format atypical, point of view atypical, etc.)
38. Does the book ask 'big questions?'
39. Was the book 'issue' based? (Abortion, drug use, abuse, homosexuality, civil rights, etc.)
40. Was the over-arching conflict of the book a complex conflict?
41. Was the plot 'complicated' in an interesting way? (A definition of 'complication' was provided: it is available in the chapter on Dean Koontz.)
42. Are the kids in the book rich (monetarily wealthy)?
43. Did the book 'talk down to you?'
44. Do you think a teen would feel like the book was 'talking down' to them?
45. Did the protagonist learn anything by the end of the book or change in a good way somehow?

46. Did you feel the author(s) were trying too hard to sound like teenagers?
47. If you lived in the world of the book, would you be [choose]: happy, ecstatic, excited, confused, depressed, suicidal, unhappy, stressed, full of angst, so. rich, whatever, I do live in this world, other.
48. How did the book make you feel?
49. Did you feel very many emotions at all when you read?
50. Was one of them yearning?
51. Would you recommend this book to a beloved teen or a friend?
52. Is the tone of the book serious or comic?
53. Dark or light?
54. Heavy or light?
55. Was the cover an accurate representation of the book?
56. Was there a lot of swearing in the book?
57. If your bishop/pastor caught you reading the book, would you blush, be embarrassed, or try to hide it?
58. Does the book talk about sex a lot?
59. What is the cheapest available version of your book?
60. Were there racial misappropriations or over/undertones in the book that were troubling or made you worry about the book being racially offensive?
61. Were there factors in the book you worried were gender-offensive?
62. Is the book part of a series?
63. Was religion a driving plot factor?
64. Was the book supernatural?

65. Which is more descriptive: 'girl book,' 'boy book.'
66. Was the book superficial or brand obsessed?
67. Was the protagonist unusually privileged?
68. On a scale of 1-10, rate the 'edginess' of the book. (In general, the more 'edgy' a book is, the more a parent would be shocked to read it.)

In addition to these questions, cover likeability was evaluated (see future chapter), and all readers were asked to note the presence or absence of certain plot characteristics as outlined by five different plot theorists (see next section).

In total, more than 150 book characteristics were recorded.

On 'Having a Plot': Some Preliminary Discussion of the Five Plot Cycles Evaluated

'Having a plot' or 'not having a plot' is not as simple as answering the question, 'does something happen?' Karen Cox paraphrases Heather Dubrow arguing that the ultimate 'function' of plots is 'to provide the reader with a set of expectations that acts as a guidebook for our reading' (Cox 152). In other words, there are a set of definable expectations for story lines. When books fail to meet reader expectations of form, the book is likely to be declared 'plotless,' no matter how many actions or inactions the actual storyline contains.

Because there are many ideas about what these specific plot expectations *are,* however, when it came to the choice of plot-cycle evaluation, five distinct viewpoints were noted.

- 'Older' academic
- 'Newer' academic

- The gender-aware
- Authorial
- Industry

The plot cycles chosen for evaluation had to serve multiple functions. Practically speaking, they had to be suited to numeric evaluation—that is, they had to prescribe certain plot characteristics that could then be scored as present (1) or absent (0). Second, they needed to be representative of one of the five noted points of view. Third, they need to be representative of the types of plot theory informally adopted by the writing community.

In the end, the prescribed plot-cycles of five different theorists were chosen to serve these functions. The 17-step Joseph Campbell Hero cycle was the first, the 'Seven Basic Plots' of Christopher Booker was the second, Maureen Murdock's 'Heroine Cycle' was the third, the 'Rules for Bestselling Fiction' by bestselling author Dean Koontz was the fourth, and the 'Rules for Breakout Fiction' by industry expert Donald Maas was the fifth.

A more detailed rationale for the specific choice of each theorist will follow in the next chapters, but shortly, these plot theorists were chosen because they were deemed representative of the requisite influential viewpoints and all contained prescriptions that were quantifiable via present/absent, 1/0, mechanisms.

The fact that even the chosen 'academic' theorists are relatively mainstream can be attributed to the fundamentally pragmatic nature of this study. Ideas that are influential, pervasive, or informal are more suited to an evaluation (and, in successful cases, implementation) of writing practices among actual market writers. The five choices, therefore, though they still demonstrate some degree of research and knowledge, are not so much *academic*, per se, as they are popular in nature. Even

Booker's *Seven Basic Plots*, which is the most traditionally 'academic' of all the sources, was published to wide acclaim in the popular market and is, thus, more likely to be representative of the types of ideas that affect the behaviour of writers directly. The intent is to test prevailing influences as pertaining to plot for the purpose of creating a text, and this is better accomplished through the use of more mainstream thought.

When evaluating books for the presence/absence of plot-cycle prescriptions for each of these theorists, readers were asked to follow a loose interpretation. If Campbell advocated a 'meeting with the goddess,' any sort of meeting with any sort of 'goddess-like' figure would be scored with a (1). In a realistic book, this might be the 'most popular' girl, though she be a mere mortal. Likewise a 'wound' could be emotional, physical, spiritual, etc. A 'descent' could be to the basement of the high school, not just to the underworld. Readers were asked to be as inclusive as possible in evaluating the presence or absence of each step in these theorist's plot cycles.

This all being said, there may be some discomfort associated with evaluating books in this manner—perhaps discomfort relating to the idea of writing as formula. The sentiment may be described best by Donald Maass, when he vehemently argues that he is 'not interested in punching out cookie-cutter bestsellers' (Maass 13). Kristine E. Marshall specifically discusses the problem of the formulaic YA novel in her 1981 'Young Adult Literature: Transcending Trendiness: Treatment of Runaways in Adolescent Fiction' when she's discussing three novels she considers 'weak':

> Readers rarely meet an adolescent whose experiences vary and whose reactions reveal fresh insight into the difficult struggles runaways face. Adolescent characters emerge as interchangeable parts in a standard sequence of events. The novels defeat their purpose, for

> treating characters as anonymous cogs in predictable plots offers us little insight into and understanding of adolescent motivations. (E. Marshall 59)

Indeed one doesn't need to delve very deep into most literary journals to hear condemnation of the unoriginal, the uninspired, or the formulaic, and this condemnation holds true in scholarship about YA lit.

In spite of these objections, however, there are an abundance of stories—YA and non-YA alike—that indeed follow specific forms—sometimes seemingly to an advantage. Even the iconic Shakespeare not only borrowed old stories and had rigidly tight story arcs, he wrote largely in verse, which one could rightly call confining. And yet, isn't his ability to successfully adhere to such strict forms at least part of what *makes* him an iconic literary figure?

Maybe the problem is that something different than 'follows a formula' is meant when something is called 'formulaic?' The same difference we find in the words 'simple' versus 'simplistic'? Perhaps the latter controls the story and the former is controlled by the author? Shakespeare transcends the *expectations* of form and perhaps it's the *transcendence* that is so remarkable, not the form itself? (Though one must *have* form in order to transcend its expectations.) Or maybe, as Christopher Vogler argues, it comes down to the difference between 'form' and 'formula' (Vogler xvi)? A 'formulaic' novel might be a novel with form but devoid of all of the other characteristics of good literature—characterization, setting, etc. A book with two dimensional characters, no setting and no emotional interplay, would certainly be less-than-favourable, even if it adhered to a plot 'formula.'

But if [formulaic = bad] then does [plotlessness = good]?

Unless we are to completely reject people like Mr. Shakespeare, this corollary is not entirely possible, of course. Traits of creative work are hardly commutative.

So while books in this sample may be evaluated according to whether or not they contain certain plot elements, perhaps it's necessary to remember that a book that contains *merely* these plot basics may or may not be well-received. The fundamental question is whether *form* is a principle of *resonance*. Perhaps those opposed to 'cookie cutters' are right and it will be found that 'formula' predicts book failure. Or perhaps this opinion is out of synch with the book-buying public.

The data from the sample may be able to provide answers to this dilemma.

Following is a discussion of each particular plot theorist, the reasons behind inclusion, and a list of the exact plot elements that were recorded as either present or absent in the sample.

The First Plot Cycle Evaluated in the Set of Independent Variables: Joseph Campbell's Hero Cycle

It would be imprudent to consider plot cycle without considering the work of Joseph Campbell. Though Campbell was not necessarily the first plot theorist to propose something like the 'Hero Cycle,' he was certainly the most influential. Furthermore the Campbell Cycle has been argued to have a particular resonance with young adults, especially boys. Betty Carter notes that fifth and sixth grade boys prefer 'particularly quest fantasy' and that their love of the quest runs so deep that they will abandon non-quest YA literature and seek the quest fantasy among adult books (63). Likewise, the 1996 *English Journal* Honour List of Young Adult literature was published with the observation that there is something striking about the fact that 'four out of the five fiction [honour] titles are about [...] embarking on the kind of romantic quest that Joseph Campbell wrote about' (Nilsen 122). Indeed, one need only imagine the audience standing in line for the latest 'Star Wars' movie to grasp the idea that there may be something particularly resonant about the 'Hero Quest' for teenage boys (and their not-so-grownup grownup counterparts).

The Campbell cycle has largely fallen out of favour with theorists, for many good reasons. It is not only dated, Euro-centric, racially questionable, and riddled with gender-inclusion problems (Campbell billed his cycle as the 'Human Story' and yet, when Maureen Murdock asked him about how women made their heroic quests he responded that 'women don't need to make the journey' (Murdock 2); I'm sure there are a few heroic teen girls out there who would disagree) but academics like

Eli Rozik caution, 'some of his intuitions should be carefully examined because they may reflect wishful thinking rather than scientific rigor' (Rozik 551).

But, again, however wishful Campbell's theories were, there can be no denying that they have been deeply influential. From forming what theorist Andrew Gordon calls the 'deep [...] epic structure' of 'Star Wars' (313) to serving as the basis of Disney-consultant Christopher Vogler's practical story-construction guide (ix), Campbell's 'monomyth' can be found throughout U.S. storytelling.

One possible benefit of this study is, therefore, that the Hero Cycle can be tested and it can be determined whether or not its influential nature is justified. If its resonance is proven, we not only understand the success of series like *The Lord of the Rings*, but we also understand the universal appeal of *Harry Potter*, as both of these series are almost exact copies of the Hero Cycle.

For each of the books in the sample, readers were asked about the presence or absence of each of the following 17 traits (definitions were given as necessary; for example, 'The Belly of the Whale' was said to translate as 'Stuck in a Bad Situation'):

The Full Hero Cycle:

DEPARTURE

1. The Call to Adventure.
2. Refusal of the Call.
3. Supernatural Aid.
4. The Crossing of the First Threshold.
5. The Belly of the Whale.

INITIATION

1. The Road of Trials: Meeting Ogres and Dragons.
2. The Meeting with the Goddess.
3. Woman as Temptress.
4. Atonement with the Father.
5. Apotheosis.
6. The Ultimate Boon.

RETURN

1. Refusal of the Return
2. The Magic Flight
3. Rescue from Without
4. The Crossing of the Return Threshold
5. Master of Two Worlds
6. Freedom to live

Pictorially, the cycle is generally represented by a circle:

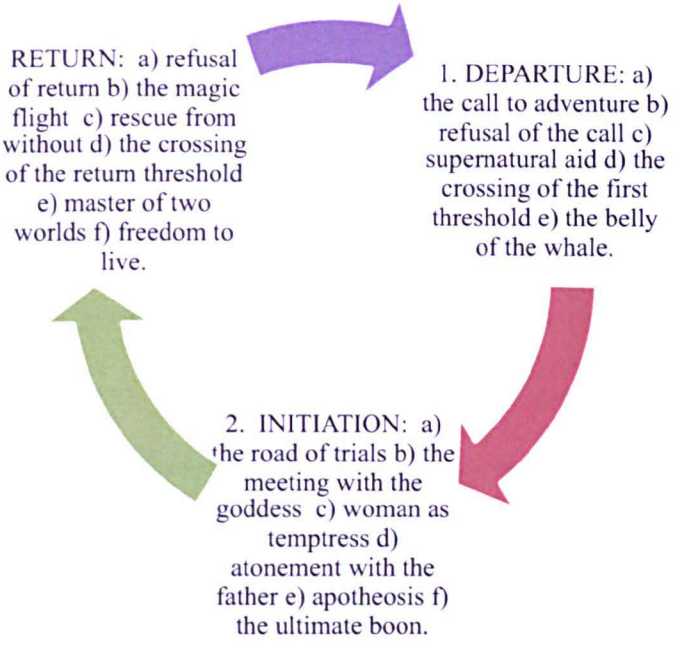

Figure 24: A Pictorial Representation of the Joseph Campbell Hero Cycle

The Campbell quest is far more complex than the simple above outline of the 'Hero Cycle,' and in examining only according to a surface outline, some of the mythic texture of the theory is admittedly lost. However, even evaluating simply presence or absence of these 17 traits allows a sense of the overall resonance of the story cycle and if the cycle proves resonant enough, further and more pervasive study might be warranted. If the cycle does prove overall resonance, its tenets will be considered in the construction of my creative text, *Secrets of the Mami Wata*, though other applications may be possible.

Christopher Booker's 'Seven Basic Plots'

The scholarship of Christopher Booker is a useful, more modern, counterpart to the work of Campbell. Instead of complete gender exclusion, Booker calls the presence of the feminine a 'fundamental polarity which is crucial' (257)—a point that is echoed in works like Christine Main's proposal of the 'Duomyth' (Mains). He draws examples not just from texts throughout history, but from various forms of modern storytelling—books, movies, video games even news events/celebrities that seem to mirror the story archetype. His study is still rather western-centric, but as the U.S. market is a fundamentally western market, this is not as much of a problem for the aims of this particular study. Educator Duncan Wu says the title of the book 'undersells' it (22), and, indeed, the title does not adequately communicate vast scholarship actually within the Booker text. Utilizing the psychological foundation of Jung, Campbell, and other 'mythological'/ 'psychological' theorists, Booker argues that there is a deep psychological reason that we tell stories the way that we do.

A thorough summary is impossible as the scope of Booker's book is too vast, but at its essence, Booker's theory is that every story takes the form of one or more of seven basic plots. The Campbell Hero Cycle is supposed to be all seven plots together in a single story, which connects easily with Campbell's proposal of the 'monomyth.' Booker argues that they take this form because there is something about them that is fundamental—i.e. resonant—to the human psyche.

The 'Seven Plots,' with their various steps are (quoted directly from Booker with the exception of my bracketed additions):

I: The Monster plot [(e.g. *Jaws*, *Beowulf*). Consisting of:]

1. The Call/Anticipation Stage
2. Initial Success/The Dream Stage
3. Confrontation/Frustration Stage
4. Final Ordeal/Nightmare Stage
5. The Miraculous Escape (and death of the Monster)

(38-39)

II: Rags to Riches Plot [(e.g. *Aladdin*, *Anne of Green Gables*) Consisting of:]

1. Initial wretchedness at home and 'The Call.'
2. Out into the World, Initial Success.
3. The Central Crisis.
4. Independence and the final ordeal
5. Final union and completion and fulfilment.

[This story can also come in 'dark' versions—i.e. 'riches to rags' or 'rags to "evil" riches,' as with, for example, *Citizen Kane*.]

(65-66)

III: The Quest [(e.g. *Star Wars*, 'Legend of the Seeker') Consisting of:]

1. The Call
2. The Journey (with ordeals)
3. Arrival and Frustration
4. The Final Ordeals

5. The Goal (after the thrilling escape from death)

(83)

IV: Voyage and Return [(e.g. *Lord of the Rings*, *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*) Consisting of:]

1. Anticipation stage and 'fall' into another world
2. Initial fascination or dream stage
3. Frustration stage
4. Nightmare stage
5. Thrilling escape and return

(105-106)

V: Comedy [(e.g. *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Emma*)]

1. We see a world in which people have passed under a shadow of confusion, uncertainty, and frustration and are shut off from each other. [World in chaos.]
2. The confusion gets worse until the pressure of darkness is at its most acute and everyone is in a nightmarish tangle. [Chaos increases/worsens.]
3. Finally, with the coming to light of things not previously recognized, perceptions are dramatically changed. The shadows are dispelled the situation is miraculously transformed, and the little world is brought together in a state of joyful union. [Revelation of the cause of the chaos; transformation to order.]

[Note: this is 'comedy' in the Classical sense, not necessarily in the humorous sense.]

(150)

VI: Tragedy [(e.g. *Romeo and Juliet*, *Skinny*) Consisting of:]

1. Anticipation Stage
2. Dream Stage
3. Frustration Stage
4. Nightmare Stage
5. Destruction or death wish stage

(156-157)

VII: Rebirth [(e.g. *30 Days*, *Beauty and the Beast*) Consisting of:]

1. A young hero or heroine falls under the spell of a dark power. [Enthrallment stage.]
2. For awhile, all may seem to go well, or the threat may seem to have receded. [Illusion continues/Danger recedes.]
3. But it approaches again and the hero or heroine is seen imprisoned in the state of living death. [Return of the threat/captivity.]
4. This continues for a long time when it seems that the dark power has completely triumphed. [Seeing triumph of evil.]
5. But finally comes the miraculous redemption: either, where the imprisoned figure is a heroine, by the hero; or, where it is the hero, by a Young Woman or Child. [Miraculous redemption by gender/age specific rescuer.]

(204)

Again, it may be simplistic to evaluate books solely on the presence or absence of these story characteristics. Though these plot traits were taken directly from the Booker text (with exceptions for the bracketed expansions), Booker's follow-up explanations were far more sophisticated and may warrant a full examination. Reviewer Adele Geras even argues that the book could be of 'enormous interest' not only to writers but to 'teachers, sixth form [U.S. high school] students' as well as anyone who wishes to 'tell stories' (18).

However, if we use these lists as guideposts to determine which books follow which story formats (multiple formats being a possibility; readers were asked to note *all* forms a story fit) and how well they follow them, we might be able to determine something about resonance and form on a very basic level. I would even hypothesize that the more 'basic plots' a book includes, the more resonant the book will be; a full inclusion of many basic plots would elevate a book to the level of monomyth, bringing us closer to the idea of deep resonance patterns in the psyche that apply equally throughout all of the human race. Should this hypothesis hold, it will no doubt inform the final structure of *Secrets of the Mami Wata.*

Maureen Murdock's Heroine Cycle

Joseph Campbell's 'Hero Cycle' has long been billed as the 'Human Story,' claiming deep resonance in the population at large. Sales of certain franchises seem to hold this theory up: *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, and *Star Wars* are all examples of stories that fit into the mould of the Campbell Hero Cycle. Indeed, when Jack Zipes, in his book *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from the Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter,* complains of his incomprehension of Harry Potter's success, seeing as it is just the same old story told again (Zipes), one can imagine Campbell's propensity to respond that it might be so popular precisely *because* it is the same old story again.

Murdock's Theory, however, is that while Campbell calls the Hero Cycle the *human* story, it is really the *male*—specifically the white, European, upper-class, able-bodied, heterosexual male—story. Thus while it, indeed, has proven successful, there is something alarming about the fact that it bills (white-European-upper-class-able-bodied-heterosexual) male resonance as *human* resonance and that story theorists have somehow overlooked the fact that the throngs of people in line to watch the newest *Star Wars* film are more male than female. Murdock's proposal lays out what she calls the 'Heroine Cycle' and defends such a story's importance.

Before a discussion of her theory, there are two issues that must be addressed in some detail: the first is about the idea of a 'heroine' cycle as it relates to storytelling; the second is about the issue of gender in YA lit more generally.

On The Problems Pertaining to the Idea of a Female Story Cycle

As a young, developing, writer in an undergraduate writing class, I remember someone asking about whether or not there was a 'Heroine Cycle'—that is, a plot cycle that achieves the same level of resonance with a female protagonist and a female audience as the Campbell Cycle theoretically achieves with a male hero and male audience.[10] As the majority of the novel-reading population happens to be female—Eric Weiner of NPR reports that males make up a mere 20% of the fiction market (Weiner)—this is a question any novel writer should be concerned about. If 80% of a reading audience is female, shouldn't practicality demand that we be concerned about telling the type of story that resonates with *them*? Or is there a chicken/egg conundrum: what readers find *is* resonant for them, thus, the fact that 80% of the YA novel audience is female indicates that YA literature is abnormally skewed toward girls to begin with?

The current position in YA lit tends toward the latter and in spite of the fact that 80% of the audience is female, authors and publishers routinely attempt to provide books that appeal to either males or to both genders. Indeed, authors of YA lit have unique challenges in that they are tasked not only to be *entertainers* of their audience, but also to be *educators* of their audience. The U.S. public education system does not typically divide groups into boys and girls, and so fiction writers

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10 Many scholars—notably Pearson & Pope and Lee R. Edwards—object to the use of the word 'heroine' to describe a story cycle in which the female takes on the primary role, i.e. the role of the hero. Edwards explains, 'A primary character, the hero inspires and requires followers; the heroine obeys, falls into line, takes second place. Although a hero can theoretically exist in a narrative without a heroine, the reverse is not the case. Hamlet's story is imaginable without Ophelia; Ophelia literally has no story without Hamlet. Role, not sex, divides the two' (5). However, because the assumption that 'hero' implies a primary role and 'heroine' implies a secondary role is, itself, fundamentally dependent upon the acceptance of the traditional 'Hero Cycle' being the default story cycle—its roles and names for roles the ultimate source of truth in story—I choose to leave Murdock's naming system in place. The word 'heroine' is used to imply gender, not role, and the 'heroine of a story' implies a female in a leading role.

who wish to be read in a school setting must attempt to reach *both* genders, no matter if the predominant reading group outside of school is that of girls. Thus, educational attention naturally turns to the question of how to turn boys into readers, instead of how to appeal to the majority of readers, who happen to be female. As Kathy Sanford notes in her *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* article, the whole of the last decade has been filled with 'considerable concern' for boys and their reading reluctance, causing educators to demand 'that something be done to fix the problem and to place attention where it belongs—on better education for boys' (302). This issue, which is causes fundamental rifts throughout educational literature, will be addressed more completely in the next section.

Campbell's own answer to the place of the female in the Hero Cycle is that she's always '*there*' which is an answer Murdock, for one, finds deeply unsatisfying as she believes women 'do not want to embody Penelope, waiting patiently, endlessly weaving and unweaving. They do not want to be handmaidens of the dominant male culture, giving service to the gods' (Murdock 2). In contrast to this sentiment, I personally remember being utterly content in my undergraduate writing classes with the answer that women could 'help the hero' along the way but that an attempt to fit the heroine into the Hero Cycle would fall flat. Granted, such a view only illuminates an embryonic feminist education, but among writing circles, including, apparently, the ones in which I received my initial training as a YA writer, the sentiment that [Heroines = Flat] is not only pervasive, it is persistent. As I am compiling this critical work in an attempt to inform my own creative writing, it is a sentiment that must be adequately reconsidered.

While reading Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi's argument that women fit well into the role of the hero in *Motherself*—which at its 1988 publication was among the earliest

attempts at creating a Heroine Cycle[11] (Rabuzzi)—readers are struck by just *how* flat the idea of woman-as-Campbellian-hero seems.

The general idea of Rabuzzi's book is consistent with the aim of identifying a resonant female plot cycle: the 'Way of the Mother' is the female 'counterpart of the familiar quest of the hero' (Rabuzzi 21). But the further into the book one reads, the more unsatisfying the conclusions become. Even as Rabuzzi argues that women should embrace their female rites (like birth, breastfeeding, menstruation, etc.) as sacred, the model she provides is that of the *male* hero. Each of her chapter headings corresponds to a phase of the very Hero Cycle she claims is male. And though she argues that the process of giving birth is *heroic*, she never breaks away from the traditional male cycle to make her argument. Thus, her entire argument basically boils down to, 'Women are just as good as men.' And since the form she uses to prove this is the male Hero Cycle, she's basically arguing, 'The best way to be is *like a man.*' It is easy to see why this sentiment is objectionable.

Of course, the book is typical of scholarship from its particular era of gender study. Nancy Mellin McCracken notes in her article, 'Gender Issues and the Teaching of Writing,' that the 1970's and 1980's were notorious for trying to 'erase' the differences between the sexes, assuming that the acceptance of differences would necessarily reinforce gender-based discrimination (McCraken 115). The problem is that as more attention has been paid to the issue of gender, more evidence has mounted that this strategy is not only ineffective, it's fundamentally false. McCracken refers to 'the growing body of knowledge from philosophy, psychology, and communication studies concerning gender-role differences in the ways men and

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11 Other notable attempters include: Lee R. Edwards, whose paper, 'The Labors of Psyche: Toward a Theory of Female Heroism' appeared in 1979 with the completed argument appearing in book form, *Psyche as Hero*, in 1984 and Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope whose 1981 book, *The Female Hero in American and British Literature* argued that women can and should fit into the mould of the hero.

women learn to use language' (116), implying that any attempt to minimize differences between sexes simply reinforces patterns that favoured males in the first place.

But while seeing Rabuzzi's book in its historical context is understandable, it is somewhat problematic that later arguments present different obstacles that are almost as insurmountable.

For example, Susan Knutson in her—later than Rabuzzi's, and thence generally more developed in terms of its feminist implications—article, 'Protean Travelogue in Nicole Brossard's 'Picture Theory': Feminist Desire and Narrative Form,' argues that the traditional story cycle is quite male in its very architecture. She says, 'Conventional story structure correlates closely with the formal elements constituting a journey. In narratological terms, a journey can always be seen as a quest in which a subject seeks an object and the six terms of narrative grammar fall easily into place' (Knutson, Protean Travelogue in Nicole Brossard's 'Picture Theory': Feminist Desire and Narrative Form 197). In other words, the traditional story takes the form of the Hero Cycle. And because 'the generic which functions at the sentence level to produce culturally determined mental representations of the "universal" human being also serve at the narrative level as a default or generic representation of the hero' (Knutson, Protean Travelogue in Nicole Brossard's 'Picture Theory': Feminist Desire and Narrative Form 199), we are used to hearing stories that feature *men.* *Star Wars* is about Luke, *The Lord of the Rings* about Frodo, *Harry Potter* about Harry Potter. Ultimately she says, 'who doubts that the traditional subject of European action narratives is male? Induction easily demonstrates that in European-based cultures, the default mental representation of a hero has for many years been that of a white, able-bodied, heterosexual man'

(Knutson, Protean Travelogue in Nicole Brossard's 'Picture Theory': Feminist Desire and Narrative Form 199). Pearson and Pope, authors of *The Female Hero in American and British Literature*, echo Knutson's observation. They say:

> Our understanding of the basic spiritual and psychological archetype of human life has been limited, however, by the assumption that the hero and central character of the myth is male. The hero is almost always assumed to be white and upper class as well. The journey of the upper-class white male—a socially, politically, and economically powerful subgroup of the human race—is identified as the generic type for the normal human condition; and other members of society—racial minorities, the poor, and women—are seen as secondary characters, important only as obstacles, aids, or rewards in his journey.' (4)

While the Pearson and Pope text is ultimately problematic in that, like the Rabuzzi text, it adheres to the idea that female heroism must conform to the same form as male heroism—ultimately falling prey to the very assumptions that elevated the form to the default position in the first place—Knutson's text seems to make a direct argument against Campbell when she criticizes the idea that the quest is thought of as 'universal' (199) when it is really just another example of what she calls in her *Tessera* article the 'masculine generic' (Knutson, Challenging the Masculine Generic 76), a problem that pervades language at a grammatical level. Because of its default nature, Knutson argues that the Campbell structure, or quest, is 'a problematic vehicle for feminist narrative' (Knutson, Protean Travelogue in Nicole Brossard's 'Picture Theory': Feminist Desire and Narrative Form 199).

The insurmountable problem with this argument, however, is that Knutson's advocated alternative, is the Brossard 'Picture Theory'—a text that may not be capable of rhetorical success, especially in a market situation similar to YA's. Knutson uses this text to argue that instead of a quest, feminine narrative is to be seen as more of a 'holographic' idea—with different threads of light coming to create a three-dimensional image (202) and while the complexity of Knutson's interpretation of the text offers a certain beauty, young readers may not be able to relate to the original story. They may see such literary writing as 'dull' and, thus, Brossard's story is a flawed model on which to base narrative theory for young girls. Whether or not it conforms to a higher metaphor of three-dimensionality and whether or not it seems to answer the feminist ideas of theorists, the fact remains most young adult readers have not had, nor will ever have, any desire to go and read the story.

This conflict between the theory and practice is one of the fundamental conflicts of YA fiction.

A YA audience will not likely recognize sound feminist/post-colonial/post-structural/etc. theory and an author's attempt to serve a theoretical construct may have the potential to alienate an audience. This is in no way a dismissal of such theoretical constructs, indeed, it is more of a posited question to working writers and one for which I hope to find some indications in the statistical data. Is there a way to straddle the demands of theory and practice? Or are the two mutually exclusive? Teenagers may never be well-versed in literary studies or feminist theory. They may not care if the overarching metaphor of a feminine story seems more 'refined' or 'three dimensional' than the traditional story cycle. Indeed, one of the only things they may care about is *do I want to turn the page or not?* Does this mean that literary theories are of no use to the YA author? I don't imagine this is the case. But

this study aims to inductively identify principles of resonance, and the problem with resonance is that once we find it, it may or may not fit within deductive theoretical constructs. There is even a possibility that resonance may rankle our ethical senses.

But then again, our ethical senses are often subject to the whims of culture and while some parts of resonance may also be subject to the same whims, there are bound to be elements that—for good or ill—speak beyond culture. That perhaps may even run counter to our cultural ideals. And while an author may want to 'correct' false or misleading cultural or counter-cultural ideals (especially in YA literature with its educational leanings), the attempt to make the female story 'fit' into the male story strikes as a culturally-guided activity. To tell a powerful story, authors can't speak to logic, they have to speak to the deeper, emotional senses. They may be able to 'correct' a stray impulse or two in readers, but 1) perhaps authors are just as easily *misled* by their own cultural assumptions as they are *led* by higher ideals; and 2) if authors indulge *too* much in 'corrective' activity, they risk the pedantic, the didactic and ultimately the loss of their audience.

It is a prickly line for any author to toe.

And so when my undergraduate writing professor echoed Campbell and offered the idea that women's stories are amorphous—supportive roles that never enter into the heroic cycle—and that the best approach to writing resonant literature is to stick with the traditional Hero Cycle, I believed her. 'Girls will read a story with a male protagonist,' I was told, over and over, 'but boys won't read a story with a female protagonist.'

If boys won't read about girls but girls will read about boys, the natural conclusion for writers is that it's best to write stories about boys.

And as obviously flawed as this conclusion is, it is a conclusion that in YA literature has become something like unto dogma.

On the Various Issues Pertaining to Gender and Literacy in the YA Market

One of the striking findings of this study is that while females account for 80% of the book-buying market, only approximately 50% of the sample books are headed by a single female protagonist. This split is likely an attempt to address the 80-20 gender split in readership, trying to make it easier to attract male readers by going back to the sentiment that 'girls will read about a boy, but boys won't read about a girl,' a sentiment echoed throughout education literature. Elizabeth Dutro, for example, observes a boy mock another boy's reading choice seemingly 'based on the [female] sex of the protagonist' (376). Beth Benjamin and Linda Irwin-DeVitts cite their alarm in a literacy study at the 'replies by a number of males who claimed that they had not read, or would not read, a book with a female main character' (66). As far back as 1972 we see teachers try to fight the claim that 'boys' stories *must* outnumber girls' because boys won't read stories about females' (Graebner 57, emphasis added) and yet long into the 21st century, the claim of boys refusing to read about girls is persistent.

Authors have attempted to address the gender split in YA lit in various ways. One of the notable strategies found in this study's sample was that of using multiple protagonists, including both males and females. While a bouncing point of view is something generally eschewed in adult fiction, it appears to have been used with some resonance success in YA (see 'Results' section). Similarly, Lois Stover, author of 'Must Boys Be Boys and Girls Be Girls? Exploring Gender Through Reading Young Adult Literature,' argues that the placing of strong and interesting female

characters *behind* male protagonists is a possible strategy to slowly overcoming highly gendered reading. She says, 'Perhaps if young men are attracted to these titles because they have male main characters, they will, in addition develop some new insights and appreciation for nontraditional females' (Stover 97).

These strategies are briefly given because it is vital to keep reiterating that the aim of this study is *writing*-based—concerned much more with the production of creative literature than with its dissemination. Ultimately, I must produce a *text* and though the act of getting that text to the appropriate readers is largely the task of my publisher and/or the teachers/librarians who assign the text to their students, in YA lit the concerns of educators cannot be completely removed from the act of production. Educators seek education for all, whereas an author seeks an audience that may or may not include all. But because one of the dominant uses of YA lit is in the educational setting, there is bound to be a disconnect between what the reading masses *want* to read and what educators can use for their classes which contain many more males than the typical reading market.

But the fact that the role of a YA author is perceived as part-educator, itself, has some troublesome gender implications. For much of the last two centuries, teaching children and/or young adults has been seen as 'women's work.' Janet Miller, in her article 'Gender and Teachers' notes that this 'descriptive thesis'—that most U.S. teachers are female—has also led to negative theses—that 'intelligent women somehow become devalued by schoolteaching' or that 'schoolteaching somehow becomes devalued through its identification with women' (181). She argues that there are gender issues at the root of this tendency to devalue 'women's work,' also noting that, as opposed to their male counterparts, 'women have been led to feel that they can integrate and use all their attributes if they use them for others,

but not for themselves' (Miller 180). YA lit, as opposed to adult lit, is a field that, like education, is predominately filled by women. (Perhaps not coincidentally, it is also a field of somewhat less perceived prestige: see next paragraph.) 70% of the YA books in this study's sample were written by women and women have *always* made up the majority of YA authors. Contrast this with the fact that a 1989 study of Newbery and Caldecott winners from the 1980's showed that although the majority of winning authors/illustrators were, indeed, women, 'the books consistently portray men and women in traditional sex roles and feature male characters far more prominently than female characters' (N. M. McCracken 5).

Because of the perception of females as 'other'-oriented and because female professions tend both to be 'other'-oriented *and* of less prestige, it is not surprising that some—even including some YA authors, themselves, like Margo Rabb who felt the need to write a *New York Times* apology: 'I'm YA and I'm OK'(Rabb)— may perceive YA lit as somehow less legitimate than adult lit. YA lit is not only female-dominated, it is focused on the 'other,' i.e. the writers are typically expected by definition to be of a different demographic than the audience. YA has the *teaching* of young people ingrained into its ontology and because of this there may be a tendency not just for the genre to be seen as 'women's work' but for the market category to be devalued. This sentiment is one that many YA authors object to. Jody Feldman, for example, American author of the YA *Gollywhopper Games*, says on her website, 'Many people believe that authors of children's books eventually 'graduate' and go on to write books for adults. That's like saying your pediatrician may get good enough to, one day, be a doctor for grown-ups' (Feldman).

But attitudes about reading and writing in gendered ways are deeply ingrained. In an article titled, 'Re-Gendering the Reading of Literature,' Nancy

Mellin McCracken cites that one of the primary obstacles for women readers and writers alike is that boys learn to read 'as boys' and girls learn to read 'as boys.' She says, 'No one, not even the girls, gets much practice reading as girls' (N. M. McCracken 55).

But how does this information apply to the actual creation of a creative text?

It is known that gender divergences can be seen in the very creation of specific genres. Academic writing, for example, is typically devoid of the personal, favouring the analytical and concrete. However, a study by Cinthia Gannett of the University of New Hampshire found that females, as opposed to males, tend to 'weave together [the] social, academic, and personal' and a rejection of such is a rejection of a typically female style of thinking in favour of male thinking (Appleby 19). (It is for this very reason that this thesis avoids completely exorcising the personal; the strong gender implications of the study make it somewhat disingenuous to discuss gender bias while fully conforming to a method inherently gender-biased.)

With the recognition that gender divergences can be seen in the very definition of YA literature, however, there arises another concerning issue: whether there is something particularly female about the form of the novel. And if there is, does this indicate that perhaps the 80-20 split in readership is due more to gender-based preferences than the 'failure' of educators to promote literacy? Literacy Researcher Hans Wagemaker found that 'in most countries, girls at age 9 were more likely to read books whereas boys were more likely to read comics' (Wagemaker 101) and that in writing 'girls were most favoured by narratives' (77). Kathy Sanford, in her article 'Gendered Literacy Experiences,' notes that boys are much more likely to engage with different kinds of literacy than girls (Sanford). Likewise, Elaine Millard in her 1997 book *Differently Literate*, cites several studies which back

up the notion that boys are not lagging in the frequency of their *reading,* per se, but that they do not make the kinds of reading choices typically rewarded in an English classroom. She cites an Australian survey that 'found that 41.6% of boys chose not to read fiction'—this compared with 19.3% of the girls (Millard 13). She also notes two studies of UK primary schools, both indicating that 'the major difference in reading attitudes [...] is similarly located in the content of what was read rather than a lack of interest in reading itself' (Millard 13). She echoes the findings of Wagemaker in that boys are more likely than girls to favour comics, a portion of them reading 'nothing but comics' (Millard 62). The conclusion that Kathy Sanford comes to is partially summed up in her citation of Marsh who says that while 'girls' literacy is also often limited by their propensity to conform to traditional conception of literacy'—like the reading of novels—boys still eventually have an advantage because 'employment is increasingly predicated on wider notions of literacy (embedded within the technological developments since the 1980s)' (Sanford 314). Sanford concludes that 'Boys are engaging in the world differently, using alternative literacies for their present and future benefit. In the long run, in many societal structures boys will still benefit by being male, and girls will still lose out by being female' (315).

But if boys are not struggling with their reading, why are the claims of their literacy challenges so persistent? Wagemaker's (et. al) 1996 study of literacy in 32 countries sought to address the issue of whether or not boys *are* lagging behind girls, and, if they are, whether the primary reasons for the lag are cultural in nature. While the authors asserted that the results could not support a physiological basis for gendered literacy differences, they note that 'the observation that the early and almost universal advantage regarding reading performance displayed by girls across

domains and across countries at age 9 is fairly systematically absent by age 14 suggests that maturational factors may partially account for gender differences in reading' (Wagemaker 101). When cultural factors were found to influence literacy, they typically were to the *disadvantage* of girls—mother's lack of education, for example, indicating a likelihood for girls to under-perform on one of the three outlined modes of literacy. The disadvantages of boys, however, were *not* similarly linked to cultural phenomena. The study asserts that 'the social origin influence is more apparent in the type of literacy in which girls have less achievement' (Wagemaker 81).

This data is of particular interest to YA authors, who are typically writing to an older young audience—an audience whose literacy is not necessarily constrained by a lack of maturation. Gender splits in YA readership may, ultimately, have more to do with preference than with lack of skill, so authors, educators, and publishers may be best served by addressing this preference instead of trying to fight phenomena that are without cultural basis.

This noted, many educators worry that the ways theorists/educators have been approaching literacy and gender are fundamentally flawed. The authors of *Boys, Literacies and Schooling: The Dangerous Territories of Gender-Based Literacy Reform* argue that, 'The old, familiar and comforting models around literacy, schooling and gender have not taken us where we want to go. Schools and literacy classrooms have produced and reproduced narrow and limiting understandings about what it means to be a boy and what it means to be a girl. This has had real—and *really* dangerous—consequences for our kids, our societies, ourselves' (Rowan 6). In his review of the literature on boys and literacy, Marcus Weaver-Hightower argues a similar point about the importance of boy-centred literacy study: 'Such work,' he

says, 'has produced the necessary complement to the research on girls, increasing our recognition that gender inequity is not a deficiency in girls but rather is caused by problematic masculinities and femininities' (Weaver-Hightower 490).

But does improving the education of boys mandate poorer education for girls? Perhaps not in all cases, but we can certainly see a tendency to adopt somewhat 'anti-girl' policies in an attempt to better serve boys. For example, even as William G. Brozo, author of the International Reading Association's *To Be A Boy, To Be a Reader,* argues that boys relate better to literature when it focuses on 'positive male archetypes' (5), his argument for girls is not that they be exposed to positive female archetypes, but that they, too, benefit from being exposed to *male* archetypes. He concludes, 'teachers of male and female adolescents can create learning environments that have special supports for boys' literacy efforts without excluding girls' (Brozo 8). While it's hard to find anything with this last statement to *disagree* with, per se, there is something unsettling buried within the assumptions of the idea—and the idea is one of the pervasive ideas of contemporary education. Assumption one: boys and girls have different issues when it comes to the acquisition of literacy. Assumption two: nevertheless, they must be taught as a single unit—girls must be taught alongside boys. Conclusion: the framework of the pedagogy necessarily centres around the boys. Problem one: Girls can't be excluded. Dismissal: but a boy-centred pedagogy doesn't exclude girls. See Brozo's own later explanation: 'Young women are just as stepped in mass media's constructions of masculinity as boys are. Books that depict males as multidimensional individuals who break masculine stereotypes do as much to erode girls' rigid conceptions of boys as they do for boys' (Brozo 8).

However, wouldn't it be far simpler to challenge one of the initial assumptions? To propose that if boys and girls assimilate literacy in different ways, perhaps they should be taught in different ways?

While academics like Sanford increasingly worry about 'the ease and speed with which girls are again made invisible in concerns of education' (Sanford 302), Brozo echoes an increasingly common argument that males need more specific attention because they '(a) commit all but a small percentage of homicides, (b) are far more likely to be victims of violent crime than women, (c) take their own lives at alarming rates, and (d) make up the vast majority of drug addicts and people who are homeless' (Brozo 3). But however alarming these facts might be (their alarming nature perhaps accounting for their long life in mass media), they are also something of a red herring from the issue of literacy. Furthermore, if it turns out that there *are* fundamental gender differences in the way that students learn (and the research of Wagemaker et al. indicates that there are), inherent gender differences could also account for all of the facts above; and in skewing literacy toward the needs of boys at the expense of girls, educators may ultimately be allowing hysteria about a non-issue (or an only marginal issue) to once again undercut girls' learning opportunities.

Perhaps a far more effective corollary would be that if boys benefit from seeing positive male archetypes, girls might benefit from seeing positive female archetypes. If a diversity of viewpoints is desired—as Brozo, himself, argues when he says that exposing girls to male viewpoints is desirable: 'This situation,' he says, 'is not substantially different from one in which a teacher uses literature with diverse ethnic and cultural themes to promote pluralism and demonstrate sensitivity of students of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds' (Brozo 8)—then *all* students should be exposed to both male *and* female archetypes.

So does the 80-20 split imply that too much is already being done to appeal to girls? Or does it imply that there is something about the *form* of fiction that is more suited to the female psyche?

While the opinions of educators are obviously divided, this study aims to answer this question in a different way.

As two of the three data methods utilized in this study look only at books that perform *contrary* to the expectations of their marketing, the positive trends uncovered show us the largely *unanswered* desires of the market—traits that were not recognized as being worthy of increased marketing, but that nevertheless produced something of a hunger in the audience, corresponding to higher sales in spite of little marketing effort. If it is found that adhering to female-oriented plot cycles *increases* audience resonance, the implication is that publishing as it currently stands is not doing enough to appeal to its majority audience; in this case, the strong attempt to appeal to boys could, at best, be seen as a missed opportunity, and, at worst, be yet another implication that a still-highly-patriarchal society too-easily dismisses the concerns of girls. If it is found, on the other hand, that adhering to female-oriented plot cycles *decreases* audience resonance, it can be assumed that there is a female skew in fiction-production and that, indeed, much more attention should be placed on telling the types of stories that appeal to boys. The question is which gendered plot cycle to look for.

Choosing the Murdock Cycle

There are several good theories and theorists about the Heroine Cycle—though not as many as expected considering the sheer numbers of girls who read stories. The previously discussed Rabuzzi was among the first considered for this

study and dismissed for the reasons described above, followed by Susan Knutson's 'holographic' proposal (Knutson, Protean Travelogue in Nicole Brossard's 'Picture Theory': Feminist Desire and Narrative Form), Lee R. Edwards' *Psyche as Hero* (Edwards), Christine Mains' 'Duomyth' (Mains), and Clarissa Pinkola Estes' voluminous *Women Who Run with the Wolves* (Estes). After a few more explorations of smaller ideas, Maureen Murdock's *The Heroine's Journey* was chosen as it was both suited to numeric evaluation, published in a market (not academic) setting, and most closely aligned with the work of Campbell. In fact, Murdock begins her book discussing an unsettling personal conversation with Joseph Campbell about female heroes. And as an evaluation of gender-bias in the Campbell and/or traditional academics of story is a large part of the reasoning behind the inclusion of a 'Heroine Cycle,' this alignment with Campbell is crucial.

Murdock's *Heroine's Journey* envisions a female hero cycle that is analogous to the Campbell cycle, yet different in distinct ways.

First, while in the Campbell cycle the hero might journey into a variety of nondomestic situations meant to represent the 'beyond,' in the Murdock cycle this journey is presented more specifically as a descent—generally it's a descent into the underworld where the heroine faces off with a dark goddess, ultimately accepting the unity between the dark and light sides of the female goddess, and being reborn herself. Scholars will recognize this story pattern in the myth of Persephone. This descent may present a more satisfying metaphor than other directional ideas about women's stories—for example the 'inward' and 'outward' 'spiral' advocated by Christopher Vogler (Vogler xx) which may give the impression of an unstable, and/or hysterical heroine. The Murdock cycle, conversely, offers a journey that is as

heroic as the male journey—though tending toward different goals and objectives, and having a different structure.

The ten steps of the cycle outlined by Murdock are:

1. Separation from the Feminine
2. Identification with the masculine and gathering of allies
3. Road of trials: meeting ogres and dragons
4. Finding the boon of success
5. Awakenings to feelings of spiritual aridity, death
6. Initiation and descent to the Goddess
7. Urgent yearning to reconnect with the feminine
8. Healing the mother/daughter split
9. Healing the wounded masculine
10. Integration of masculine and feminine

Pictorially, the full Murdock cycle can be represented thus:

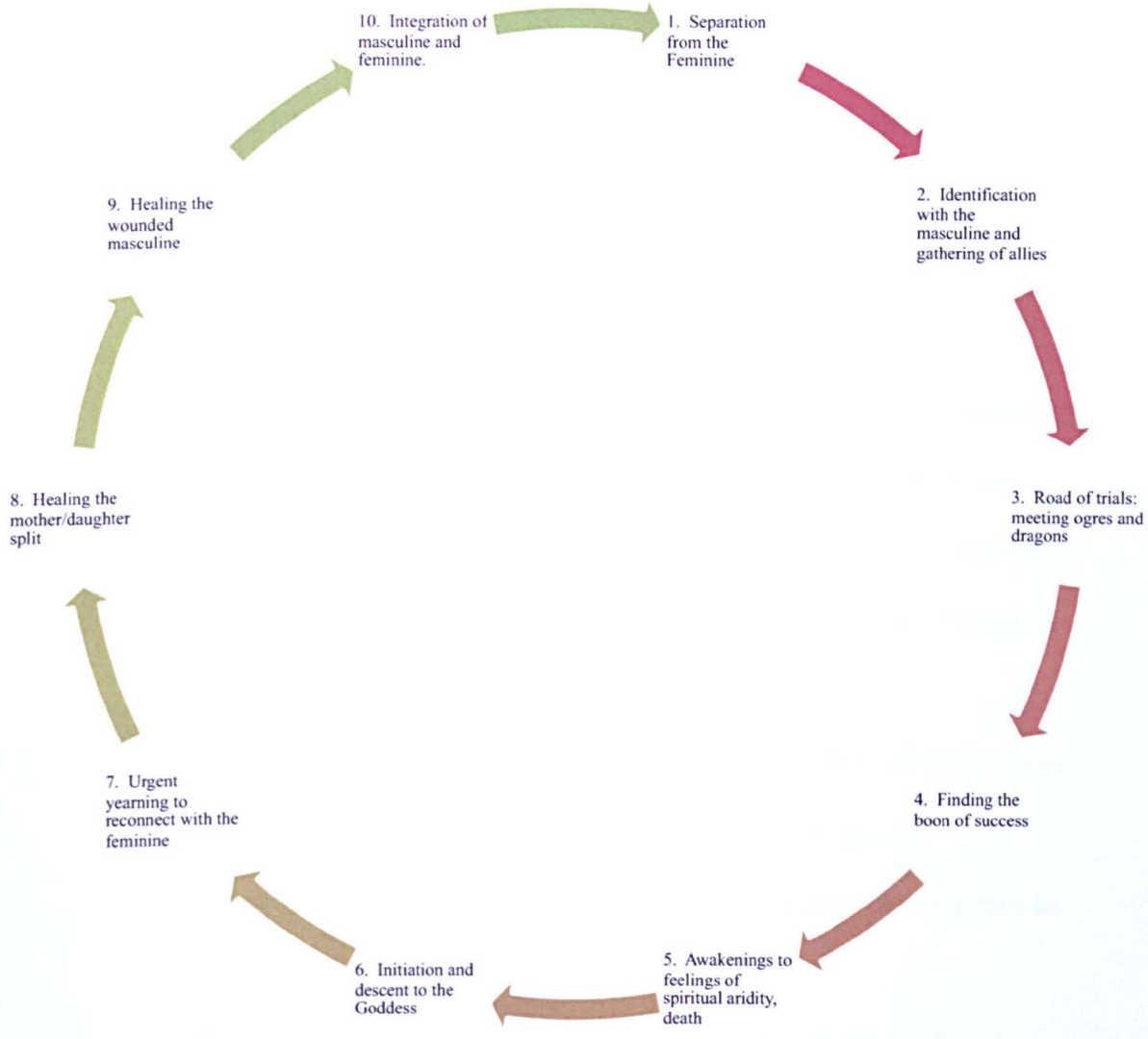


Figure 25: Pictorial Representation of the Murdock Heroine Cycle

In using Murdock's work to evaluate each of the books from the sample, the presence or absence of each of these ten steps of the Murdock cycle were recorded.

In addition, a few other characteristics that were based upon Murdock's work, though not included in her10-step story cycle, were noted.

1. Whether or not the story contained a recognition that the dark goddess and the light goddess were one goddess. This can be referred to as 'shadow naming' wherein the word 'shadow' is used in the Jungian sense and the distinction between light and dark is not the same distinction as that between good and evil. (Eli Rozik criticizes Christopher Booker for assigning 'light' and 'dark' neutral identities (552), but in female-oriented stories, it does seem that light versus dark and good versus evil cannot be considered synonymous dualities. Consider Scarlett O'Hara, or in a more modern example, the vampires of *Twilight.*)
2. Whether or not the heroine took on goddess-like characteristics; this is what Campbell refers to as 'Apotheosis,' though the gender distinction was specifically noted—taking on goddess-like qualities as opposed to god-like qualities.
3. Whether or not the 'urgent yearning to connect with the feminine' was directed mortally or immortally—i.e. was the yearning for a mother god? And, thus, is healing the mother/daughter split more about re-integrating a female idea of deity into the highly patriarchal Western monotheism?

From asking these questions of the sample books, it was hoped that the resonance levels of YA novels with female-oriented plot structures could be quantitatively evaluated and, thus, inform the structure of *Secrets of the Mami Wata.*

Dean Koontz's 'How to Write Bestselling Fiction'

The theorists hitherto discussed—Campbell, Booker, and Murdock—were the most academic of the five plot theorists selected. And though relying on academics can be useful, a full evaluation would not be complete without examining the opinion of one we might call an expert on resonance—a bestselling author. Many successful authors have written their opinions on writing. Stephen King's *On Writing* (King), Madeleine L'Engle's *The Rock that is Higher: Stories as Truth* (L'Engle), and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (Woolf) come to mind. These books differ from the type of writing book published by non-experts in that whatever is advocated, we know that the author has had some degree of success.

Dean Koontz has published more than 375 million books in the US market, including various popular series, like *Brother Odd*.[12] And though he writes for adults, his book, *How to Write Bestselling Fiction*, is much more suited to a numerical evaluation than the scant writing books available by YA authors like Madeleine L'Engle. Indeed, another one of the benefits of using an adult author for this portion is the added ability to evaluate the ways that the adult market might differ from the YA market and, thus, to more fully consider what it means to write YA when finalizing *Secrets of the Mami Wata*. Though Campbell/Booker/Murdock also didn't technically write about young adult fiction, theorists have noted the frequent connection between YA literature and various 'heroic' cycles like Campbell's (Nilsen et al., and Carter for example) and a comparison between these types of cycles—all billed as the format for *all* stories, not just adult stories—and the

12 See: http://www.deankoontz.com/about-dean/

Koontz cycle, much more geared toward popular adult fiction, could be illuminating during the story-formation processes required of my creative writing.

In the plot cycle recommended by Koontz, hereafter referred to at the Koontz plot cycle, there are six requisite steps:

1. The protagonist must be in 'Terrible Trouble.'
2. The trouble must become even more terrible.
3. The plot must contain many 'complications.'
4. There must be an absence of 'delays'
5. The protagonist's trouble must become life or death.
6. The protagonist must figure out how to save themselves based upon what they've learned from undergoing the 'Terrible Trouble.'

(Koontz chapter 4)

The distinction between the 'complication' and the 'delay' is the most pivotal of these steps. To clumsily paraphrase Koontz, think of it this way:

Two scenarios:

One: Let's say you're wanted for murder. There is one person in the entire world who can clear your name. So you go to her house. Only, her roommate says she's not there, she's gone to the gym. So you go to the gym. You see her car pulling out of the parking lot. You follow her. She goes into a crowded mall. You have trouble finding her, etc.

These are called DELAYS. We know that you'll get to her eventually, and when an author presents this kind of plot, they are just annoying readers by stringing them along in a probably boring way.

Scenario Two: you're wanted for murder. There is one person in the entire world who can clear your name. So you go to her house. Only, when you get there, her front door is open. You peek in. There's blood. There's a body. She's lying there dead. You hear police sirens and know that if you don't get out of there FAST, you're going to be wanted for TWO murders.

This is a complication.

The appeal of complications is visceral in nature. Whatever problems a protagonist has, the emotions of the reader become entangled as the problems become much worse, causing forward textual momentum. According to Koontz, complications are mandatory for best-selling fiction. Delays are to be avoided

(For Koontz's better executed version of this murder scenario as it relates to 'complication' versus 'delay,' see pp. 107-108 of his book.)

The Final Plot Theorist Considered Among the Independent Variables: Donald Maass and His 'Writing the Breakout Novel'

Maass, a New York City Literary Agent and self-proclaimed industry expert, gives highly specific advice about the format of novels he believes perform better than those that don't. Some of his advice may rankle authors, in that he places a lot of blame on the author for what others might clearly see as industry failure. He argues, 'The root cause of most midcareer meltdowns is the author's own writing,' (Maass 31) or that it's not a lack of marketing, promotion, covers, etc. that cause a book to fail, but that failure rests with the author who has 'failed to muster the techniques' (11). Some of these opinions seem particularly convenient in that Maas is, himself, part of the industry that seems to escape blame for book failures. Nevertheless, as his book is the most influential book available from someone with his credentials, a consideration of his argument is merited.

As with Koontz, Maass speaks about novels in general, not specifically YA books, though the Donald Maass Literary Agency accepts YA submissions and one imagines that the advice given in the book—advice that is general in its nature—is just as applicable to the YA market as any other. (And perhaps, again, a consideration of any seeming differences between the adult market and the YA market can be inferred after data collection.)

According to Maas, there are ten requisite plot elements of the 'breakout novel':

1. It must be plausible.
2. It must have inherent conflict.

3. It must be original.
4. It must have gut emotional appeal.
5. There must be high stakes.
6. There must be a rich and detailed setting.
7. The characters must be larger than life.
8. And they must be deep.
9. The plot must contain *all five* of: sympathetic character, complex conflict, complication, climax, and resolution.
10. And the book must have 'something to say.'

For this study, the presence or absence of each of these ten traits was recorded.

Additional questions were added inquiring about the complexity of the conflict and the believability of the author's world-building.

Again, as with all of the other theorists, Maass' advice extends beyond merely these ten requirements and Maass and others might object to the reduction of his advice. However, in terms of research procedure, a simplification is fundamentally necessary and if/when the boiled down version of Maass' advice proves true and/or applicable to the sample, and, thus, applicable to the creative portion of this thesis, future engagement in further research is possible.

Auxiliary Cover-Likeability Study

Corrine Kratz cites Oscar Wilde in her article about book covers: 'It's only shallow people who do not judge by appearances' (Kratz 179) and she reaffirms the idea that 'books *can* be told by their covers' explaining that both 'publishers and purchasers' are able to 'distinguish books by genre and by market' (Kratz 184). But whether or not this is true, the fact is many, if not most, authors of YA fiction—as well as authors from other genres—have very little control over the form/appearance of their book covers and a bad book cover can cause an author distress. (Feminist author Karla Jay hilariously laments, 'When I saw the cover of the anthology [...] I almost passed out' (Jay 5).)

But how much does the cover of a book influence its sales?

While, as author Timothy Schaffert notes, your editor might claim that cover decisions are based upon 'graphic expertise and marketing concerns of professionals' (Shaffert 77) and while agent Donald Maas might offer his dictums about how authors-who-whine-about-bad-covers-are-really-in-denial-about-how-bad-their-writing-is (Maass 15), one of the tenets of this study, as previously established, is to move toward an inductive, not deductive, method, and thence, to avoid reliance on pre-existing theoretical frameworks.

In other words, in order to know what teens think of covers, teens must be asked what they think about covers.

If their opinions can be shown to correlate with books that sold better or worse than marketing predicted, an inference is possible about the effect that a good or bad cover might have on a book's sales.

This endeavour required a location change, as the initial location of the study (a particularly religious portion of an already religious state) was not suited to results representative of the U.S. YA market at large.

The cover exercise thus took place in a Northern California high school—chosen because its demographics (racial, religious, and socioeconomic) were representative of the U.S. as a whole—and utilized 149 high school students.

By setting the test in a high school classroom some problems associated with convenience sampling were eliminated, as many teens go to school because they are legally required to, not because they want to. However, this might also have caused some skew in that a book cover doesn't need to appeal to all teenagers, only the teenagers likely to buy books. In order to compensate for this, all respondents were asked to name the approximate number of books that they bought in a year so it could be determined if overall likeability of book covers differed for readers and non-readers. There were not large divergences of opinion between the readers and non-readers, though the sample of self-proclaimed readers was small and, thus, a true representation of cover likeability among *confirmed* book-buyers might be needed in order to come to more definite conclusions.

With the aid of a computer projector, students were shown pictures of each of the 200 (+/-) books' covers (this included the covers of various books which were ultimately discarded for statistical reasons). When books were released with multiple covers, both covers were scored. Students were asked to respond, without thinking deeply and by relying on initial gut impulses, by rating each picture on a scale of 1-5. A score of 1 corresponded with a deep dislike of the cover-picture. A score of 5 corresponded with an intense like. (See appendix for a sample of the sheet they filled out.) Each form included some demographic information, but the forms were

essentially anonymous (i.e. did not ask them to record their names) and students were reassured that any identifying demographic information was for statistical aggregation purposes only and their identities would not be inferable from any gleaned/published data.

For simplification of analysis the data collection was done via quadrant—i.e. one quadrant per page with cover photos being shown on the overhead in alphabetical order. Students were not told the significance of the quadrants prior to their scoring. The quadrant method alone was used in analysis of the data, in that the desire was to obtain merely an *indication* of the effect that covers had on sales and therefore the single method was sufficient, especially considering the fact that the quadrant scheme is the most likely to uncover smaller discrepancies.

During the collection of the data, strict silence was not enforced and, consequently many of the students commented about covers as they were shown. Comments included those of the like, 'Ugh! Feet are gross!' and, 'It's got a guitar and a girl's belly button. I'm SO GIVING it a FIVE!' Though these types of comments could cause some skew in the data, it is not only unavoidable when dealing with subjects of an average age of 16, it might also be a better representation of the way real-life teens choose to buy or not buy a book. Teens, greatly influenced by peers, might be more likely to buy a book if certain friends find it attractive, and as these teens are the same teens likely to change their scores based upon peer reaction, the presence of this reaction is not entirely problematic, especially considering that teens were aware of the essential anonymity of their answers.

Once this data was gathered it was input into spreadsheets and the averages were recorded.

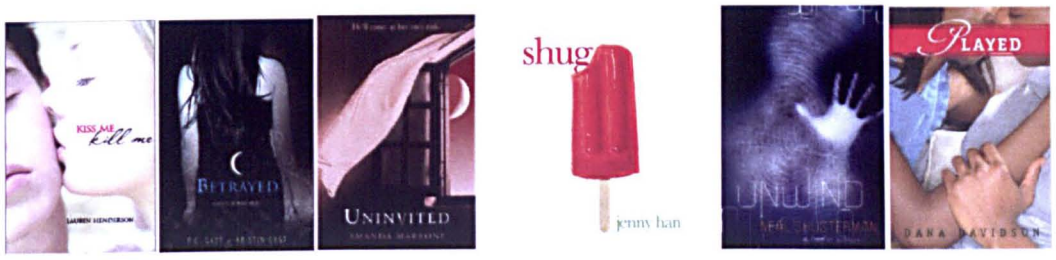
Books that sold better than their marketing predicted (quadrant two books) had a cover-likeability score 11% (+/- 5%) higher than books that sold worse than their marketing predicted (quadrant three books). Eleven books from quadrant two (books selling better than predicted by marketing) had a cover score more than one standard deviation higher than the mean, as compared to one book from quadrant three (books selling worse than predicted by marketing). Conversely, five books from quadrant two had a score more than one standard deviation below the mean, compared to five books from quadrant three with a score more than one standard deviation below the mean. This seems to indicate that a likeable cover is more beneficial than an unlikeable cover is damaging.

Likewise, the score differences seem to be largely driven by the tastes of girls. When split into gender groups, the girls' cover-likeability scores for books that sold better than predicted were 14.5% (+/- 6.5%) higher than books that sold worse than predicted. The boys showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups of books.

The conclusion, therefore, seems to be that a likeable cover does give book sales a degree of advantage, but only if the likeable cover in question appeals to girls. Considering the fact that 80% of the market is female, this is not surprising. Indeed, these results do not indicate that the cover tastes of boys do not affect book sales, but that the female book market is much more powerful than the male market in the case of YA fiction. In order to target the effect of male taste on 'male' books, a sample of entirely 'male' books could be shown to an entirely male audience in another study.

The following are examples of covers which showed high (more than one standard deviation above the mean) and low (more than one standard deviation below the mean) likeability scores with girls:

High:



Low:

Though authors have little control over the final appearance of their books, being aware of the extent to which covers influence sales levels can help authors, myself included, to appropriately evaluate their work and the reasons behind its market success or failure.

Part Two: The Results

The Linear Model

After sample sales scores were adjusted for marketing according to the model provided through linear regression (for exact scores, see the appendix), the Pearson's Relationship Coefficient (PRC) was calculated for each of the 150+ independent variables. This was the method termed the 'linear scheme.'

As expected, no single variable crossed the 0.3 (absolute value) threshold, but there were several variables that scored between the 0.1 and 0.3 (absolute value) threshold. Though this kind of Pearson's score doesn't say anything conclusive, it does give an indication of traits that *might* be important, especially if other data show indication of such. Thus, these traits will be compared with results from the next chapters and in cases of agreement it becomes more likely that the trait in question corresponds with increased audience resonance.

The data scoring between 0.1 and 0.3 (absolute values) is herein presented. The first table includes all of the PRCs that had a positive scoring (a positive scoring indicates that as the independent variable increases, resonance increases) and the second table includes all of the PRCs that had a negative scoring (a negative PRC indicates that as an independent variable increases, resonance decreases). A full table of all relevant data will be presented in the next section.

Independent Variables	Pearson's Relationship Coefficients with values > 0.1 (Positive PRCs indicate that as an independent variable increases, resonance increases)
# pages	0.174
Did you like your book? (1) yes (0) meh (-1) no	0.117
Pacing slow (1) med (2) fast (3)	0.138
Was romance a driving plot factor? Yes (1) No (0)	0.130
Tense (1) past (2) present	0.160
Emotive? 1-10	0.177
Edginess 1-10	0.138
Do you think that adults would read this book? That is has potential to cross over into the adult market? (1) yes (0) no	0.210
Is the book 'experimental' somehow? (written in verse, page format atypical, point of view atypical, etc.) (1) yes (0) no	0.104
Does the book ask 'big questions?' (1) yes (0) no	0.297

Independent Variables	Pearson's Relationship Coefficients with values > 0.1 (Positive PRCs indicate that as an independent variable increases, resonance increases)
Is the over-arching conflict of the book a complex conflict? (1) yes (0) no	0.114
if I lived in book's world I'd be ecstatic (1) yes (0) no	0.277
Stressed (1) yes (0) no	0.128
full of angst (1) yes (0) no	0.136
Did you feel very many emotions at all when you read? (1) yes (0) no	0.180
Was one of them yearning? (1) yes (0) no	0.260
Would you recommend this book to a friend/beloved teenager? (1) yes (0) no	0.144
Murdock: Road of trials: meeting ogres and dragons (defined for volunteer readers as 'crap keeps going wrong.') (1) present (0) absent	0.110
Murdock: Initiation and descent to the goddess. (1) present (0) absent	0.116
Murdock: Urgent yearning to reconnect with feminine. (1) present (0) absent	0.128
Murdock: Healing the mother/daughter split. (1) present (0) absent	0.173

Independent Variables	Pearson's Relationship Coefficients with values > 0.1 (Positive PRCs indicate that as an independent variable increases, resonance increases)
Total % correlation with Murdock cycle	0.232
Crossing the first threshold. (1) present (0) absent	0.108
Calling/Yearning for mother/ mother God. (1) present (0) absent	0.122
Recognition that the dark goddess and the light goddess are ONE goddess. (1) present (0) absent	0.134
Female Apotheosis. The heroine takes on goddess-like powers. (1) present (0) absent	0.122
More than one Booker form? (1) yes (0) no	0.193
Koontz: The protagonist is in terrible trouble. (1) yes (0) no	0.145
Koontz: The protagonist's trouble becomes life/death (1) yes (0) no	0.144
Total % correlation with Koontz	0.158
Maass: There must be inherent conflict. (1) there is (0) there isn't	0.199
Maass: It must have gut emotional appeal. (1) it does (0) it doesn't	0.162
Maass: Characters must be deep. (1) they are (0) aren't	0.183

Independent Variables	Pearson's Relationship Coefficients with values > 0.1 (Positive PRCs indicate that as an independent variable increases, resonance increases)
Maass: Five plot elements must be present: 1) sympathetic character; 2) complex conflict; 3) complication 4) climax 5)resolution. Are all 5 there? (1) yes (0) no	0.114
Maass: Does the book 'have something to say?' (1) yes (0) no	0.170
Total % correlation with Maas	0.126
Was race somehow an important part of the book or did it *seem* to be? (1) yes (0) no	0.113
Does the book stereotype along racial lines? (1) yes (0) no	0.122
Is the book aware of its own stereotyping? (1) yes (0) no	0.109
Anything else racially troubling or potentially offensive? (1) yes (0) no	0.177
Religion driving plot factor? (1) yes (0) no	0.114

Figure 26: Independent Variables with Positive PRCs >0.1

Independent Variables	Pearson's Relationship Coefficients with values < -0.1 (Negative PRCs indicate that as the independent variable increases, resonance decreases.)
Did the book 'talk down' to you? (1) yes (0) no	-0.115
Do you think a teenager would feel like the book was 'talking down' to them? (1) yes (0) no	-0.149
If I lived in this world, I'd be So. Rich. (1) yes (0) no	-0.105
Is the tone of the book (1) serious (2) comic	-0.137
(1) dark (2) light	-0.154
JC's Hero cycle 'Freedom to Live' (1) present (0) absent	-0.109
Murdock: 'Separation from Light Goddess.' (1) present (0) absent	-0.112
Superficial, i.e. brand obsessed? (1) yes (0) no	-0.154
Privileged protagonist? (1) yes (0) no	-0.119

Figure 27: Independent Variables with Negative PRCs <-0.1

Principles Connected to Resonance

The Principles with the Strongest Connection to Resonance

In the linear method, resonance was measured by calculating the probability of relationship between a sales-adjusted-for-marketing score and the 150+ independent variables. In the 'quadrant' and 'difference' methods, resonance was measured by calculating the independent variable differences between books that sold better than their marketing predicted and books that sold worse than their marketing predicted.

The following table outlines all of the independent variables that showed a statistically significant (*alpha = 0.05)* resonance advantage/disadvantage in the 'quadrant' and 'difference' methods, *and* a |PRC| > 0.1 in the linear method. The starred variables showed a particularly strong advantage (at least one value >50% beyond what was needed for statistical significance, or a |PRC| >0.25).

Independent Variables	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation (counted if absolute value > 0.1)	% advantage *beyond* what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage *beyond* what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
# of pages	0.174	2.87%	1.50%	A longer length appears to be a small advantage among all schemes
Did you like your book?	0.117	2815.89%	143.89%	Study-Readers and Buyers seem to agree on likeable books.
Tense	0.160	8.18%	10.62%	Favours present-tense.
Emotive 1-10	0.177	12.13%	3.50%	Favours more 'emotive' narratives.

Independent Variables	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation (counted if absolute value > 0.1)	% advantage *beyond* what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage *beyond* what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
Potential for adult crossover?	0.210	37.76%	32.23%	Favours potential for adult-crossover.
Asks 'Big Questions'?	0.297	79.54%	63.02%	Favours 'Big Questions.'
Did book 'talk down' to you?	-0.118	-20.17%	-18.93%	Disfavours books that 'talked down' to readers.
Would teens feel 'talked down' to?	-0.149	-84.83%	-52.24%	Disfavours books that 'talk down' to teens.
If you lived in world you'd be ecstatic?	0.277	136.22%	83.21%	Favours 'Ecstatic.'
Stressed?	0.128	176.48%	87.41%	Favours 'Stressed.'
Full of angst?	0.136	39.92%	3.38%	Favours 'Angst.'
So. Rich.?	-0.105	-114.26%	-72.54%	Disfavours 'So. Rich.'
Did you feel many emotions at all when you read?	0.181	4.70%	79.70%	Favours emotion.
Was one of them yearning?	0.260	81.92%	34.36%	Favours yearning.
Would you recommend this book to a friend/beloved teen?	0.145	8.27%	17.86%	Favours recommending.
Race an important part of plot?	0.113	66.37%	71.42%	Favours books with race part of plot.
Is aware of its own stereotyping?	0.109	171.18%	109.21%	Favours being aware of own stereotypes.
Anything else potentially racially offensive?	0.177	113.54%	113.54%	Favours the potentially racially offensive.
Religion driving plot factor?	0.114	36.58%	50.02%	Favours religion as driving plot factor.

Independent Variables	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation (counted if absolute value > 0.1)	% advantage *beyond* what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage *beyond* what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
Superficial or brand obsessed?	-0.154	-19.86%	-25.20%	Disfavours superficial/brand obsessed.
Privileged protagonist?	-0.119	-12.31%	-21.36%	Disfavours privileged protagonists.
		No Joseph Campbell Hero Cycle traits had resonance connections in all three data sets.		
Murdock (MM) (Heroine): Road of Trials	0.110	2.66%	6.94%	Favours female 'Trials.'
MM: Urgent Yearning to Reconnect with Feminine	0.128	25.37%	20.90%	Favours yearning to reconnect.
MM: Healing the Mother/Daughter Split	0.173	55.92%	29.57%	Favours healing the mother/daughter split.
MM: Calling out or yearning for mother/mother god	0.122	60.63%	24.68%	Favours yearning for mother/mother god.
MM: Recognition that dark/light goddess are the same	0.134	5.27%	7.99%	Favours recognition.
MM: Female Apotheosis	0.122	21.23%	7.90%	Favours female apotheosis (note that male apotheosis did not score as highly).
Does it follow more than one Booker story form?	0.193	165.03%	9.74%	Favours stories that fit more than one story form.
Present/Absent Koontz: Protagonist is in 'Terrible Trouble'	0.145	24.24%	12.17%	Favours 'Terrible Trouble'

Independent Variables	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation (counted if absolute value > 0.1)	% advantage *beyond* what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage *beyond* what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
Koontz: The trouble becomes life or death	0.146	11.53%	1.87%	Favours life/death.
Maass: There must be inherent conflict	0.199	32.85%	8.62%	Favours inherent conflict.
Maass: It must have gut emotional appeal	0.162	5.40%	28.62%	Favours gut emotional appeal.
Maass: Characters are deep	0.183	57.99%	22.16%	Favours deep characters.
Maass: Five plot elements present (sympathetic character, conflict, complication, climax, resolution)	0.114	19.66%	6.32%	Favours 5 elements.
The book has 'something to say'	0.170	31.21%	27.53%	Favours having something to say.
TOTAL Maass	0.126	3.47%	4.60%	Favours Maass.

Figure 28: Independent Variables with the Strongest Connection to Resonance

Independent Variables that had a |PRC| >0.1 or that Showed a Statistically Significant (alpha = 0.05) Advantage/Disadvantage in at Least one Data Scheme

While the independent variables with the strongest connection to resonance are more likely to appear in all three datasets, *patterns* may still be gleaned from

groupings of independent variables that demonstrated a relationship in at least one data scheme. The data fitting these criteria is presented in table form. A future section will discuss notable patterns.

Independent Variables (unless otherwise specified, 'yes' was =1, 'no'=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
# of pages	0.174	2.87%	1.50%	A longer length appears to be a small advantage among all schemes
Did you like your book?	0.117	2815.89%	143.89%	Study-Readers and Buyers seem to agree on likeable books.
Multiple protagonists?	0.048	none	13.16%	Advantage for multiple protagonists.
Attempt to appeal to both genders?	0.001	-43.17%	-5.82%	Favours books that do NOT attempt to appeal to both genders.
Character (1) or plot (2) driven?	0.094	13.97%	1.59%	Favours books that are plot-driven.
Choose the best word to describe the book (1) literary (2) titillating	0.010	0.11%	1.63%	Very slight preferences for 'Literary.'
Choose the best word to describe the book (1) literary (2) commercial	0.026	none	0.14%	Very slight preference for 'Literary.'
Pacing (1) slow (2) medium (3) fast	0.138	none	1.11%	Indicates preference for faster pacing.
Romance as driving plot factor?	0.130	none	none	Favours romance.
Abusive/Negligent parents?	0.067	69.67%	9.48%	Favours presence of abusive parents.

Independent Variables (unless otherwise specified, 'yes' was =1, 'no'=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
Hopeful worldview?	0.070	18.28%	6.95%	Hopeful worldview better.
Identity play?	0.088	-6.31%	0.41%	The Quadrant Scheme disfavours 'identity play' while the Difference Scheme favours it. The low Pearson's Coefficient seems to confirm that 'identity play' is not strongly related to resonance
POV (1) first (2) second (3) third	-0.080	none	9.07%	Favours first-person narratives.
Tense (1) past (2) present	0.160	8.18%	10.62%	Favours present-tense.
Choose the best word to describe the book (1) action (2) emotion	0.097	9.00%	none	Favours emotion.
Choose the best word to describe the book (1) sex (2) desire	-0.011	19.19%	none	Favours desire.
Emotive 1-10	0.177	12.13%	3.50%	Favours more 'emotive' narratives.
Protagonist a drama queen?	0.074	-3.56%	none	Disfavours drama queens.
Did you like the protagonist?	0.084	21.97%	22.08%	Favours likeable protagonist.
Annoying protagonist?	-0.097	-19.92%	-9.16%	Disfavours annoying protagonist.
Spoiled, ungrateful, or whining protagonist?	-0.072	-3.71%	-10.24%	Disfavours whining protagonist.
Believable world-building?	0.076	15.77%	7.14%	Favours believable world-building.
Edginess 1-10	0.138	none	8.06%	Favours more 'edgy' books.

Independent Variables (unless otherwise specified, 'yes' was =1, 'no'=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
Did you enjoy reading?	0.054	none	3.33%	Favours more 'enjoyable' books.
Intended for older (2) or younger (1) teens?	0.020	none	5.84%	Favours older teens.
Potential for adult crossover?	0.210	37.76%	32.23%	Favours potential for adult-crossover.
Experimental?	0.104	none	10.00%	Favours the experimental.
Asks 'Big Questions'?	0.297	79.54%	63.02%	Favours 'Big Questions.'
Issue' based?	0.070	none	26.24%	Favours 'Issue-based.'
Complex conflict?	0.114	22.78%	8.17%	Favours complex conflicts.
Understanding of 'Complication'?	0.084	38.87%	none	Favours 'complication.'
Wealthy characters?	-0.072	-14.66%	none	Disfavours wealthy characters.
Did book 'talk down' to you?	-0.118	-20.17%	-18.93%	Disfavours books that 'talk down' to readers.
Would teens feel 'talked down' to?	-0.149	-84.83%	-52.24%	Disfavours books that 'talk down' to teens.
Protagonist learns and grows?	0.084	39.49%	7.39%	Favours books with learning/ growth.
Author(s) trying too hard to sound like teens?	-0.066	5.38%	12.07%	Disfavours books that try too hard to sound like teens.
If you lived in world you'd be happy?	-0.086	16.89%	none	Favours 'Happy.'
Ecstatic?	0.277	136.22%	83.21%	Favours 'Ecstatic.'
Confused?	0.024	165.03%	none	Favours 'Confused.'
Depressed?	0.059	none	45.33%	Favours 'Depressed.'
Suicidal?	-0.024	none	-14.85%	Disfavours 'Suicidal.'
Unhappy?	0.081	-69.63%	none	Disfavours 'Unhappy.'

Independent Variables (unless otherwise specified, 'yes' was =1, 'no'=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
Stressed?	0.128	176.48%	87.41%	Favours 'Stressed.'
Full of angst?	0.136	39.92%	3.38%	Favours 'Angst.'
So. Rich.?	-0.105	-114.26%	-72.54%	Disfavours 'So. Rich.'
Whatever?	0.097	-145.22%	none	Disfavours 'Whatever.'
I do live in that world?	0.022	23.48%	none	Favours 'I do live in that world.'
Did you feel many emotions at all when you read?	0.181	4.70%	79.70%	Favours emotion.
Was one of them yearning?	0.260	81.92%	34.36%	Favours yearning.
Would you recommend this book to a friend/beloved teen?	0.145	8.27%	17.86%	Favours recommending.
Is the tone of the book (1) serious (2) comic	-0.137	none	7.47%	Favours serious.
(1) dark (2) light	-0.154	none	8.87%	Favours dark.
(1) heavy (2) light	-0.097	5.34%	4.20%	Favours heavy.
Race an important part of plot?	0.113	66.37%	71.42%	Favours books with race part of plot.
Was there a lot of swearing?	-0.051	-37.02%	none	Disfavours swearing.
Would you be embarrassed if bishop/ecclesiastical leader found you reading book?	0.005	-22.56%	none	Disfavours 'embarrassing' books.
Book talk about sex a lot?	0.084	none	18.46%	Favours sex talk.

Independent Variables (unless otherwise specified, 'yes' was =1, 'no'=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
Cost of cheapest version?	0.059	none	1.04%	Slightly favours more expensive books.
Contains racial stereotypes?	0.122	none	15.20%	Favours racial stereotypes.
Is aware of its own stereotyping?	0.109	171.18%	109.21%	Favours being aware of own stereotypes.
Anything else potentially racially offensive?	0.177	113.54%	113.54%	Favours the potentially racially offensive. (Likely related to favouring race as present in plot: very few books discussed issues of race, vastly under-representing the non-white market.)
Gender offensive?	0.049	-85.31%	none	Disfavours the gender offensive.
Total race score (minus for stereotypes and offensiveness, plus for being aware of them and for non-white protagonist or race as driving plot factor)	0.041	168.67%	104.53%	Favours racially aware books.
Total gender score (minus for stereotypes and offensiveness, plus for being aware of them)	0.038	61.62%	11.02%	Favours gender aware books.
Non-white protagonist?	0.032	0.95%	1.17%	Favours non-white protagonists.
Book part of a series?	0.054	-32.56%	-21.29%	Disfavours series.
Religion driving plot factor?	0.114	36.58%	50.02%	Favours religion as driving plot factor.
Supernatural?	0.032	none	-10.69%	Disfavours the supernatural
Superficial or brand obsessed?	-0.154	-19.86%	-25.20%	Disfavours superficial/brand obsessed.
Privileged protagonist?	-0.119	-12.31%	-21.36%	Disfavours privileged protagonists.

Independent Variables (unless otherwise specified, 'yes' was =1, 'no'=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
Present/Absent: JC 'Call to Adventure'	0.044	none	4.66%	Favours a 'call.'
Crossing the First Threshold	0.053	none	7.08%	Favours a 'first threshold crossing.'
Belly of the Whale	0.066	none	2.27%	Favours 'belly of the whale.'
Atonement with the Father	0.084	55.89%	34.17%	Favours 'Atonement with Father.'
Apotheosis	0.094	7.14%	3.26%	Favours 'Apotheosis.'
The Ultimate Boon	-0.018	6.05%	none	Favours 'boon.'
Refusal of Call	0.094	none	7.26%	Favours 'refusal.'
Magic Flight	-0.056	none	-9.73%	Disfavours 'magic flight.'
Rescue from without	-0.0049	-6.37%	-4.28%	Disfavours 'rescue.'
Crossing the Return Threshold	0.068	22.99%	16.15%	Favours return threshold.
Master of Two Worlds	0.083	10.98%	10.33%	Favours mastery.
Freedom to Live	-0.109	7.44%	none	Favours freedom.
TOTAL JC Hero Cycle	0.029	5.31%	1.97%	Favours overall JC Hero Cycle
Present/Absent: Murdock Separation from the Feminine	0.021	36.03%	2.03%	Favours separation from feminine.
Road of Trials	0.110	2.66%	6.94%	Favours 'Trials.'
Finding the Boon of Success	0.067	none	12.41%	Favours 'boon.'
Awakening of Spiritual Aridity and/or death	0.086	10.25%	11.80%	Favours death/spiritual aridity.
Initiation and Descent to the Goddess	0.116	12.02%	none	Favours descent to goddess.

Independent Variables (unless otherwise specified, 'yes' was =1, 'no'=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
Urgent Yearning to Reconnect with Feminine	0.128	25.37%	20.90%	Favours yearning to reconnect.
Healing the Mother/Daughter Split	0.173	55.92%	29.57%	Favours healing the mother/daughter split.
Healing the Wounded Masculine	0.099	12.01%	none	Favours healing wounded masculine.
TOTAL Murdock Heroine Cycle	0.232	none	9.34%	Favours Murdock Heroine Cycle.
Separation from 'light' goddess	-0.112	16.35%	none	Linear disfavours separation, quadrant favours separation. Not much can be concluded with two disagreeing datasets and a statistically insignificant third.
Descent to the underworld	0.067	-0.43%	none	Disfavours descent to underworld.
Meeting with dark goddess	0.021	none	-1.29%	Disfavours meeting with dark goddess.
Calling out or yearning for mother/mother god	0.122	60.63%	24.68%	Favours yearning for mother/mother god.
Recognition that dark/light goddess are the same	0.134	5.27%	7.99%	Favours recognition.
Female Apotheosis	0.122	21.23%	7.90%	Favours female apotheosis.
Saved by Light Goddess	0.084	5.99%	none	Favours goddess-salvation.
Mastery over light/dark allows healing of wounded masculine	-0.031	17.93%	-0.62%	Quadrant favours, Difference disfavours, Linear too small to determine. Again, not much can be concluded from mixed results such as this.
Marriage/integration of opposites	-0.098	-3.92%	none	Disfavours marriage/integration.

Independent Variables (unless otherwise specified, 'yes' was =1, 'no'=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
Does it follow more than one Booker story form?	0.193	165.03%	9.74%	Favours more than one story form.
Present/Absent Koontz: Protagonist is in 'Terrible Trouble'	0.145	24.24%	12.17%	Favours 'Terrible Trouble'
Koontz: The trouble becomes Even More Terrible	0.073	1.22%	none	Favours trouble being more terrible
Koontz: The trouble becomes life or death	0.144	11.53%	1.87%	Favours life/death.
Koontz: The Protagonist is the one who figures out how to overcome the 'Terrible Trouble'	0.066	9.65%	11.67%	Favours protagonists figuring out how to save themselves.
TOTAL Koontz	0.158	none	0.29%	Favours Koontz Plot Cycle.
Present/Absent Maass: Book is Plausible	0.090	3.66%	6.79%	Favours plausibility.
Maass: There must be inherent conflict	0.199	32.85%	8.62%	Favours inherent conflict.
Maass: It must have gut emotional appeal	0.162	5.40%	28.62%	Favours gut emotional appeal.
Maass: There must be high stakes	0.093	13.96%	9.04%	Favours high stakes.
Maass: There should be a rich and detailed setting	0.052	33.05%	none	Favours rich and detailed setting.
Maass: Characters should be larger than life	0.053	-0.71%	none	Disfavours larger-than-life characters.
Maass: And they should be deep	0.183	57.99%	22.16%	Favours deep characters.

Independent Variables (unless otherwise specified, 'yes' was =1, 'no'=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
Maass: Five plot elements present (sympathetic character, conflict, complication, climax, resolution)	0.114	19.66%	6.32%	Favours 5 elements.
Maass: The book should have 'something to say'	0.170	31.21%	27.53%	Favours having something to say.
TOTAL Maass	0.126	3.47%	4.60%	Favours Maass.

Figure 29: Independent Variables with Possible Resonance Connections Noted in at Least One Data Scheme

Traits that Could Not Be Connected with Audience Resonance

It could be said that this chapter is about traits that 'fail' to produce audience resonance/dissonance, though it must be specified that what is meant by 'fail' is traits for which a statistically significant (*alpha* = 0.05) advantage/disadvantage could not be shown in the quadrant scheme or the difference scheme, and for which the linear scheme did not note Pearson's Relationship Coefficients (PRCs) greater than an absolute value of 0.1. In the manner of statistics, 'failures' tell us nothing and predict nothing (nothing completely sure, at least), though the lack of ability to show relationship between of these characteristics and resonance in *any* of the data schemes is noteworthy and will certainly be taken into account when finalizing *Secrets of the Mami Wata.*

Independent Variables (Unless otherwise specified yes=1; no=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
If I lived in the world of the book, I'd be 'excited'	-0.022	none	none	Being 'excited' to live in world not connected to resonance.
Was the cover an accurate representation of the book?	0.065	none	none	The cover being an accurate representation of the book was not as important as its being likeable.
Does the book stereotype any characters into gender roles?	-0.012	none	none	Gender stereotypes don't seem to negatively affect sales.

Independent Variables (Unless otherwise specified yes=1; no=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
1) girl book? 2) boy book?	0.011	none	none	Intended gender does not connect to sales/resonance, in spite of the fact that books that attempted to appeal to *both* were disfavoured.
Guess at intended gender of audience (1) Male (2) Female	-0.023	none	none	See above.
Gender of author (1) male (2) female	-0.039	none	none	Gender of author had no effect on resonance.
Genre (1) Realism (2) Fantasy (3) Sci-Fi (4) Romance (5) Other	-0.019	none	none	Genre doesn't necessarily affect resonance, though this scoring system does not necessarily allow us to know more than that.
Do any teens have sex?	-0.051	none	none	The presence of sex doesn't affect resonance either positively or negatively.
Author writing skill at the paragraph level: good (3) acceptable (2) not great (1)	-0.031	none	none	An author's writing skill (specified at the paragraph level) doesn't affect resonance.
Joseph Campbell: Rejection of Call	0.002	none	none	Joseph Campbell had the highest number (among 5 theorists) of plot traits that failed to correspond with resonance.
JC: Supernatural Aid	0.010	none	none	Perhaps related to a general distaste for 'rescue?'
JC: Road of Trials	-0.013	none	none	The 'female,' or Murdock 'Road of Trials' fared better.

Independent Variables (Unless otherwise specified yes=1; no=0)	Pearson's Relationship Coefficient from linear/sales-adjusted-for-marketing derivation	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Quadrant Scheme	% advantage beyond what was necessary for statistical significance in the Difference Scheme	Discussion
JC: Meeting with the Goddess	-0.024	none	none	Perhaps the JC characterization of the Goddess-as-prize is the problem?
JC: Woman as Temptress	0.012	none	none	Perhaps the majority female audience don't see themselves as 'temptresses?'
Maureen Murdock: Identification with Masculine and Gathering of Allies	-0.058	none	none	Perhaps teen girls *don't* identify with the masculine?
MM: Integration of masculine and Feminine	0.032	none	none	Perhaps the MM 'integration' was too theoretical in nature?
Follows the format of one or more of Booker's Seven plots?	0.023	none	none	More than 95% of books followed the form of one (or more) of Booker's plots, independent of how well they sold. The lack of resonance for following a single Booker plot is interesting considering that plots that followed *more than one* Booker plot *did* show a resonance advantage.
There are numerous Koontz 'complications'	0.054	none	none	Numerous complications didn't connect to resonance, though complication, itself, did.
There is an absence of Koontz 'delays'	0.083	none	none	Absence of 'delays' did not connect to resonance. Perhaps readers are more 'patient' than expected?
Maass: It must be original.	0.072	none	none	Originality is apparently not as important as Mr. Maass asserts.

Figure 30: Independent Variables that Showed No Correlation with Resonance in *Any* of the Data Schemes

In addition to these traits, two different scoring systems for protagonist gender were applied, but both failed to determine anything conclusive about resonance due to the problematic nature of accounting for multiple protagonists.

The next chapter will discuss patterns that can be gleaned from the data, attempting to identify patterns that result in greater audience resonance and, ultimately, to establish criteria meant to inform the creation of *Secrets of the Mami Wata*, though there may, certainly, be larger applications of the resultant resonance patterns.

Patterns of Resonance

On Meaning and Sophistication

Some of the strongest findings have to do with what could be called 'deeper' issues. For example, the highest predictor of resonance—with a PRC very nearly crossing the 0.3 level of significance—was the dictum 'Ask Big Questions.' It is likewise important not to 'talk down' to readers, to have 'deep' characters, to have 'something to say,' and to focus on 'issues,' 'complex conflicts,' and the 'serious,' 'heavy,' or 'dark.' Interestingly, longer books fare slightly better, perhaps indicating a resonance tendency linked to more 'sophisticated' books. And also perhaps notable is the way that religion as a driving plot factor increased resonance, even as average marketing scores for such were lower. Traits that correspond with the building of moral or ethical identity appear to lead to a higher level of resonance in the teen audience. Overall, teens don't seem to show proclivities toward the ambivalent. Instead, it seems that they care about good versus evil, about how to make life *matter*. That they don't want to waste time on the trivial, trite, or fringe, but on 'big' issues—on *meaning*.

On Emotion

Another unmistakeable pattern in the data is the importance of emotion. 'Yearning,' the 'emotive,' 'inherent conflict,' and 'gut emotional appeal,' appear in all three data sets and even a passing glance at the full set of data recorded indicates

that emotional content is essential to YA lit. Indeed, the pattern is so notable that when Donald Maass asserts that good books will have 'conflict on every page' (28) there is reason to suggest an amendment: good (YA) books will have *emotion* on every page. One thing that is interesting to note about this pattern, however, is that there was a distaste demonstrated for protagonists who were 'drama queens' or otherwise annoying/unlikeable, in spite of the fact that what makes a 'drama queen' or someone annoying is typically a function of their overly emotive nature. And yet, being 'emotive' did indicate resonance. Is this a contradiction? Considering the previous pattern—meaning and sophistication—perhaps what is actually happening is that teens are expressing their desire to understand *complex* emotional situations. A 'drama queen' may be emotive, but their emotional outbursts/expressions may tend toward the minute/insignificant/small/one-dimensional/shallow. Teens want to ask *big* questions and perhaps the same is true for the emotional content of books. Perhaps the emotion should *mean* something—be founded, be related to true and deeply important issues. Perhaps teens are more emotionally-driven than adult counterparts, but it could be that this emotion is a fundamental part of their grappling with life's major—not minor—issues.

Themes of Estrangement

It has never been a secret that teens may feel estranged or that they may have a hard time getting along with their parents or other authority figures. Similar patterns emerge in the data. 'Healing the mother/daughter split,' providing 'atonement with the father,' demonstrating a 'yearning for a mother god,' favouring 'abusive' parents, a 'yearning to reconnect with the feminine,' being 'saved' by the

mother god/'light' goddess, or initializing a plot with the 'separation' from the feminine, all appear as important.

A Book About Me

One of the most important patterns seems to be found in the disconnect between market demographic and book demographic. 80% of the market is female, for example, while only 50% of books are headed by a single female protagonist. More astoundingly, the 2009 US Census reports that nearly 44% of the under-18 population is non-white and yet only 5% of sample books had a non-white protagonist. And yet patterns of resonance seem to indicate that the teen reader wants to read about someone like *them.* 'Identity play' (an opportunity to pretend to be someone different), for example, couldn't comprehensively be shown to correspond with resonance. But believable world-building and books about which readers could say, 'I do live in this world,' *could* be shown to have connections with resonance.

This connection between self-identification and book resonance has been noted in the past. Scholar John Gough, for example, says of Judy Blume's coming-of-sexual-age story: '*Forever* remains a very popular text, in part because teens can "find" *themselves* truthfully presented, undistorted, not in *extremis*—just ordinary life and its awful emotions' (Younger 46).

Adolescence—a time of self-discovery—seems to value literature that allows teens to explore questions of identity: who am I? What can I become?

A more detailed discussion of particular 'demographic/identity disconnects' follows.

A Book About Me: Gender

Consider some of the gender patterns noted in the above findings. Strong connections between resonance and 'healing the mother/daughter split.' Strong connections between resonance and 'yearning for a mother god.' Female apotheosis scoring above male apotheosis. A notable 'yearning to reconnect with the feminine.' Weaker, but still noted, favourability for *not* attempting to appeal to both genders, for being gender aware, for avoiding the gender-offensive, for conflict centring around a 'separation from the feminine,' for a protagonist who 'descends' to meet a goddess, for a salvation-providing goddess, indeed a relatively strong favouring of the Murdock (female) plot cycle as a whole.

Most of the YA novel audience is female. It appears that books that recognize this outperform those that do not.

A Book About Me: Race

Issues related to race resulted in some of the strongest, if some of the most surprising, results of this study. Books with race as an important part of the plot are more connected with resonance. Likewise are books that aren't afraid to delve into arenas others might perceive as racially offensive. Indeed, race patterns permeate all of the findings. Books with non-white protagonists seem to have an advantage. Books with racial stereotypes perform better than expected—particularly when these books aware of their own stereotypes.

When it comes to race, it seems that the need to see stories with racial components is so strong that it supersedes the importance of pricklier issues that may have caused authors to avoid the topic. *Discussing* race seems to be more important

to teens than worrying over offensiveness. With 44% of the potential market dealing with race as part of everyday life, the importance of including race in storytelling can't be overstated.

A Book About Me: Socioeconomic Status

There are a plethora of YA books with very unlikely socioeconomic worlds (*Gossip Girl*, for example). However, census-consultation confirms that the majority of the U.S. population comes from the middle or lower class. Indeed, University of Wisconsin professor, Craig Werner, notes, 'Every scholar of the novel has concluded, the novel is a middle-class genre' (Trachtenberg). Perhaps it isn't surprising to see patterns that show a disfavour for books that centre on the 'rich' and 'privileged?' Notable points connected to dissonance seem to be protagonists that are 'privileged,' 'wealthy,' or 'so. rich,'; or plots that are 'superficial' or 'brand obsessed.'

Again, readers seem to prefer books that they can see *themselves* in.

A Book About Me: Divine Potential

The idea that teens read to 'find themselves' has always been a part of informal YA philosophy. The data seem to support this notion, particularly the idea that teens—even (perhaps especially) ordinary ones—want to know that they have the ability to rise above circumstances and to become something more than they are. The data show this in the appeal of 'apotheosis' (both male and female), in the general 'yearnings' demonstrated for divine imagery, and in the admonition that

protagonists can (and should) figure out how to solve their own problems and not typically rely on 'rescue.'

Some Final Discussions

While the primary focus of this study was pragmatic—meant to inform the creation of a specific YA text—there may be other implications and/or applications of the study's findings, though the original intent should not be discounted in such implications. Some discussion of notable points follows.

Additional Discussion on Race

Problems pertaining to gender in YA have been explored and expounded upon in great detail; however, the problems of race uncovered by the data were unexpected as they have not to this point received comparable levels of academic scrutiny.

In one of the few available articles on race in YA, 'Finding Common Ground: Multicultural YA Literature,' Chris Crowe asserts: 'Young adult literature in general has been exiled to the realms of sub-literature, and thus the double-labelled "*multicultural* young adult literature" is doubly damned' (125). The findings of this study seem to indicate this is a problem that mainly stems from marketing—or rather, from a *lack* of marketing for multicultural books. For example, when a Pearson's Relationship Coefficient (PRC) was run for marketing alone—i.e. an examination of which independent variables are more likely to result in more marketing—it was found that having race as a driving plot factor is related to a *decrease* in marketing money with a PRC of nearly -0.1 (see future chapter evaluating the publishing industry). Compare this to the fact that the same variable is associated with audience

resonance by a PRC of more than +0.1. Indeed, when we look at all of the race variables together and calculate a marketing PRC, we find a negative association between race and marketing of nearly -0.3—the threshold for statistically solid evidence of direct linear correspondence.

This runs counter, however, to existing marketing philosophy on race and books with non-white protagonists. Book-review magazine publisher Carol Stacy says that African-American books are marketed primarily to African-American audiences by placing them in completely separate sections of a bookstore—an 'African American Fiction,' section, for example, instead of the general 'Fiction' section. She says that a 'reader wants to know if a book has African-American characters' and that the marketing choices publishers make regarding such books are 'deliberate' (Trachtenberg). *Wall Street Journal* reporter, Jeffery Trachtenberg, notes that, 'African-American sections are the rule at Borders and Waldenbooks, chains both owned by Borders Group Inc., as well as many airports and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. outlets'(Trachtenberg). One imagines that other racial groups may be relegated to the same type of sections. This kind of segregation of book sections supports the impression that multicultural literature is a fundamentally different—fringe, or minor—portion of the market—that it is, indeed 'sub-literature' (Crowe, Young Adult Literature: Finding Common Ground: Multicultural YA Literature). But if 44% of the U.S. under-18 population self-identifies as non-white, this assumption in YA lit is not only misguided and naively prejudiced, it may also lead to a missed opportunity for publishers. A potential 44% market share could not, under any circumstances, be called fringe or minor. And indeed, the findings of this study only confirm that there is a clear, unanswered, desire for multicultural books in

the general YA market (a desire that will not be ignored as I construct my own creative work).

Fundamentally, it appears that multicultural books are not receiving marketing and are generally not being published in a fashion consistent with the demographics of the marketplace.

The issues of race uncovered by this study are so astounding that it is impossible to adequately provide discussion. The 44% population versus 5% representation in YA literature, itself, is enough to give grave pause. Indeed, this thesis is so ill-equipped to handle the (unexpectedly) vast nature of race and literature that it can only strongly advocate that more study be focused on the subject, that more publishers become aware of the issue, and that actions be taken in *all* arenas—academic, pedagogical, market, literary, etc.—to more appropriately consider the implications of race when it comes to product, profit, thought, bias, and study.

Some Final Discussion on Gender

In spite of the findings of this study, the fact that YA is so intertwined with education indicates that publishers will not necessarily be able to match their product lines along the gender demographics indicated by readership anytime soon. Good books for boys will always be sought by teachers and, thus, authors particularly good at appealing to boys will always have a place in YA publishing. And there are some really wonderful books for boys—books that girls may even enjoy. The book from this study that comes to mind is Judson Roberts' *Viking Warrior*—which, in spite of the fact that it is obviously intended for boys, still managed to outperform the expectations of its marketing, scoring a place in quadrant two.

Furthermore, as so much of the book-reading audience is female, a study that doesn't factor out gender is going to show a female skew and perhaps another study could/should investigate just this—ultimately highlighting traits of resonance for boys and girls separately. Twenty percent market share is enviable—remember, Amazon, the book-distributor with the highest market share, had only 14% of the market. Even if 80% of the YA market is female, there will still be millions of boys in need of good fiction. And as this study cannot reliably say much about the difference between tastes of boys and tastes of girls, further study could indicate points of resonance among *them.*

But one thing the results of this study seem to indicate is that perhaps educational theorists are misguided in focusing undue amounts of energy on the question of 'how to get boys to read more.' Because it seems that authors, publishers, teachers, parents, etc. are earnestly trying to do just that, but that, on average, the novels that are more resonant are novels more resonant with girls.

Perhaps the question gets back to the question of medium: maybe boys just aren't quite as suited to the novel form? And while this might (rightly?) concern educators, perhaps it's not as alarming as we'd otherwise think? Remember Kathy Sanford's *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* argument that, 'There is considerable evidence to suggest that boys are becoming literate in many [other] ways' (Sanford 302). While boys respond well to 'new literacies'—like fantasy/quest video games that require a good deal reading and/or writing (309)—girls 'are not engaging in these same activities' (303). So while a lot of energy in the book world is being devoted to the 'literacy problems' of boys, 1) perhaps these problems aren't as bad as they otherwise would seem, and 2) perhaps by focusing that energy on boys, what publishing/education/parenting/authorship is doing is

removing learning opportunities that are uniquely female? If nothing else, the question is worth considering.

The results of this study indicate that writing to/for boys won't necessarily get more boys to read, but that writing to/for girls does give a book an advantage.

As an author personally engaged in creation of market work, what this comes down to is simple. Eighty percent of my audience—maybe more—is likely to be female. If this shouldn't inform my writing, I'm not sure what should. And I imagine the same is true for other parties interested in the literacy of young people.

When it Comes to Resonance, Who's right? Campbell, Booker, Murdock, Koontz, or Maass? And are there Notable Differences Between Advice for YA Lit and Adult Lit? Differences that Matter when it Comes to My Own Work?

Answer: everyone is right and everyone is wrong, future studies may be needed to address the YA/Adult question further, and no integral conflicts were identified that might make applying theorist advice to my own writing ill-advised.

None of Campbell's 'Hero Cycle' components predicted resonance in all three data schemes, but they were not entirely absent from resonance predictions, either. Furthermore, there *do* seem to be patterns/principles that predict resonance and this was Campbell's larger argument about story—an argument that is certainly heeded as I write.

But in considering Campbell, it must be considered that, indeed, his arguments *were* biased toward the white-male viewpoint. Questions of race and gender ended up being major patterns associated with resonance; hence, the overall success of the Murdock plot cycle and my own use of parts of the Murdock cycle in the construction of *Secrets of the Mami Wata.*

And then there's Booker who was proved right in 95% of all cases. Authors indeed appear to tell seven basic stories over and over again. Maybe it doesn't matter that following these seven formats offers no resonance advantage. There is something terribly fascinating about the fact that authors have done exactly what he predicted we would. Indeed, there's something terribly fascinating about the way that Booker both claimed that the Campbell 'Hero Cycle' was all seven plots together and then that the study's numbers found a resonance advantage for books which

contained/fit *more than one* of Booker's seven plots. In the second half of his book, Booker does spend some time discussing ways that stories go wrong—perhaps a study of resonance would be better if it considered not the truth of the *existence* of 'Seven Basic Plots,' but the truth of Booker's claims about where they go *wrong*? In any event, I will certainly attempt to tell polyvalent stories in both *Secrets* and in future work.

And Koontz may never be writing deep or literary fiction, but many of his recommendations were consistent with resonance which is only further bolstered by the fact that he has, after all, sold *a lot* of books. As to the question of whether or not his advice—which is not geared toward YA fiction—would have differed if we were considering adult lit, the issue cannot be fully resolved with this data set. An unscientific survey of adult bestsellers does seem to indicate that adults seem to respond more favourably to books with more ambivalent, minor, or nuanced plot components. Likewise, they seem to be able to entertain less egocentric story lines. And the fact that the presence of 'complications' corresponded with YA resonance while the presence of 'multiple complications' did not, may simply be related to the smaller scope of YA novels. My suspicion is that Koontz's advice would only prove to be more effective in an adult world than in a YA, though I have absolutely taken his recommendations under advisement in my YA composition.

Finally, the advice of Maass may still rankle authors, but it doesn't appear to be complete 'bullshit' the way that Stephen King said most writing books' would be (xvii) and can certainly not be discarded in my creative endeavour. Indeed, in terms of pure numeric advantage, Maass' advice was slightly more successful than any of the other plot theorists. And when it comes to his advice in the YA world versus the adult world, there doesn't appear to be a big potential disconnect. The few places

where Maass' ideas did not hold up—originality, for example—do not seem like they will change based on the age of the audience, though, again, the numbers of this study are not particularly suited to answering this question once and for all.

One facet of Maass' advice that will be strongly disputed in a future chapter, however, pertains to his assertions about the general ineffectiveness of marketing. Marketing was, indeed, a much, much, stronger predictor of sales than *any* of the independent variables examined. As a writer, this is something I believe must be emphasized to all writers attempting to sell books.

And speaking of me, I really didn't have terribly fixed ideas when I went into this study. (That's why I did the study in the first place.) I thought that Koontz, with his 'complication' versus 'delay,' seemed right. I'd always had a secret-and-tinted-with-shame fondness for Campbell, but agreed with Murdock that he forgot about women and minorities. I thought it was astounding, but not completely unsurprising, that there may only be seven stories in existence. I'd tacitly accepted professorial advice about scene-building, dialog tags and other paragraph-level techniques, characterization, premise, story arc, etc. But I had no idea what my study was going to show. And, as a writer looking to write a story, many of the results surprised me and fundamentally changed the way I look at manuscript production and story-telling—most notably in *Secrets*, though I imagine all of my future work will be informed, in some way, by the critical exercise attempted in this study.

The only really deep idea/argument that I had going into this study was that girls might need a different kind of story.

That, at least, seems to be true.

Evaluation of the Publishing Industry

Every author—myself included—who works within the business of publishing is wont to wonder, how much of a book's failure is *my* fault, and how much is the industry's? Though it was not the primary objective behind this study, the resultant data does give us some ability to address this question and, perhaps, in addressing the question, it may be more possible to accurately gauge the answer and, thus, provide a sense of how to judge a 'failed' text. Such evaluation, though it admittedly be part ego-based, does allow a consideration of how to better approach the creation of new texts and will certainly inform the way that I understand collaboration with publishers on texts beyond *Secrets of the Mami Wata.*

Of the 117 books which did *not* receive above average marketing, 42, or about 36%, sold above average.

On the other hand, of the 75 books which *did* receive above-average marketing, only 21, or 28%, *failed* to perform above average.

If sales were *completely* a function of marketing, one would expect the number of exceptions to be roughly the same for each category, indicating that editors are, perhaps, putting money behind the right books more often than they're not. But is this true?

Because traits corresponding to resonance were identified in the datasets, some comparisons are possible. Due to the self-referential nature of performing this via quadrant/difference comparison, the linear method provides the best way to evaluate publishing's marketing placement.

Specifically, for each of the 150+ independent variables, there are two numbers to consider: the Pearson's Relationship Coefficient (PRC) of sales adjusted for marketing and the Pearson's Relationship Coefficient of marketing alone. That is, books that *sell* can be compared against books that are *marketed* and areas of disconnect can be noted.

When these numbers are run, it's found that marketing is disconnected with sales somewhere between 3% and 55% of the time—though a more precise estimation may not be possible.

There are five independent variables that show a definite/statistically indisputable correlation with marketing/sales disconnects, i.e. variables for which there is a >0.3 difference between the PRC's of books that sell versus books that receive marketing. These disconnects correspond to issues of race, gender, socioeconomic status and meaning:

	Pearson's correlation: sales adjusted for marketing	Pearson's correlation: marketing alone	Absolute Value of Difference	Discussion
Does the book ask 'big questions?' (1) yes (0) no	0.297	-0.131	0.428	Marketing disfavours 'big questions' but resonance favours it.
Total % correlation with Murdock 'Heroine Cycle'	0.232	-0.136	0.368	Marketing disfavours this female-centred plot cycle, but resonance favours it.
If I lived in this world I'd be So. Rich.	-0.105	0.234	0.339	Marketing favours wealthy worldviews, but resonance disfavours them.
Total 'race' score	0.041	-0.270	0.311	Books with high 'race' scores are disfavoured by marketing, but this disfavour does not translate over to resonance.

Is the book aware of its own stereotyping?	0.109	-0.202	0.310	Marketing disfavours books aware of their own stereotyping, but resonance favours them.

Figure 31: Top Five Marketing Sales Disconnects

In other words, publishing should probably be focusing more of its marketing on books with 'big questions,' female-attuned plot structures, socioeconomic statuses that correspond more closely with the market, more diversified racial awareness, and more self-awareness of stereotypes of all kinds.

These five traits represent about 3% of the total number of traits investigated and if they represent the *totality* of publishing's marketing/sales disconnects, it might seem that publishing correctly places marketing 97% of the time—an impressive track record.

However, again due to the sheer number of independent variables associated with any given book, it may be prudent—as was done in the initial analysis of resonance—to consider variables that are *likely* to demonstrate disconnects, i.e. those that have PRC sales/marketing differences between 0.1 and 0.3.

There are 30 variables (approximately 20% of the variables sampled) that show a highly likely disconnect between sales and marketing: i.e. variables that demonstrated a PRC sales/marketing difference of more than 0.2. Some of the notable patterns among these variables relate to gender-issues, issues of emotion, meaning, estrangement, and various writing-related issues like point of view (POV), audience, and conflict.

	Pearson's correlation: sales adjusted for marketing	Pearson's correlation: marketing alone	Absolute Value of Difference	Discussion
Urgent yearning to reconnect with feminine.	0.128	-0.165	0.292	Marketing disfavours books that contain an 'urgent yearning to reconnect with feminine' but resonance favours it.
The protagonist is in terrible trouble.	0.145	-0.145	0.291	Marketing disfavours protagonists in 'terrible trouble' but resonance favours them.
If I lived in this world I'd be ecstatic	0.277	0.000	0.277	Marketing shows no correlation with an 'ecstatic' feeling, but resonance does.
If I lived in this world I'd be stressed	0.128	-0.146	0.273	Marketing disfavours a 'stressed' worldview, but resonance favours it.
Calling/yearning for mother God.	0.122	-0.152	0.273	Marketing disfavours 'yearning' for 'mother God' but resonance favours it.
Atonement with the Father.	0.084	-0.185	0.269	Marketing disfavours 'atonement' but resonance does not show disfavour.
Was the world-building in the book believable? (1) yes (0) no	0.073	-0.196	0.268	Marketing disfavours believable world-building but resonance does not show disfavour.
Do you think a teenager would feel like the book was 'talking down' to them? (1) yes (0) no	-0.149	0.109	0.259	Marketing favours books that teens may feel 'talk down' to them but resonance disfavours them.

	Pearson's correlation: sales adjusted for marketing	Pearson's correlation: marketing alone	Absolute Value of Difference	Discussion
Maass: Does the book 'have something to say?'	0.170	-0.087	0.257	Marketing disfavours books with 'something to say' but resonance favours them.
Abusive parents? Yes (1) no (0)	0.067	-0.189	0.256	Marketing disfavours books with abusive parents, but resonance does not show disfavour.
Privileged protagonist? (1) yes (0) no	-0.119	0.134	0.254	Marketing favours books with privileged protagonists, but resonance disfavours them.
Superficial, i.e. brand obsessed? (1) yes (0) no	-0.154	0.088	0.242	Resonance disfavours the superficial/brand obsessed, but marketing does not share this disfavour.
POV (1) first person (2) second person (3) third person	-0.080	0.159	0.239	Marketing favours third person narratives, resonance favours first person narratives.
Did you like the protagonist? (1) yes (0) no	0.084	-0.152	0.236	Marketing favours more unlikable protagonists than resonance.
Do you think that adults would read this book? That is has potential to cross over into the adult market? (1) yes (0) no	0.210	-0.022	0.233	Resonance favours books with crossover appeal, but this favour is not shared by marketing.

	Pearson's correlation: sales adjusted for marketing	Pearson's correlation: marketing alone	Absolute Value of Difference	Discussion
Separation from the Feminine.	0.021	-0.200	0.221	Marketing disfavours books that contain a 'separation from the feminine' but this disfavour is not shared by resonance.
Did the protagonist annoy you? (1) yes (0) no	-0.097	0.122	0.219	Marketing favours more annoying protagonists than resonance.
Maass: The book must be plausible. (1) it is (0) it isn't	0.090	-0.127	0.217	Marketing disfavours the more plausible, but this disfavour is not indicated by resonance.
Did the book 'talk down' to you? (1) yes (0) no	-0.118	0.098	0.216	Resonance disfavours books that 'talk down' but marketing does not share disfavour.
Maass: There must be inherent conflict. (1) there is (0) there isn't	0.199	-0.015	0.214	Resonance favours inherent conflict, marketing does not.
Did you feel the authors were trying too hard to sound like teenagers? (1) yes (0) no	-0.066	0.144	0.210	Marketing favours trying to sound like a teen, resonance does not.
Maass: It must have gut emotional appeal. (1) it does (0) it doesn't	0.162	-0.046	0.209	Resonance favours gut emotional appeal, marketing does not.
Is your book 'issue' based? (abortion, drug use, abuse, homosexuality, etc.) (1) yes (0) no	0.070	-0.139	0.208	Marketing disfavours 'issue' books, resonance doesn't.
Tense (1) past (2) present	0.160	-0.048	0.207	Resonance favours the present tense more than marketing does.

	Pearson's correlation: sales adjusted for marketing	Pearson's correlation: marketing alone	Absolute Value of Difference	Discussion
Worldview: hopeful (3) neutral (2) hopeless (1) nihilistic (0)	0.070	-0.134	0.205	Marketing disfavours hopeful narratives more than resonance does.
Maass: Characters must be deep. (1) they are (0) they aren't	0.183	-0.020	0.203	Resonance favours deep characters but marketing doesn't necessarily favour or disfavour them.
Healing the mother/daughter split. (1) present (0) absent	0.173	-0.029	0.202	Resonance favours healing the mother/daughter split, marketing doesn't.
Was the protagonist an ungrateful, spoiled whiner who should be slapped senseless? (1) yes (0) no	-0.073	0.129	0.201	Marketing favours spoiled protagonists, resonance does not.
Did you feel very many emotions at all when you read? (1) yes (0) no	0.181	-0.021	0.201	Resonance favours emotion but marketing doesn't.
Religion driving plot factor? (1) yes (0) no	0.114	-0.086	0.200	Resonance favours religion more than marketing does.

Figure 32: Variables with Marketing/Sales Disconnects with a PRC Difference Between 0.2 and 0.3

The solid disconnects put together with the highly likely disconnects represent approximately 23% of the possible areas of disconnect.

However, there are 47 (31%) more variables that are *possible* areas of disconnect, i.e. variables that demonstrate a PRC sales/marketing (abs value) difference between 0.1 and 0.2.

	Pearson's Correlation: sales adjusted for marketing	Pearson's Correlation: marketing alone	Absolute Value of Difference	Discussion
Was race somehow an important part of the book or did it *seem* to be? (1) yes (0) no	0.113	-0.084	0.197	Resonance favours race-plots more than marketing.
Did the protagonist learn anything by the end of the book or change in a good way somehow? (1) yes (0) no	0.084	-0.112	0.196	Marketing disfavours change and growth, this disfavour is not shared by resonance.
(Koontz) The protagonist is the one who figures out how to save themselves because of what they've learned from the terrible trouble. (1) they are (0) they aren't	0.066	-0.127	0.193	Marketing disfavours self-salvation, but resonance does not.
(Maass) There must be high stakes (1) There are (0) There aren't	0.093	-0.100	0.193	Marketing disfavours high stakes but resonance doesn't.
Murdock Apotheosis: The heroine takes on goddess-like powers. (1) present (0) absent	0.122	-0.069	0.191	Resonance favours goddess-like powers in protagonist, but marketing doesn't.
JC: The Call. (1) present (0) absent	0.044	-0.145	0.188	Marketing disfavours 'the call' but resonance doesn't.

	Pearson's Correlation: sales adjusted for marketing	Pearson's Correlation: marketing alone	Absolute Value of Difference	Discussion
Are the kids in the book (1) rich (0) not rich	-0.072	0.114	0.186	Marketing favours more wealthy characters, resonance doesn't.
(Murdock) Recognition that the dark goddess and the light goddess are ONE goddess. (1) present (0) absent	0.134	-0.051	0.186	Resonance favours recognition, marketing doesn't.
Total gender score	0.038	-0.145	0.183	The total gender score indicates that resonance favours gender awareness more than marketing.
Total % correlation Campbell Cycle	0.029	-0.154	0.183	Marketing disfavours the Campbell cycle, but resonance doesn't necessarily share this disfavour.
Total % correlation with Koontz	0.158	-0.022	0.180	Resonance favours the overall advice of Koontz but marketing doesn't.
Murdock: Finding the boon of success.	0.067	-0.112	0.179	Marketing disfavours Murdock 'boon' but resonance doesn't.
JC: Crossing the Return Threshold.	0.068	-0.110	0.178	Marketing disfavours the Campbell 'crossing of return threshold' but resonance doesn't.
Choose the best word to describe the book (1) literary (2) titillating	0.010	0.184	0.175	Marketing favours the titillating but resonance doesn't.
Emotive? 1-10	0.177	0.008	0.169	Resonance favours the more 'emotive' but marketing doesn't.

	Pearson's Correlation: sales adjusted for marketing	Pearson's Correlation: marketing alone	Absolute Value of Difference	Discussion
Five plot elements must be present: 1) sympathetic character; 2) complex conflict; 3) complication 4) climax 5) resolution. Are all 5 there?	0.114	-0.050	0.164	Resonance favours the presence of all five Maass elements but marketing doesn't.
Talk about sex a lot? (1) yes (0) no	0.084	-0.075	0.159	Resonance favours sex talk more than marketing.
JC: Master of Two Worlds.	0.083	-0.072	0.154	Resonance may favour JC 'mastery' more than marketing.
JC: Crossing of the first threshold. (1) present (0) absent	0.053	-0.098	0.151	Resonance may favour a JC 'crossing' more than marketing.
Murdock: Awakenings of spiritual aridity, death. (1) present (0) absent	0.086	-0.065	0.151	Resonance may favour aridity/death more than marketing.
Character (1) or plot (2) driven?	0.094	-0.054	0.148	Resonance may favour the plot-driven novel while marketing may not.
JC: Freedom to Live. (1) present (0) absent	-0.109	-0.257	0.148	Marketing disfavours endings that leave protagonists 'free to live' more than resonance disfavours it.
Was the book (1) dark or (2) light?	-0.154	-0.007	0.147	Resonance may favour the 'dark' more than marketing.

	Pearson's Correlation: sales adjusted for marketing	Pearson's Correlation: marketing alone	Absolute Value of Difference	Discussion
Was one of the emotions experienced while reading yearning? (1) yes (0) no	0.260	0.115	0.145	Resonance may favour 'yearning' more than marketing.
Edginess 1-10	0.138	-0.007	0.145	Resonance may favour edginess more than marketing.
Anything else racially troubling? (1) yes (0) no	0.177	0.043	0.134	Resonance may favour the racially troubling more than marketing.
Total % correlation with Maas	0.126	-0.007	0.133	Resonance may favour the overall Maass prescriptions more than marketing.
Murdock: Healing the wounded masculine. (1) present (0) absent	0.099	-0.034	0.133	Resonance may favour this 'healing' more than marketing.
If I lived in this world: Whatever. (1) present (0) absent	0.097	0.230	0.133	Marketing shows a relatively strong favour for the ambivalent, but this is not backed up by resonance.
Is the over-arching conflict of the book a complex conflict? (1) yes (0) no	0.114	-0.016	0.130	Resonance may favour complexity more than marketing.
Would you recommend this book to a friend/beloved teenager? (1) yes (0) no	0.145	0.016	0.129	Resonance may favour the more 'recommendable' books more than marketing.

	Pearson's Correlation: sales adjusted for marketing	Pearson's Correlation: marketing alone	Absolute Value of Difference	Discussion
JC: Rejection of the call. (1) present (0) absent	0.002	-0.126	0.128	Marketing may disfavour the JC call rejection more than resonance.
Murdock: Initiation and descent to the goddess. (1) present (0) absent	0.116	-0.011	0.127	Resonance may favour a goddess-descent more than marketing.
Numerical race (1) white (2) other	0.032	-0.094	0.126	Marketing may disfavour non-white protagonists more than resonance.
Is the tone of the book (1) serious or (2) comic?	-0.137	-0.011	0.125	Resonance may favour the serious more than marketing.
Romance? Yes (1) No (0)	0.130	0.006	0.124	Resonance may favour romance more than marketing.
JC: Rescue from Without. (1) present (0) absent	-0.005	0.119	0.124	Marketing may favour the exterior rescue more than resonance.
Attempts to appeal to both males and females (1) yes (0) no	0.002	0.125	0.123	Marketing may favour books that appeal to both genders more than resonance.
Would you describe the book as (1) heavy or (2) light?	-0.097	0.024	0.121	Resonance may favour a heavier tone than marketing.
More than one story form? (1) yes (0) no	0.193	0.074	0.119	Resonance may favour the presence of more than one Booker story form more than marketing.

	Pearson's Correlation: sales adjusted for marketing	Pearson's Correlation: marketing alone	Absolute Value of Difference	Discussion
Does the author show an understanding of how to complicate the conflict in an interesting way? (1) yes (0) no	0.084	-0.032	0.117	Resonance may favour the presence of interesting complications more than marketing.
Murdock: Integration of masculine and feminine. (1) present (0) absent	0.032	-0.083	0.115	Marketing may disfavour masculine/feminine integration more than resonance deems necessary.
How much does the cheapest available version cost?	0.059	-0.056	0.115	As the PRC's of each of these is fairly close to zero (just on opposite sides) not too much can be concluded in spite of a PRC difference >0.1.
Do you think the book was intended for younger teens (1) older teens (2)	0.020	-0.094	0.114	Marketing may disfavour older teens more than is warranted by resonance.
JC: Refusal of Return. (1) present (0) absent	0.094	-0.019	0.113	Resonance may favour the JC 'Refusal' more than marketing.
If I lived in this world I'd be: suicidal (1) present (0) absent	-0.024	0.081	0.105	Marketing may favour the 'suicidal' more than resonance.
Murdock: Road of trials: meeting ogres and dragons. (1) present (0) absent	0.110	0.008	0.102	Resonance may favour the MM 'Road of Trials' more than marketing.

Figure 33: Variables with Marketing/Sales Disconnects with PRC Differences Between 0.1 and 0.2

As noted before, this means that marketing is disconnected with the books that actually sell somewhere between 3 and 55% of the time.

In spite of these non-specific findings, from the *patterns* of resonance noted, it is possible to note books from the sample that would likely have thrived under better marketing conditions. For example:

- Books with more racial diversity—like *Nothing but the Truth (and a Few White Lies), Divine Secrets,* or *Roots and Wings.*
- Books with a slightly more literary feel that still hinge largely on emotion to drive the plot—like *Tallulah Falls.*

On the other hand, there are books that *should* have done well, according to most of their content and the likeliness that their marketing was healthy. But these books could have been sabotaged by something as possibly small as a title error. Consider, for example, *Prom Dates from Hell.* With its feisty female protagonist, its echoes of generational female power, and its darkish-but-delicious tone, it *should* have sold well. But perhaps the slight prudishness (at least when it comes to swearing) of readers was put off by the semi-swear-word-in-the-title? Or the seeming triteness of Prom? Or the clichéd 'from Hell' phrase? It may not be entirely possible to know for sure, but regardless the title is a poor reflection on the content of the book and this may or may not have affected sales.

And this not knowing with any certainty turns out to be one of the most frustrating things about evaluating publishing as a business. In spite of efforts to *quantify*, a large share of success or failure depends upon factors either unknown or too chaotic or complicated to appropriately quantify. (Although, Amazon does *try.*)

Still, it's possible to further examine lists and present further speculations. Perhaps, after all, acquisition editors are too unconsciously swayed by their own demographic perceptions of race/gender/religion/meaning/etc.? The views of a handful of (mostly young, mostly privileged, mostly white, mostly female) professionals living primarily in NYC certainly can't be said to be representative of the *entire* U.S. young adult book market, can they?

Consider a few suspect trends in low-selling sample books that were likely to have been well marketed:

Books too obsessed with surface appearances: i.e. clothing, wealth and fame. (Data indicated resonance advantages for the deep, the complex, not the surface alone, though they were fairly forgiving as long as there was plenty of emotion.)

- *A Girl Like Moi: the Fashion-Forward Adventures of Imogene*
- *Project Paris (The Fashion-Forward Adventures of Imogene)*
- *Stealing Bradford (The Carter House Girls)*
- *Mixed Bags (The Carter House Girls)*
- *6X: the Uncensored Confessions*
- *How to Be Popular*
- *But I don't Want to Be a Movie Star*
- *Stealing Princes (Calypso Chronicles)*
- *Loud, Fast, & Out of Control (6x)*

Or books that underestimated the extent of latent teen prudishness (at least of those who buy books) or their willingness/desire to examine questions of religion and meaning:

- *Gert Garibaldi's Rants and Raves: One Butt Cheek at a Time*

- *Becoming Chloe*
- *Pop!*
- *Wicked Dead Series (Lurker, Torn,* and *Snared)*
- *The After Life*

Conversely, books that might be considered too Christian and/or preachy:

- *The Year of my Miraculous Reappearance*
- *Maggie's Story* (a modern re-telling of Mary Magdalene's story, most chapters with biblical connections and citations)[13]
- *Carter House Girls* (whole series)

Or books whose protagonists were less than competent with understanding emotion:

- *The Very Ordered Existence of Merilee Marvellous* (protagonist had a developmental disorder, so while emotion was present in the text, it was not typically recognized/understood by the protagonist)
- *The Social Experiments of Dorie Dilts* (protagonist was adorable, but her love-for-science did seem to translate into a less-emotionally-driven story)

But when it comes down to it, one could find books with these types of traits among collections of the books which sold as predicted and even among those that sold better than predicted and these possible problems are fundamentally conjecture.

13 Though, in defense of this book (and because the author is a dear acquaintance of mine), I loved how beautiful the re-telling *was*. It was, however, a re-telling and perhaps those with biblical inclinations would prefer the bible and those without them would prefer a non-biblical book altogether?

Maybe another way to answer the question of publisher success is to look at which publishing houses are performing the best in relation to others. Who is selling the most books? And who is allocating marketing most efficiently?

The following is a table that outlines the average marketing and sales scores for all publishers in the study. It also notes the ratio of sales to marketing—the higher the ratio, the more efficient the placement of marketing, since more sales were gleaned from lower average levels of marketing.

Publisher (alphabetical)	# of Titles in sample	Average Marketing Score	Average Sales Score	Sales/Marketing Ratio
AMG	3	4.00	6.00	1.50
Bancroft	1	1.00	4.00	4.00
Brown Barn	5	1.00	2.40	2.40
Disney	3	4.00	7.67	1.92
Hachette	12	5.50	6.08	1.11
HarperCollins	35	4.34	4.86	1.12
Highland Press	1	1.00	2.00	2.00
Holiday House	1	1.00	3.00	3.00
Holtzbrinck	21	3.10	5.38	1.74
Houghton Mifflin	8	4.13	4.00	0.97
Journey Forth	2	1.00	2.50	2.50
Kensington	3	3.00	4.00	1.33
Llewellyn	10	1.40	3.10	2.21

Publisher (alphabetical)	# of Titles in sample	Average Marketing Score	Average Sales Score	Sales/Marketing Ratio
Mirrorstone	1	3.00	5.00	1.67
Norilana	1	1.00	6.00	6.00
Penguin	25	3.56	5.12	1.44
RH	19	3.05	4.21	1.38
S & S	36	2.67	4.53	1.70
Tyndale	1	4.00	2.00	0.50
Zondervan	3	5.00	3.67	0.73

Figure 34: Publisher Marketing and Sales

Because many of the highest sales scores come from the largest publishing houses, it makes sense to break these publishers into two basic groups: 'big' publishers and 'small' publishers.

The following table and graphs present the scoring of six 'big' publishers. (Disney and Houghton Mifflin are excluded, in spite of their being large corporations, because they did not have a comparable number of books in this particular sample.)

'Big 6' Publishers (alphabetical)	# of Titles in sample	Average Marketing Score	Average Sales Score	Sales/Marketing Ratio
Hachette	12	5.50	6.08	1.11
HarperCollins	35	4.34	4.86	1.12
Holtzbrinck	21	3.10	5.38	1.74
Penguin	25	3.56	5.12	1.44
Random House	19	3.05	4.21	1.38
Simon & Schuster	36	2.67	4.53	1.70

Figure 35: 'Big 6' Publisher Marketing and Sales

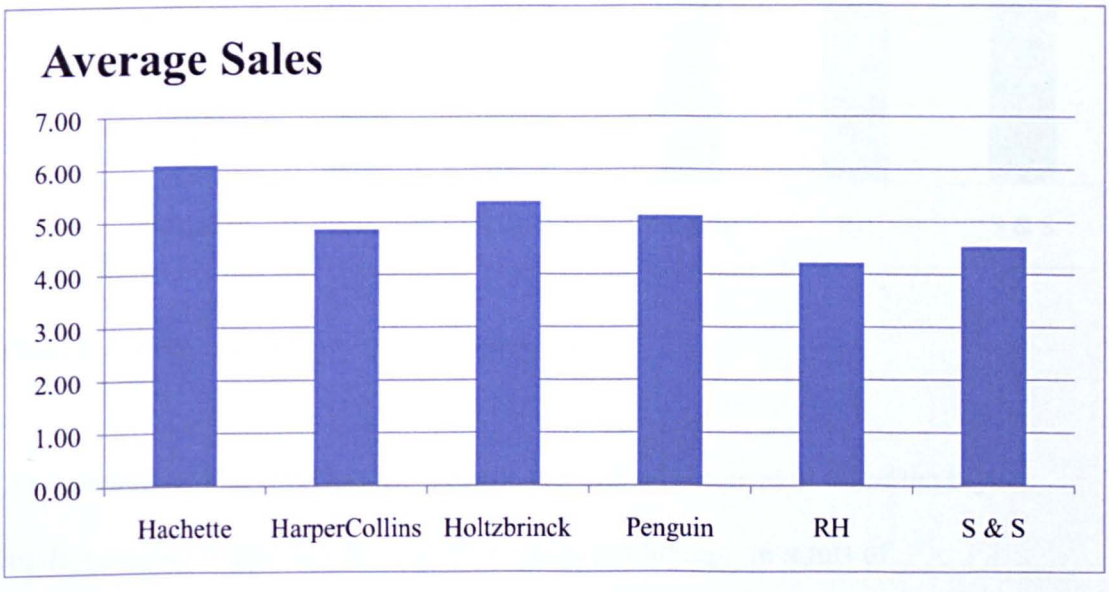


Figure 36: Average Sales of 'Big 6' Publishers

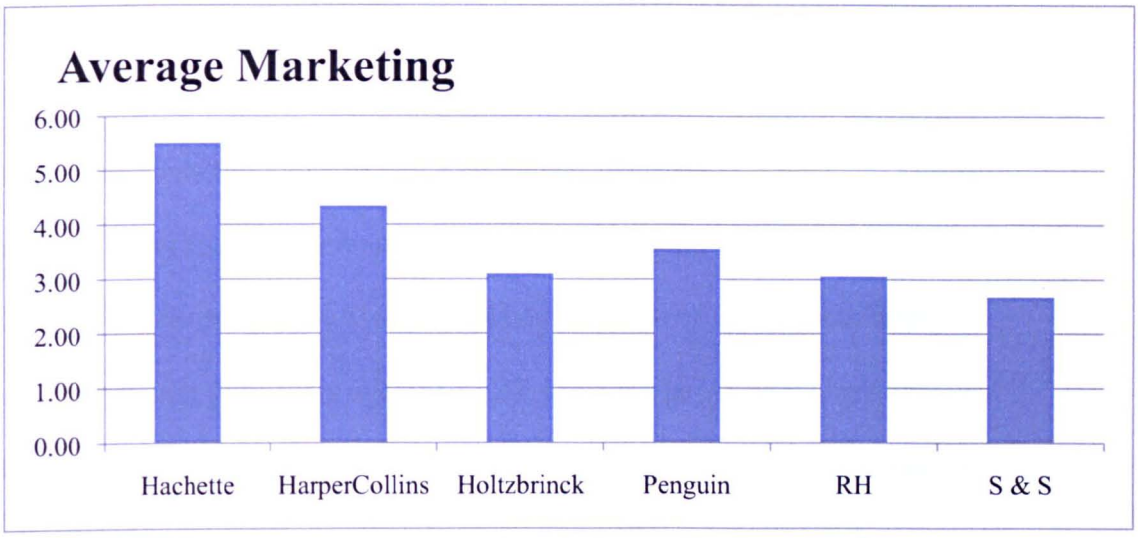


Figure 37: Average Marketing of 'Big 6' Publishers

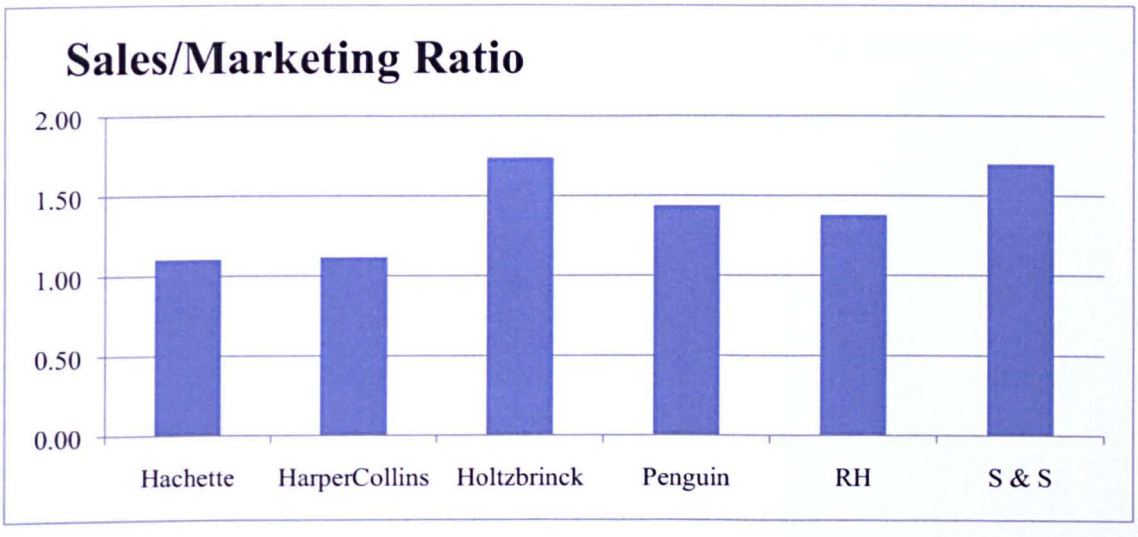


Figure 38: Sales/Marketing Ratios for 'Big 6' Publishers

As seen above, Hachette has the highest average sales scores of all of the big publishing houses, but it also has the highest average marketing. In terms of marketing-allocation efficiency, Holtzbrinck seems to demonstrate the most efficient allocation of marketing, resulting in the highest sales/marketing ratio while Hachette actually demonstrates the *least* efficient sales/marketing distribution.

But how do the 'big' publishers compare to smaller publishers? At first glance, the smaller publishers[14] seem to be at a disadvantage. The 32 sample books from 'small' publishers (all together, this represented fewer books than from Simon & Schuster or Harper Collins alone) averaged sales scores of 3.64, compared to the 'big' publishers' average of 5.03. However, when the *ratio* of sales to marketing is considered, the smaller publishers averaged 2.32 while the larger publishers averaged only 1.41. Smaller publishers may be making less money, but they are also likely to be *spending* less money, indicating that they are more efficient at allocating marketing than the bigger publishers.

Ultimately, it may not be completely possible to finally determine the success of publishers at matching marketing budgets with the kinds of books likely to sell—though I'd wager there is no shortage of opinion on the subject within the industry. Perhaps, though, there are trends in the data presented here that publishers, themselves, may find useful and that authors may find comforting.

14 For the purposes of this thesis, the following were considered 'smaller' publishers: AMG, Bancroft, Brown Barn, Highland Press, Holiday House, Journey Forth, Kensington, Llewellyn, Mirrorstone, Norilana, Tyndale, and Zondervan

On Author-Produced Marketing

In considering all that goes into the marketing of a book, it is imprudent to skip the possible effects of self-marketing. Even as I engage in *writing* a text, I cannot help but wonder what I will be asked to do when *selling* the text and, indeed, this trepidation can affect the creative process.

Most authors feel pressure to engage in self-promotion, if not from themselves, then surely from their publishing houses. In the course of doing research for this study, I stumbled upon one author's blog which contained a long lament about all of the self-promotional things his publishing house *wanted* him to do that he *hadn't* done and how the house was blaming him for his books' abysmal sales. I leave the name off of reference to this blog post intentionally, because not only can I not verify the veracity of his claims, but also because this sentiment is ubiquitous: no authors seem to either enjoy self-promotion or believe that it is at all effective anyway.

When assigning initial marketing points for this study, no practical way to estimate the number of hours spent on promotion by 200 individual authors could be established. Perhaps the despair-laden feelings of authors influenced this failure—it is difficult to establish a rubric for a process that authors find as uncomfortable as useless. Or perhaps it was influenced by the fact that the effect of marketing/promotion that authors do *not* have control over is more useful when it comes to understanding an author's place in publishing. Or perhaps the idea that self-marketing strongly affects sales is simply unconvincing—in spite of glaring exceptions like Richard Paul Evans and his *Christmas Box* (Evans). Because while

an author may struggle to reach a few hundred schools, publishers and big booksellers with their mailing lists and school book-order forms and established infrastructure have already made the connections that an author, personally, cannot.

But is this misguided? Does self-promotion work? And even if it does, is the effort justified by the result?

In order to attempt to answer these questions, a final inductive procedural was undertaken.

First, whether or not each sample author had a blog they updated regularly was recorded. Next, whether or not they had a web page was recorded. And then each author was personally emailed and asked to self-rank how much time they spend per month on self-promotion. 0 = None; 1 = Little, 2 = A moderate amount; 3=Lots. While these factors cannot represent a comprehensive look at self marketing, it was hoped that they would at least give an *indication* of how effective such efforts might prove.

Blog/Website Results

75% of all authors had either a blog or a website. There was no statistically significant difference between groups of books with high sales and those with lower sales as related to the presence or absence of such sites.

Self-Promotion Self-Scoring

93 responses from sample authors were received, which represented close to 50% of the total number of authors (a handful of authors having written more than one book from the sample). The following is the count for each quadrant.

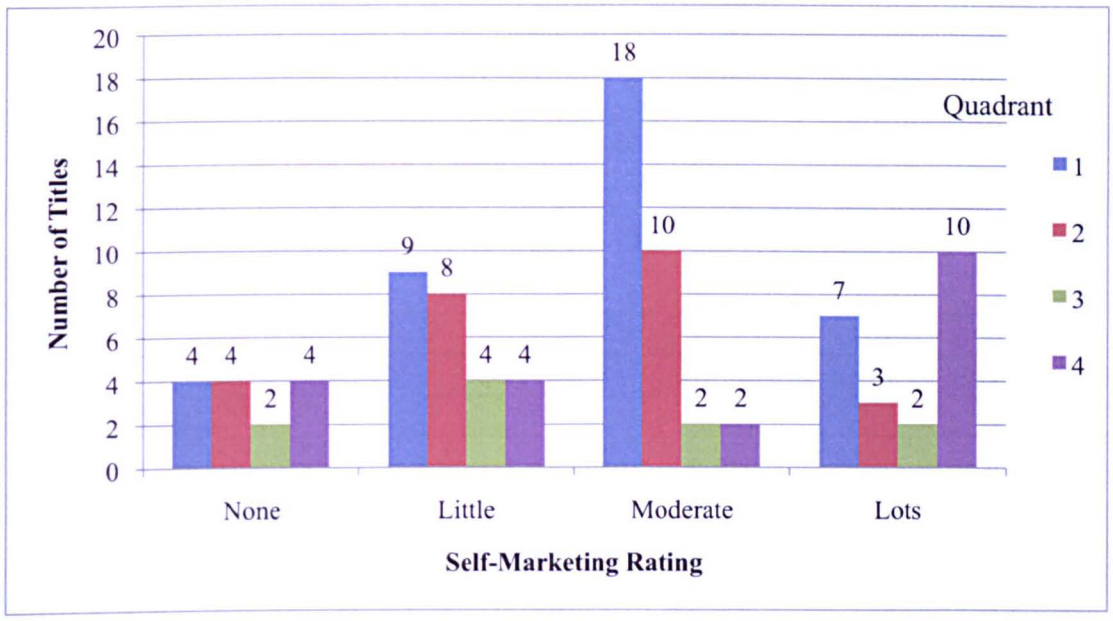


Figure 39: Author Self-Marketing Ratings

This count represented authors for about 50% of the books in quadrant one (books with low marketing/low sales), 60% of the books in quadrant two (low marketing/high sales), 40% of the books in quadrant three (low marketing/low sales), and 50% of the books in quadrant four (high marketing/high sales). As with cover-data, only the quadrant data were considered as they were likely to yield the most notable relationships and indication of relationship was more important to the aims of the procedure than the precise nature of the relationship.

The average self-marketing score by quadrant is as follows:

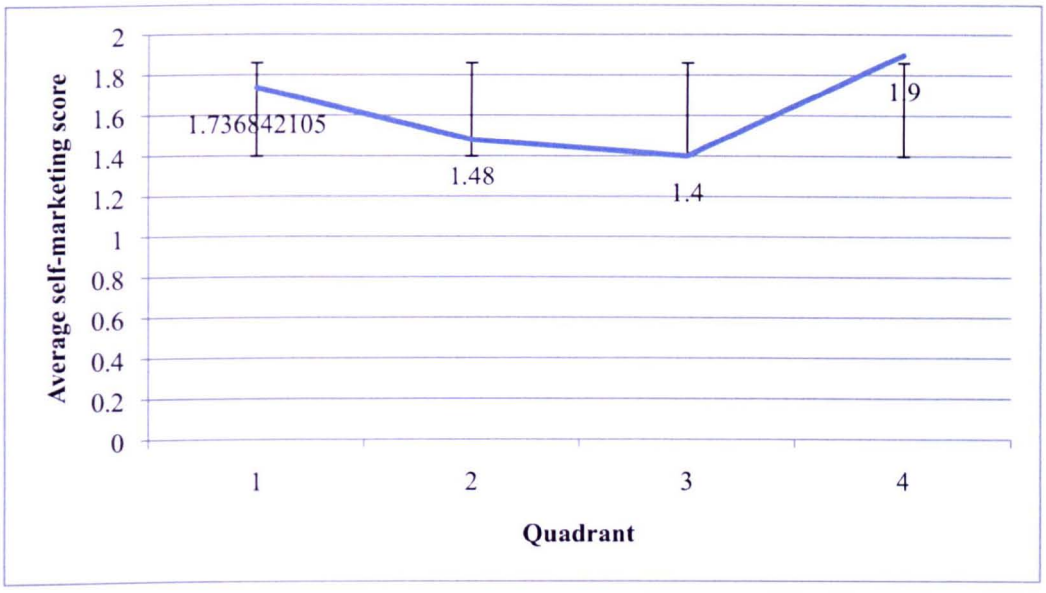


Figure 40: Author Self-Marketing by Quadrant

As indicated by the error bars, this is not a highly statistically significant result. There does seem to be a (very) slightly higher tendency in quadrant four to engage in self marketing, but this could be explained by the fact that publishers—who put a lot of marketing money behind quadrant four books in the first place—are likely to put even more pressure on these authors to engage in self-promotion. If self-promotion was fundamentally connected to *sales,* however, we might expect books in quadrant two to show more self promotion than we do. Furthermore, it is interesting to see the relatively low results of quadrant three. Perhaps when the books started to fail, the publishers gave up pushing the authors? The authors gave up pushing themselves? Or maybe one of the reasons they got more marketing money is that they were more likely to already be famous and no one thought they *needed* to engage in self-promotion? And finally, quadrant one authors demonstrate more self-marketing than we'd expect. Perhaps because they were aware that they weren't going to receive it from the publisher? The reasoning is not entirely clear based solely on this data.

Summary:

The overall average self-marketing rating for books that sold well (quadrants two and four) was 1.69.

The overall average rating for books that did not sell well (quadrants one and three) was 1.57.

This was not a statistically significant difference.

Self-Promotion Conclusion

Perhaps the question of self-marketing is more complicated than is discernable from this short glimpse into the topic and a larger investigation should be undertaken—especially given the beliefs of authors and publishers that self-promotion matters, the presence of major self-promotional anomalies (like *The Christmas Box,* or to a lesser degree, in the sample book *Little Brother*), and the fact that raw numbers *did* correlate with an increase in sales with a higher self-promotional scores, just not in any statistically significant way.

Fundamentally, however, this study could not establish a statistically significant connection between the amount of self-promotion an author feels that they are doing and the likelihood that their book sells. If nothing else, this encourages the creative writer to work first and foremost on *writing*. The business issues pertaining to a publishing career may be best left to those who have made publishing their business.

On Marketing: The Final Word

Having identified book trait patterns whose resonance (or lack thereof) likely caused their books to sell differently than their marketing would have predicted, one might be tempted to think that all an author must do to sell books is to reproduce the successful techniques and avoid the less successful ones.

This is not an auspicious assumption for an author.

And in questioning the assumption, I'm aware that I'm speaking in direct opposition to Donald Maass, who spends a sizeable portion of his *Writing the Breakout Novel* debunking the 'myths' that a big advance means big sales or that promotion doesn't sell books (20-25). (He even goes as far as to say that, 'Ads in the New York Times Book Review are placed there mostly to make the author feel good' (23).)

It has been demonstrated that there is a direct, linear, relationship between the level of marketing and the level of sales. e.g.:

Figure 41: Marketing (x) Versus Sales (y) on the Average

And though the very low sample size of books on the upper end of the chart disallows the calling of this trend statistically significant, the image, itself, is stunning.

In fact, going a step further and simply identifying the number of books with above average marketing who likewise had above average sales results in an equally stunning 70%. But when books were marketed at a below average level? Sixty percent of the time they also sold at a below average level.

Indeed, comparing the percentage of above-average-selling-books with a marketing score of one—about 20%—to the percentage of above-average-selling-books with a marketing score of nine or higher—about 90%— provides further conviction that marketing is the primary, fundamental, source of a book's success or failure.

See the following table for a full mark-up by marketing score:

Marketing score	# Books with above average sales	Total # books with this marketing score	Percentage of books with above average sales
1	12	59	20.34%
2	12	24	50.00%
3	22	39	56.41%
4	12	19	63.16%
5	10	16	62.50%
6	10	15	66.67%
7	6	6	100.00%
8	2	4	50.00%
9	2	2	100.00%
10	4	5	80.00%
12	1	1	100.00%

Figure 42: Number of Books with Above Average Sales by Marketing Score

A few more numbers:

- Total number of times the study identified books with a sales score of 10 or higher a.k.a. 'megahits': 17
- Average marketing score of 'megahits': 7.4
- Average marketing score for entire sample: 3.3
- Percentage of sample books that were megahits: about 9%
- Number of books with a marketing score of one that became megahits: 0

Consider, also, the following sales-spike-frequency chart:

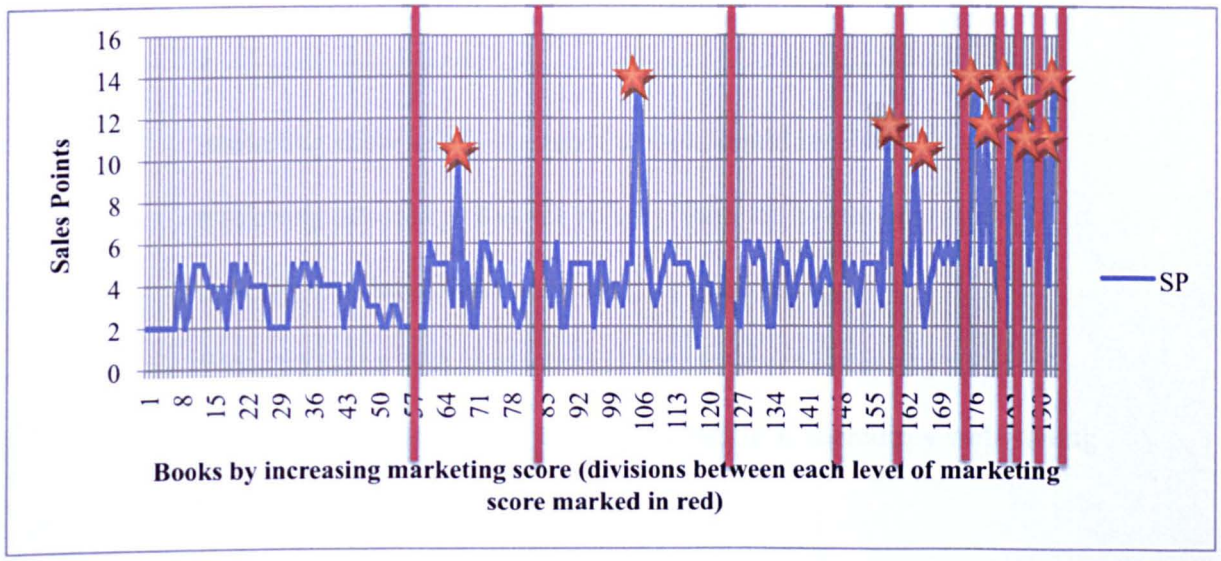


Figure 43: Sales Spikes Don't Occur At the Lowest Level of Marketing While Their Frequency Only Increases at the Upper End

Book professionals might argue that the reason that there is such a strong correlation between marketing and sales is that they are very good at choosing the kinds of books that will sell. This may be true. However, as the previous chapter evaluating the publishing industry illustrates, there is just as much reason to believe that it's *not* true as to believe that it is.

Whatever the case, by referring back to the initial scoring system, it's clear that if an author would like to sell a lot of books, they *must* receive more than 1 marketing point. (And a marketing score of 1 was by far the most common of all of the possible scores.) In practical terms this means that an author in search of sales must do as many as possible, but *at least* one, of the following:

1. Get an advance more for more than $50,000, preferably in an auction or a pre-empt.
2. Sell their book in a multi-book deal.
3. Get a starred review in *Booklist* or the *School Library Journal* or a positive full-length review in a major book-review source.
4. Win a major award.
5. Be famous (though the absence of 'megahits' for books with a marketing score of 4—the score a book would receive if its *only* marketing advantage was the relative fame of its author—might indicate that fame alone does not guarantee success).
6. Write on topics with the potential for carryover—using as subject matter major news events, the same subjects as incredibly well-selling books, or other established/famous topics.

This all runs quite contrary to the Maas advice that big advances don't matter and that 'cookie-cutters' don't sell (13). It's nevertheless what the findings of this study indicate. Marketing might not guarantee success, but it certainly makes it much more likely—so much so that a the marketing/sales PRC of 0.6 was *magnitudes* higher than the sales PRC of any other independent variable.

To conclude: is it possible to sell a book without any external marketing?

Well, yes. Anything's possible, right?

But is it likely?

Absolutely not.

Part Three: Correlation with the Creative Portion of Thesis

Connection Between Research Findings and My Submitted Creative Work, *Secrets of the Mami Wata*, a YA Novel

In attempting to incorporate the variables connected with resonance in the novel presented in the creative portion of this thesis, I ran into the initially stated problem: relationship does not equal causation. Yes, resonant books were more likely to exhibit certain characteristics, but no, achieving resonance is not as simple as reproducing each trait into a text by rote. Consider, for example, if I were to look at the piece of data that suggests that racially offensive material has a connection with resonance and set about to create the most racially offensive work possible. What kind of work would that be? Certainly not one I'd like to put my name on.

However, the *patterns* identified do indicate possible modes of causation, and when each particular trait identified to have a connection with resonance is viewed through these patterns—specifically patterns of meaning/sophistication, emotion, estrangement, race, gender, socioeconomics, and overall relationship of a text to the real life of a reader—there is a greater chance of achieving resonance.

The piece of fiction I've submitted—a novel titled *Secrets of the Mami Wata*—therefore attempts to incorporate as many of the pattern-linked 'resonant' traits as possible, and to avoid principles that result in 'dissonance,' always doing so in a way that respects the overall meanings and does not overtly strive for a literalistic, forced, or contrived reproduction of any individual trait.

While it is, of course, completely misguided to assume that incorporating all of these traits into my story will lead to more *sales*, I do think it is reasonable to assume that incorporating the pattern-linked traits is likely to result in a higher level of *resonance*. This assumption, however, cannot cover all of the aspects that

contribute to the production of a novel, and so after a discussion of how the 'resonance' patterns were incorporated into the presented novel, a discussion of other traits, like narrative voice, will follow.

Two of the strongest performing traits in the study were a demonstrated 'yearning for mother god' and the presence of racial diversity. The premise and title of my book are meant to evoke images of both of these: the 'Mami Wata' is a goddess from West Africa, specifically part of the Voudoun religious tradition.

Furthermore, the protagonist is engaged in a quest to find the identity of her father, which establishes the premise of the book around the Campbellian step, 'Atonement with the Father,' and the quest is instigated by her dead grandmother, who is the head of a pagan/goddess worshipping cult ('Separation from the Feminine,' 'Yearning for Mother God'), and obstructed by her mother ('Healing the Mother/Daughter Split'). Naturally, the issues of identity, paternity, good versus evil, and light versus dark, all make appearances as she attempts to uncover the truth about her secret past (i.e., 'Ask Big Questions'). The book attempts to emulate the structures embodied in the Booker plots of 'Rags to Riches,' 'The Quest,' and 'Tragedy' in the sub-plot of the mother's past.

In order to simplify the connections between the results of this study and my book, I present the remainder of relationships between the data and my creative work in table form, organized according to identified patterns.

Pattern One:

Patterns of meaning and sophistication	How incorporated into work
Resonance favours 'big questions.'	The very premise of the book attempts to ask big questions: how do old secrets haunt us? How does death change our family? Does making a horrible mistake make you evil? Or is the reality of good versus evil more complicated than the simple light/dark dualities we sometimes see things in?
A longer length.	While some YA novels finish in around 30,000 words, this novel has more than 60,000. This is not substantially longer than the average YA novel, but it does place the novel among the more 'grown-up' lengths.
'Literary' preference (avoiding the 'titillating' or 'commercial.')	My agent made me take out all of the 'titillating' stuff; god bless her.
Favours books with potential for adult crossover.	A lot of adult crossover may, in fact, come from the cover art, or in the way a book is packaged or distributed. But I tried to make sure that the internal elements of the book allowed for such a crossover to take place. The protagonist is a bit older, a lot of the drama is centred not in the high-school setting, but in places outside school, and the relationships should hopefully be familiar to both adults and teens.
Favours books that are more 'edgy.'	There is a cult, rape, attempted rape, murder, incest, family secrets, etc. Though the idea of 'edginess' is subjective (and a bit vague) hopefully the criteria has been adequately addressed.
Favours books that deal with 'issues.'	This is not an 'issue' book, per se, but I believe that in terms of the overall patterns of meaning and sophistication implied by this trait, the book does not shy away from the difficult, complex, or otherwise unpleasant and that this may be the main thrust behind the idea of 'issue' books in general.
Favours complex conflict.	The conflict of the book is multi-level: Isa's grandmother has died and has done so just after indicating that she may have known something about the identity of Isa's father. But the identity of Isa's father is more complicated than one would initially assume and it leads to revelations about Isa's mother and Isa's place within her family.

Patterns of meaning and sophistication	How incorporated into work
Favours deep characters.	Isa is a teen and because of that she faces problems in an upfront way: however, she also is not simple. She has layers of emotion, she's willing to reconsider things that she's always assumed about her life, she's ultimately willing to face the darkness of her family's past with compassion, and she's able maintain a relationship with her best friend who has a very different past. Ultimately no one in the book is entirely good or entirely evil. Everyone has made mistakes and everyone means well—even when their actions are terrible. I think stories are more interesting when no one is painted as completely horrible or good.
Favours books that don't 'talk down' to readers or try too hard to sound 'teenagery.'	I have been told that I, personally, am wont to sound like a teenager in my day-to-day speech. This being admitted, I did not really try at all to make the voice in the book 'teenagery' and I revised dialog that editors spotted as clumsy or unrealistic.
Favours learning/growth.	Isa does learn and grow. Not only does she learn the truth about her parentage, she learns compassion for her mother and acceptance of a grandmother whose memory has been tainted by her past actions.
Favours serious.	I did include humorous moments, in order to relieve tension during some bits, but the overall tone of the book is serious in nature.
Favours dark.	There is plenty of dark.
Favours heavy.	Incest, rape, kidnapping, secrets. I don't think it gets much heavier.
Favours sex talk.	I did not include 'sex talk,' per se, but I did not characterize Isa as someone without sexual feelings and inclinations, which is, I believe, one of the larger issues behind the favour found for 'sex talk.' Parents may not like to think of their teens as sexual creatures, but teens certainly have their own inner lives, feelings, and desires for relationships.
Favours more expensive books.	Perhaps this is simply related to the 'serious' nature of more expensive books? Mass-market paperbacks may be less expensive, but they also tend to be more disposable—flighty fun, or a quick romance escape, etc. This story would certainly not fit into the 'escapist' genre and this may satisfy the underlying reasons behind favour for this trait.

Patterns of meaning and sophistication	How incorporated into work
Favours religion as driving plot factor.	The story is set in a highly religious town—a town where religion, itself, is almost as much of a character as anyone else. The storyline that ensues is only plausible in a setting like this, seeing as one of the main conflicts of the book ends up being about religion taken to extremes. There is also some biblical imagery—Adam and Eve, for example.
Favours 'Terrible Trouble.'	Though Isa may not be aware of just how terrible the trouble she's in, there is a sense of foreboding from the initiation of the plot line. And in addition to the way Koontz phrased this type of 'trouble,' I attempted to follow Donald Maass' advice to put 'conflict on every page' (28). When outright conflict wasn't amenable to the situation, I attempted to incorporate internal and emotional conflict.
Favours trouble being more terrible.	The trouble does, indeed, become more terrible.
Favours life/death.	The climax of the story has Isa in a life-threatening situation and, in fact, someone does die.
Favours protagonists figuring out how to save themselves.	There is a moment when Isa is rescued, though there is some conflict between the 'resonance' results on this issue as being 'saved by the light goddess' is also a possible point of resonance. As there is a conflict, it seems prudent to consider the larger issues behind the idea of the protagonist 'saving themselves' and I would wager that the issue is more about teens fully accepting responsibility for their own actions and not having adults rush in and 'fix' everything in the end. Isa is the main purveyor of action throughout the story—she is the one who unravels the mystery that puts her in the life/death position and when she's in that position, even her rescue is coloured by the internal changes taking place. She calls out for her mother, and her mother 'hears' her and she recognizes what this represents. No one puts everything into a neat box for her and she's the one who faces the complications of her own actions and the actions of those who came before her.
Favours having something to say.	There are a lot of things I attempt to say in this book. (Whether or not such an attempt is successful is another question!) More than anything, I wanted to convey the sense of good/evil being more complicated than light/dark. I also wanted to illustrate a worldview that accepts divine female potential.

Figure 44: Patterns of Sophistication and Meaning

Pattern Two:

Patterns of emotion	How incorporated
Resonance favours romance.	There is a love interest in the book and the romance between him and Isa ends up providing one of the ultimate complications that lead to the climax of the story.
Favours the plot-driven and fast paced.	Good, because this is a twisty plot.
Favours a hopeful worldview.	Forgiveness is one of the over-arching themes of the story, which hopefully provides an element of optimism for the future.
Favours the 'emotive' and emotion in general.	With the death, mourning, issues of paternal estrangement, and Isa's overall propensity to act out her emotions to the fullest, I'm hoping the book accomplishes this.
Favours 'desire.'	Isa eventually finds herself in a situation where there is nothing left *but* desire. She can't have her grandmother, she can't have her boyfriend, she can't even uncover the truth—in spite of the fact that she wants desperately to have all of those things.
Favours likeable/non-annoying/non-spoiled /non-drama queen/non-whining protagonist.	I think that part of a protagonist being likeable is them having compassion for others—especially people they're likely to be mean to, like siblings. While Isa's maternal relationship is strained, her relationship with her sisters is more kind. I think another part of likeability is an awareness of flaws. Isa has some bratty bits, but she realizes the depth of her mistakes by the end of the book.
Favour the 'enjoyable.'	This, again, is one of the more subjective findings of the study. What does it mean to be enjoyable? Does it mean that something is engrossing? That positive emotions were felt? Or that emotions were felt in general? Or that the experience of reading the story was one that didn't cause the reader to regret the time spent? Enjoyability was attempted, of course, though ultimately the reader decides this question.

Patterns of emotion	How incorporated
Favours 'If I lived in this world I'd be happy.'	There are likely some differences between this world and the world many readers live in, but I'm hoping that the world isn't so different from our own that readers happy in their own worlds wouldn't also be happy in this one.
Favours 'If I lived in this world I'd be ecstatic.'	In many ways I would be 'ecstatic' to have a grandmother like Isa's. Her unabashed lack of shame for the way that she conducts so much of her life was refreshing to write. The rest of the world would be more confining, but I would enjoy the kinds of female relationships present.
Favours 'If I lived in this world I'd be confused.'	There are many elements of confusion—both emotional and cognitive. Isa's own confusion will likely translate to the reader.
Favours 'If I lived in this world I'd be depressed.'	There are plenty of 'depressing' things—though the novel is not, of course, without hope. I think that the sentiment of 'depression' has more to do with entangling the protagonist in a seemingly hopeless situation, which I did attempt to do.
Disfavours 'If I lived in this world I'd be suicidal.'	In Isa's world, no. She's got a lot to live for. Her mother's world has been a little more challenging, but even she has things to live for.
Disfavours 'If I lived in this world I'd be unhappy.'	Isa has stress, angst, confusion, sadness, grief, etc., but I don't think that she is a fundamentally unhappy person.
Favours 'If I lived in this world I'd be stressed.'	Isa has plenty of stress.
Favours 'If I lived in this world I'd be full of angst.'	Isa also has plenty of angst.
Disfavours 'If I lived in this world: whatever.'	One thing Isa does not have is ambivalence.

Patterns of emotion	How incorporated
Favours emotion.	As with the 'conflict on every page,' I attempted to put 'emotion on every page.' Emotion is the cornerstone of the novel.
Favours yearning.	The book is full of yearning. For the truth, for her grandmother, for a boy, for a belief system. No yearning for vampires, but I'm open to revision…
Disfavours 'embarrassing' books.	I suppose some of this would come down to the way the cover art presented the book, but I think the title is both obscure enough and intriguing enough so as not to unduly embarrass readers.
Favours inherent conflict.	The premise of death and secrets is inherently full of conflict.
Favours gut emotional appeal.	Likewise, I think the issue of grief and identity allow for gut emotional appeal.
Favours high stakes.	The stakes become life or death.

Figure 45: Patterns of Emotion

Pattern Three:

Themes of estrangement	How incorporated
Resonance favours abusive parents.	While you couldn't entirely call Isa's parents abusive, it is her mother's secrecy that leads Isa to put herself in such peril. That and the complete absence of her biological father, which I would count as an element of negligence. Also, it's ultimately the deep sin of the Grandmother that caused all of the unrest in the first place.
Favours 'Atonement with Father.'	The novel's story arc centres around Isa's quest to find the identity of her father and to answer the question: how does paternity shape identity?
Favours separation from feminine.	Her grandmother's death initiates the action in the novel.

Themes of estrangement	How incorporated
Favours yearning to reconnect.	Both her mourning for grandmother and the way that her calling out for her mother saves her demonstrate this, I hope.
Favours healing the mother/daughter split.	The story arc is finally completed when Isa understands her mother and learns compassion for her mother's mistakes. There is also an element of mother/daughter healing in the relationship between Isa's mother and her grandmother. Isa's willingness to accept both the good and bad about her grandmother provides her mother with some ability to forgive and move on.
Favours yearning for mother God.	Mother God is, for the most part, embodied by Isa's dead grandmother. Isa yearns for her—yearns for the sense of belonging, the connection to the goddess, everything divine that her grandmother stood for. Her grandmother provides Isa with direct experiences of goddess worship, and through missing her grandmother, Isa also misses this sense of connection with the maternal and divine.

Figure 46: Themes of Estrangement

Pattern Four:

Patterns of relatability	How incorporated
Resonance favours books that are likeable.	This trait was among the more subjective questions asked. (What, exactly, makes a book likeable? We didn't ask readers to expound upon this, merely to identify whether or not they *felt* like for the book.) However, I think that part of a likeable book is in the likeability of the protagonists, so I tried to make Isa likeable. Unfortunately, the subjective nature of 'like' leads me to believe I can't address this trait fully on my own and that it's just one of those many 'faiths' an author must have in order to produce anything at all.
Favours first person, present tense.	I wish this was something that had been fully clear when I started working on the book! Several rewrites were needed just to correct the tense and POV. However, I'm pleased with the first-person present tense result.

Patterns of relatability	How incorporated
Favours older teens.	Isa is a slightly older teen.
Disfavours books that have 'larger than life' characters.	With the possible exception of the grandmother, the characters in this book are fairly ordinary, hopefully allowing teens to see themselves through the eyes of the protagonist.
Favours believable world-building.	Nothing truly supernatural happens, though there is a supernatural fabric to the story. The religious fervour of the town was sometimes a bit hard for NYC editors to believe in, which I tried to work on in subsequent drafts. But it is definitely a believable world view in the part of the country I'm from and I definitely tried to make the world one the reader could believe in, even if it was unfamiliar.
Favours 'I do live in this world.'	Well, I, personally, live in a very similar world to the one presented here. The mountainous part of the U.S. where I live is renowned for its religious fervour. The world is different from that of someone living in NYC or in Wales, for example. However, I think the bigger issue was not to create a world exactly like the one readers live in, but to create a world they could *see* themselves living in. The reality of world-building is, thus, probably what's implied by the success of this trait, and as noted I did attempt to allow the reader to *believe* in the world, even if it was unfamiliar.
Favours plausibility.	I actually tried to make the book both far-fetched *and* plausible, since many good stories seem to do both at the same time.

Figure 47: Patterns of Relatability

Pattern Five:

Patterns of relatability: gender	How incorporated
Resonance favours books that don't try to appeal to both genders.	I did not explicitly try to appeal to both genders. This was approached very much from a female point of view.

Patterns of relatability: gender	**How incorporated**
Disfavours the gender offensive.	I played on stereotypes a bit: all of the women in Isa's family *hate* cooking, while her boyfriend loves it. While Isa's mother has a more 'traditional' job (she's a music teacher), it's Isa's stepfather who understands emotions with more wisdom.
Favours gender aware books.	As gender was one of the underlying conflicts in the story, I hope that the book achieves gender awareness.
Favours descent to goddess.	The descents in the book are metaphorical, though they are explicit. Isa has to delve down into the truth about her grandmother—who was a goddess-like figure in her life—and accept that things weren't as clear-cut as she'd always believed.
Favours yearning to reconnect with feminine.	Isa misses her grandmother desperately.
Favours healing the mother/daughter split.	The story arc isn't complete until Isa and her mother achieve understanding and reconciliation.
Favours Murdock Heroine Cycle.	The favourable Murdock elements were incorporated, along with the general understanding that a female-plot cycle follows a different pattern than the more traditional male cycle.
Favours yearning for mother god.	Part of what Isa loved about her grandmother was the way that she interacted with a mother god—especially in the starkly patriarchal environment of her town. Her yearning for her grandmother is influenced by the images of divinity presented by her grandmother.
Favours recognition that the dark goddess and the light goddess are one goddess. (Shadow-naming.)	Isa has to accept both the good and bad parts of her grandmother.
Favours female apotheosis.	The apotheosis bits present are always female.

Patterns of relatability: gender	How incorporated
Favours goddess-salvation.	In spite of the other indications that 'rescue' was unfavourable, this finding did lead me to incorporate a single 'salvation'—when Isa calls to her mother on the rock and her mother comes. In initiating the action with Isa, I hoped to mitigate any potential problems indicated by the other anti-rescue findings and still fulfil the emotional reality behind the desire to be saved by the light goddess.

Figure 48: Patterns of Relatability: Gender

Pattern Six:

Patterns of relatability: race	How incorporated
Favours racially aware books.	Mami Wata is an African goddess and serves as one of the metaphorical frameworks of the story.
Favours non-white protagonists.	Isa is white, but her best friend is black. And the Mami Wata is traditionally supposed to be both black *and* white.
Favours books with race part of plot.	Isa's best friend is black, and it's her best friend that provides her with the 'Mami Wata' as a conceptual framework that allows her to accept both the good and the bad of her grandmother. This is difficult because Isa's grandmother had always been a racist, but both girls learn to look past this.
Favours racial stereotypes (likely related to the importance of including race in the plot).	I believe this trait does have more to do with dealing with race in the plot, so I didn't include stereotypes, per se, though I did try to play on some.
Favours being aware of own stereotypes.	The Nigerian fortune teller herself attempts to play on people's stereotypes of her in order to get a certain kind of effect. Other characters do similar things.

Patterns of relatability: race	How incorporated
Favours the potentially racially offensive. (Likely related to the importance of including race in the plot: very few books discussed issues of race, vastly under-representing the non-white market.)	There were a few racially questionable things: the word 'nigger' was used once or twice, and the grandmother's racism may make it difficult for some people to accept other parts of her character. But I left these difficult bits intact because the *questions* they raised seemed to be questions fundamental to American society and its troubled racial relations. I think the reason that the potentially racially offensive is favoured is because these relations make *talking* about race much more urgent than worrying about avoiding the offensive.

Figure 49: Patterns of Relatability: Race

Pattern Seven:

Patterns of relatability: socioeconomic status	How incorporated
Disfavours superficial/brand obsessed.	The only brands mentioned were Diet Coke and Doritos, I think. And really, how could you *not* mention those?! Totally foods of the gods.
Disfavours privileged protagonists.	No one is terribly privileged.
Disfavours 'If I lived in this world I'd be So. Rich.'	No one is terribly rich.

Figure 50: Patterns of Relatability: Socioeconomic Status

Pattern Eight:

Patterns of relatability: divine potential	How incorporated
Favours 'Apotheosis.'	Isa's revelation about how to finally discern the truth by tearing down all of the photographs on the wall is a moment of divine inspiration. Likewise, her mother takes on a 'goddess' like role in the way she shows up at the exact moment needed.
Favours achieving the 'boon of success.'	Isa is, in fact, able to uncover the truth about her parentage, which is what she wanted to accomplish initially. Whenever there is a boon, however, there are the unintended consequences of getting what you wanted, and these are abundant in this story.
Favours JC's 'refusal of return.'	I think the fundamental idea behind 'refusal of return' is that we can't move backwards—we learn and we grow and even if presented the opportunity to regress, we would not choose to, even if it spared a lot of pain. Isa's discoveries cause a lot of pain, but she never has the sense that she would rather go back to when she didn't know the truth. She accepts the reality of her new situation without wishing to undo what's been done.
Disfavours JCs's 'rescue from without.'	As previously discussed, Isa *is* rescued at one point, though her psychological shifts toward her mother precede the rescue, thus giving her more of an active (as opposed to an 'acted upon') role. This, I believe, is the fundamental principle behind the idea of avoiding 'rescue.'
Favours the 'mastery over two worlds.'	Isa masters the tenuous line hovering between light and dark. She learns how to act out of love and she's willing to change her attitude about her mother.
Favours JC's 'freedom to live'.	The thing that is most free by the end of the book is Isa's willingness to accept her family situation as it is—especially pertaining to her stepfather, mother, and half-sisters. She never really felt like she was completely part of their circle of relationship, but by the end she sees that she's been a part of it from the beginning and this gives her the ability to live out her future as a full member of her family.

Figure 51: Patterns of Relatability: Divine Potential

When it comes to the more visceral qualities of a novel—those that are either difficult to quantify, or too unconscious to allow enumeration—I admit to relying on instincts honed not just through this study, but through years of engagement in the world of young adult literature. The 'narrative voice' used in the novel was decided based upon such instinct. But though the voice was one I consider to be my 'natural' writing voice, the act of reading more than a hundred novels for this thesis certainly informed this voice—changing it to fit within the expectations of the form. I have never quite agreed with those authors who say that writing can't be taught, that it is something that someone either can or can't do. Hence, the overall aims of this thesis, which relied on quantification, enumeration, and investigation. However, although I still largely disagree with the idea that writing can't be taught or broken down into understandable parts, I must admit that there are many more parts than are possible to investigate within the scope of a dissertation. And of these parts, many remain in the instinctual, visceral level or writing—unable, even through meticulous attempt, to come to the surface of explanation. 'Narrative voice' was one of those parts for me.

Perhaps another one of the more visceral choices involved was in the choice of setting. The setting—a fictionalized version of my own hometown—was certainly influenced by the fact that religion was among the traits of resonance. But religion also shapes the very fabric of day to day life where I live and I could think of no better way to access the texture of that fabric than to utilize the traits of my own surroundings into the fictional world of my protagonist. Certainly there are many places from which I could have drawn inspiration, but none of them were as familiar to me and as readily accessible than those with which I was already deeply familiar. A good writer friend of mine once said that the 'details' of her fiction—the very

details that give her prose life—are almost always drawn from her own environment. In this way, she said, her fiction is full of more 'truths' than even the nonfiction pieces she attempts. I empathize with this point of view. No matter how much one can quantify the aspects that make up a fictional work, when it comes down to the writer and the empty page, the details that bubble up from the unconscious and into the story are often autobiographical. Perhaps this is a limitation of writing, though perhaps it is what gives writing life. Real human existence is made of thousands of tiny details and perhaps their replication in fiction is what allows characters to truly come alive.

Indeed, this is why the critical portion of this thesis looks at some items that others may consider minutiae. Details—that may seem not to mean much on their own—have a way of adding up into something that *matters.*

Thus, the act of creative writing informed the critical exercise here as much as the results of the critical exercise informed the act of creative writing. And this may be one of the ultimate lessons of this thesis.

In Conclusion

On Blind-spots

If I were to try to pin point the single greatest take-away from the data, it would be the degree to which the 'mismatches' between marketing and sales correlate with our own cultural 'blind-spots.' Culturally, we may be aware that there are larger problems with race, gender, or age stereotypes. But when it comes to the application of this awareness to the creative/market sphere, we are stifled by our own inability to see the problems *in our work.*

This is in not meant to be an indictment of authors, booksellers, or publishers. 'Blind spots' by nature are difficult to pinpoint. If we, as producers/disseminators of YA literature, are unaware of the ways that we are failing to connect with our audience, it is difficult to condemn—or even to discuss—our failings as we are, by definition, unaware of them.

But the benefit of using the type of statistical epistemology used in this thesis is that statistical epistemology provides a unique ability to *quantify* the things that are normally invisible. In a statistical inquiry, the identification of blind spots is as simple as a mathematical notation of disconnect between the numerical equivalents of value from both the production side of YA (marketing) and the consumption side (sales)—disconnects termed in this work as 'resonance' and 'dissonance.'

And the patterns of resonance discovered in this thesis are remarkably linked to three main 'blind-spots': problems pertaining to race, to gender, and to mistaken stereotypes about the values of American teens in general.

The questions of race and gender have been discussed previously, and though they deserve even more discussion, a consideration of the third 'blind spot'—mistaken stereotypes about the moral identity of teens—reveals much of the broader potential application of 'blind spot'-recognition to YA writing. Consider some of the stereotypes about American teens. They are thought to be:

- Materialistic
- Shallow
- Emotionally unsophisticated
- Uninterested in self-improvement
- Untroubled by their inability to get along with their parents
- Generally uninterested in anyone but themselves

But patterns of story resonance outlined within this study are directly in conflict with these assumptions.

According to the findings here, American teens find books overly focused on wealth to be distasteful and the over-presence of materialism in a book can hurt a book's ability to sell. Likewise, teens don't respond well to the 'shallow.' Books that are too comic, books that fail to ask 'big' questions, and books that 'talk down' to readers, all fail to perform as well as their marketing predicts they should. On the other hand, teens do respond to books that are emotionally complex, that provide them with a vision of what they can become, that recognize and reconcile feelings of estrangement—especially from parents—books that take them seriously, and that give them a sense that they are an important part of making the world a better place.

It could be argued that this study cannot draw conclusions about *all* American teenagers—only those that read books. However, teens are reading more books than they ever have. Even amidst economic downturn, sales of YA books in the U.S. have

continued to climb higher and higher. In 2009 when overall book sales were 'about as bad as it gets,' sales of YA and children's books actually rose 14.3% (Publisher's Weekly). According to Jamie Reno in her *Newsweek* article, 'Generation R (R is for Reader),' the 'typical' teen is now a teen that reads. Reno notes that publishing professionals have gone as far as to call this decade the 'second golden age' of young adult literature, topped only by the decade in which YA as we know it was born (Reno 1). Skeptics of the idea that the terms 'teens who read books' and 'teens' may becoming more and more synonymous are invited to see how many American teen girls who have not read *Twilight* they can find, or even how many teens of any gender who have not read at least one of the *Harry Potter* books. In fact, the idea that teens don't value reading might well be just one more of the stereotypes about teens that adults perpetuate without due cause.

The recognition of 'blind spots' provides publishers, booksellers, and authors with opportunity, however. For authors, the idea of 'blind spot' recognition is fundamental to writing itself as revision is perhaps the most vital part of the writing process. And revision is re-*vision*—the act and process of re-seeing a text, re-examining it so that the unseen is seen, addressed, corrected, and so that it can be re-shaped, re-created, and generally improved. It's an act that some may call the primary challenge to all human beings—regardless of whether or not they write books. Indeed, the biblical idea of repentance comes from the Greek μετανοέω, meaning literally to re-think. The process of recognizing 'blind spots' and the processes involved in the revision of writing are remarkably similar. Thus, because the data helped to identify 'blind spots,' it already has direct applicability to the writing process.

On the Writing Process and the Findings of this Thesis

The critical portion of this thesis does not specifically discuss the *how's* of writing, but the *what's*. It uncovers *what kind* of book succeeds in the marketplace, attempting to enumerate the *what's* down even to the choice of tense and point of view. But knowing these facts alone does not equal the production of a text.

What I can say about the writing process, however—at least if my own writing process is any indication—is that it is generally a draft-based process. Writers don't typically sit down at the computer and watch as music magically flows from their fingertips. Words are tried and then discarded. Scenes are written and re-written. Plot lines are outlined and then abandoned. The *process* of writing is messy—a series of acts that are undone more often than they are done and that can, ultimately, be compared to a long game of darts: groups of hits and misses.

But in the messiness of process, it is undeniably useful to have a solid set of facts which can be returned to. Such facts can provide a foundation, ensuring that the messiness of drafting can be built into a final edit in which the true extent of messiness is not visible. The type of information included in this thesis is meant to function as such a foundation. And by being able to compare the *what's* enumerated here to the product attained through my own series of *how's*, I feel I was better able to approach my own fiction with a sense of foundation—a solid place from which to launch into the intricacies of a particular story.

More on the Study's Applicability to my Own Writing, and My Own Writing as the Litmus Test for the Study's Findings

This study provided many findings with direct applicability to my personal YA writing—both in *Secrets* and in my writing beyond *Secrets*. But perhaps the most useful was the way the findings allowed me to realize the extent to which teens want to be able to see *themselves* in the protagonists. And more than that—they want to be able to see their own divine (as in, 'larger than themselves' if the religious connotations are problematic) potential. Teens want to ask big questions, they are eager to discern meaning in their lives, but they are most eager to be able to apply these explorations *to themselves.* Girls want to be able to see girls they can relate to—and they want to be able to see them succeed, learn, grow, and generally take on attributes beyond what they initially thought possible. People of non-white races want to see protagonists struggle with the same kinds of problems *they've* struggled with. And everyone, regardless of gender or race or socioeconomic status, wants to view these discussions with *hope.*

The litmus test, of course, as to the validity of this study comes ultimately in the way I am able to apply these findings to my own writing and in the way the applied principles play in the market at large. And, unfortunately, *Secrets of the Mami Wata* had the misfortune of being in the beginning of the publishing-contract-negotiation phase when the 2008 publishing collapse mandated that all new contracts be cancelled. And so while it may have demonstrated *acquisition* worthiness for the American YA market, it will not yet have the chance to be tested in the American YA market, itself. This being said, it was not the first book I've ever written and I do not intend it to be the last one I will ever write. And perhaps every one of my future

books will end up being litmus tests of the study findings. Indeed, this is how I already see them.

On this Study and What it Means to be a YA Author

Being a YA author is to be the wearer of many hats. YA authors are part educator, part entertainer. They speak specifically to teens, but if they succeed, more often times than not they have constructed something that speaks to humanity in general. YA authors are artists who function specifically in the marketplace, storytellers with a very specific audience: adolescents.

Adolescence has often been seen as a time of self discovery. A time for teens to ask, 'Who am I?' and 'What can I become?'

The findings of this study not only confirmed the importance of these questions, they convinced me that they are questions that are fundamental to what it means to be a YA author. YA authors don't write just to entertain. They don't write just to educate. They write because their writing helps teens grapple with issues of identity, meaning, potential, and hope. And if I'm to call myself a YA author, those issues must be central to the foundations of my storytelling. Whatever subject I pursue, whatever specifics are broached in each text I construct for teens, the questions—who am I? what can I become?—should be hovering beneath the words on the screen.

Identity is at the core of success in the American YA market.

(But getting a big advance doesn't hurt, either.)

Appendix 1: The Full Sample of YA novels with Marketing Points, Sales Points, Sales Points Adjusted for Marketing, Difference Levels and Specified Quadrants: Sorted Alphabetically by Title

Title	Author	Marketing Points	Sales Points	Sales Adjusted for Marketing	Difference	Quad
1000 Reasons Never to Kiss a Boy	Freeman	1	3	-0.21	2	1
6X: The Uncensored Confessions	Malkin	8	3	-4.62	-5	3
A Brief Chapter in my Impossible Life	Reinhardt	3	5	0.53	2	2
A Girl Like Moi: The Fashion-Forward Adventures of Imogene	Barham and Rim	5	4	-1.73	-1	3
All Q, No A: More Tales of a 10th-Grade Social Climber	Moser and Mechling	4	3	-2.1	-1	3
Angel's Choice	Baratz-Logsted	1	4	0.79	3	1
Angels on Sunset Boulevard	de la Cruz	6	4	-2.36	-2	3
Audrey, Wait!	Benway	7	5	-1.99	-2	4
AutumnQuest (The Dragonspawn Cycle)	Garrison	3	2	-2.47	-1	1
Back Talk	Richards	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Becoming Chloe	Hyde	4	4	-1.1	0	3
Beige	Castellucci	1	4	0.79	3	1
Betrayed: A House of Night Novel (Book 2)	Cast	3	6	1.53	3	2
Beyond the Reflection's Edge (Echoes from the Edge)	Davis	3	3	-1.47	0	1
Black and White (Speak)	Volponi	4	6	0.9	2	4
Brand X: The Boyfriend Account	Shapiro	1	2	-1.21	1	1

Title	Author	Marketing Points	Sales Points	Sales Adjusted for Marketing	Difference	Quad
But I don't want to be a movie star	Pinder	4	2	-3.1	-2	3
Carpe Diem	Cornwell	3	5	0.53	2	2
Chosen: (House of Night, Book 3)	Cast	3	14	9.53	11	2
Circles of Seven: Volume 3 of Dragons in our Midst	Davis	4	6	0.9	2	4
Cornelia and the Audacious Escapades of the Somerset Sisters	Blume	4	5	-0.1	1	4
Dairy Queen	Murdock	6	6	-0.36	0	4
Dead Connection	Price	3	5	0.53	2	2
Demonkeeper	Buckingham	3	3	-1.47	0	1
Desert Blood 10pm/9c	Cree	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Divine Secrets	Thomas	2	4	0.16	2	1
Dumping Princes (Calypso Chronicles)	O'Connell	5	5	-0.73	0	4
Endymion Spring	Skelton	10	12	3.12	2	4
Epoch	Carter	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Evolution, Me & Other Freaks of Nature	Brande	3	5	0.53	2	2
Exit Here	Myers	1	5	1.79	4	2
Fall of a Kingdom (Farsala Triology, Book 1)	Bell	5	5	-0.73	0	4
First Kisses 2: The Boyfriend Trick	Davis	2	4	0.16	2	1
First Kisses 4: It Had to Be You	Jordan	1	4	0.79	3	1
Fly by Night	Hardinge	5	4	-1.73	-1	3
Football Genius	Green	7	11	4.01	4	4
Football Hero	Green	7	5	-1.99	-2	4
Foreign Exposure: The Social Climber Abroad	Moser and Mechling	4	3	-2.1	-1	3

Title	Author	Marketing Points	Sales Points	Sales Adjusted for Marketing	Difference	Quad
Forging the Sword (The Farsala Trilogy)	Bell	4	5	-0.1	1	4
Frenemies (Drama High)	Divine	5	5	-0.73	0	4
Gamma Glamma	Flores	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Gert Garibaldi's Rants and Raves: One Butt Cheek at a Time	Kizer	4	4	-1.1	0	3
Glass	Hopkins	7	14	7.01	7	4
Glass Houses (The Morganville Vampires, Book 1)	Caine	4	6	0.9	2	4
Goal II: Living the Dream	Rigby	6	5	-1.36	-1	4
Goal! The Dream Begins	Rigby	6	5	-1.36	-1	4
Going Nowhere Faster	Beaudoin	3	2	-2.47	-1	1
Graffiti girl	Parra	1	3	-0.21	2	1
Head Case	Aronson	1	4	0.79	3	1
Hershey Herself	Galante	2	3	-0.84	1	1
High School Bites: The Lucy Chronicles	Conrad	3	4	-0.47	1	1
Holdup (Deborah Brodie Books)	Fields	1	4	0.79	3	1
Homefree	Wright	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Hoops of Steel	Foley	1	3	-0.21	2	1
Hotlanta, No. 1	Millner and Miller	4	5	-0.1	1	4
How It's Done	MacLean	1	4	0.79	3	1
How to Be Bad	Myracle, Lockhart, and Mlynowski	2	5	1.16	3	2
How to Be Popular	Cabot	10	4	-4.88	-6	3
How to Ruin a Summer Vacation	Elkeles	1	5	1.79	4	2
How to Ruin my Teenage Life	Elkeles	2	5	1.16	3	2

Title	Author	Marketing Points	Sales Points	Sales Adjusted for Marketing	Difference	Quad
I'd Tell You I Love You, But Then I'd Have to Kill You (Gallagher Girls)	Carter	8	14	6.38	6	4
In the Serpent's Coils (Hallowmere)	Trent	3	5	0.53	2	2
Into the Dark (Echo Falls)	Abrahams	9	5	-3.25	-4	4
Into the Woods	Smythe	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Is He or isn't He?	Hall	1	5	1.79	4	2
It Girl #5, Lucky: An It Girl Novel (It Girl)	von Ziegesar	12	13	2.86	1	4
Key to Aten (First Chronicle of Aten)	Sinclair	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Kid B	Dalecki	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Kiss Me Kill Me	Henderson	2	5	1.16	3	2
Knights of the Hill Country	Tharp	1	5	1.79	4	2
Lady J (Drama High)	Divine	3	5	0.53	2	2
Last Dance at the Frosty Queen	Uhlig	3	2	-2.47	-1	1
Leaving Paradise	Elkeles	2	4	0.16	2	1
Leftovers	Wiess	2	5	1.16	3	2
Leonardo's Shadow: Or, My Astonishing Life as Leonardo da Vinci's Servant	Grey	3	5	0.53	2	2
Little Brother	Doctorow	9	11	2.75	2	4
Little Friendly Advice	Vivian	3	5	0.53	2	2
Lobsterland	Carlton	2	2	-1.84	0	1
Long May She Reign	White	4	5	-0.1	1	4
Looking for Alaska	Green	6	6	-0.36	0	4
Lost Summer	McAulay	1	5	1.79	4	2
Loud, Fast, & Out of Control (6X)	Malkin	8	2	-5.62	-6	3

Title	Author	Marketing Points	Sales Points	Sales Adjusted for Marketing	Difference	Quad
Love from London: The Principles of Love	Franklin	1	4	0.79	3	1
Love in the Corner Pocket	Perez	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Lulu Dark and the Summer of the Fox (Lulu Dark)	Madison	1	3	-0.21	2	1
Madapple	Meldrum	4	5	-0.1	1	4
Maggie's Story	Mackall	4	2	-3.1	-2	3
Magic City	Lerman	4	3	-2.1	-1	3
Major Crush	Echols	1	5	1.79	4	2
Marked: A House of Night Novel	Cast	3	11	6.53	8	2
Martyn Pig	Brooks	2	10	6.16	8	2
Me, In Between	Baratz-Logsted	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Mixed Bags (Carter House Girls, Book 1)	Carlson	6	4	-2.36	-2	3
Moby Clique (Bard Academy, the)	Lockwood	5	5	-0.73	0	4
Nothing But the Truth (and a few white lies)	Headley	1	4	0.79	3	1
Oh My Goth	Showalter	1	5	1.79	4	2
Oh. My. Gods.	Childs	1	5	1.79	4	2
Once Upon a Crime (The Sisters Grimm Book 4)	Buckley and Ferguson	5	5	-0.73	0	4
One Trick Pony	Brodsky	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Ophelia	Klein	3	4	-0.47	1	1
Out of Patience	Meehl	3	5	0.53	2	2
Phantom Stallion: Wild Horse Island #1: The Horse Charmer	Farley	6	5	-1.36	-1	4
Phantom Stallion: Wild Horse Island #6 Sea Shadow	Farley	6	5	-1.36	-1	4
Plan B	O'Connell	2	5	1.16	3	2

Title	Author	Marketing Points	Sales Points	Sales Adjusted for Marketing	Difference	Quad
Love from London: The Principles of Love	Franklin	1	4	0.79	3	1
Love in the Corner Pocket	Perez	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Lulu Dark and the Summer of the Fox (Lulu Dark)	Madison	1	3	-0.21	2	1
Madapple	Meldrum	4	5	-0.1	1	4
Maggie's Story	Mackall	4	2	-3.1	-2	3
Magic City	Lerman	4	3	-2.1	-1	3
Major Crush	Echols	1	5	1.79	4	2
Marked: A House of Night Novel	Cast	3	11	6.53	8	2
Martyn Pig	Brooks	2	10	6.16	8	2
Me, In Between	Baratz-Logsted	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Mixed Bags (Carter House Girls, Book 1)	Carlson	6	4	-2.36	-2	3
Moby Clique (Bard Academy, the)	Lockwood	5	5	-0.73	0	4
Nothing But the Truth (and a few white lies)	Headley	1	4	0.79	3	1
Oh My Goth	Showalter	1	5	1.79	4	2
Oh. My. Gods.	Childs	1	5	1.79	4	2
Once Upon a Crime (The Sisters Grimm Book 4)	Buckley and Ferguson	5	5	-0.73	0	4
One Trick Pony	Brodsky	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Ophelia	Klein	3	4	-0.47	1	1
Out of Patience	Meehl	3	5	0.53	2	2
Phantom Stallion: Wild Horse Island #1: The Horse Charmer	Farley	6	5	-1.36	-1	4
Phantom Stallion: Wild Horse Island #6 Sea Shadow	Farley	6	5	-1.36	-1	4
Plan B	O'Connell	2	5	1.16	3	2

Title	Author	Marketing Points	Sales Points	Sales Adjusted for Marketing	Difference	Quad
Played	Davidson	1	5	1.79	4	2
Pool Boys	Haft	4	5	-0.1	1	4
Pop!	Wallington	4	3	-2.1	-1	3
Project Paris (The Fashion-Forward Adventures of Imogene)	Barham and Rim	5	4	-1.73	-1	3
Prom Dates from Hell (Maggie Quinn: girl vs Evil)	Clement-Moore	5	4	-1.73	-1	3
Quad	Watson	1	3	-0.21	2	1
Red Glass	Resau	2	6	2.16	4	2
Regina Silsby's Phantom Militia	Brodeur	1	3	-0.21	2	1
Revenge of the Homecoming Queen	Hale	2	4	0.16	2	1
Rise of a Hero (Farsala Trilogy, Book 2)	Bell	5	5	-0.73	0	4
Roots and Wings	Ly	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Rucker Park Setup	Volponi	4	5	-0.1	1	4
Running Horsemen	Lemoult	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Sarah's Long Ride (Piper Ranch)	Davis	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Scrib	Ives	3	1	-3.47	-2	1
Secret Santa	James	1	5	1.79	4	2
Secrets of My Hollywood Life	Calonita	8	6	-1.62	-2	4
Secrets of My Hollywood Life: Family Affairs	Calonita	6	5	-1.36	-1	4
Secrets of My Hollywood Life: On Location	Calonita	5	5	-0.73	0	4
Seeing Redd (The Looking Glass Wars Trilogy)	Beddor	8	12	4.38	4	4
Senrid	Smith	1	6	2.79	5	2
Shug	Han	2	6	2.16	4	2

Title	Author	Marketing Points	Sales Points	Sales Adjusted for Marketing	Difference	Quad
Sight	Vrettos	2	3	-0.84	1	1
Simply Divine	Thomas	3	5	0.53	2	2
Singing Hands	Ray	1	3	-0.21	2	1
Skin	Vrettos	2	5	1.16	3	2
Skinny	Kaslik	6	10	3.64	4	4
Snapshots	Buchanan	1	2	-1.21	1	1
So Lyrical	Cook	2	3	-0.84	1	1
Something Rotten	Gratz	1	4	0.79	3	1
Spells & Sleeping Bags (Magic In Manhattan)	Mlynowski	5	5	-0.73	0	4
Star-Crossed	Collison	1	4	0.79	3	1
Stealing Bradford (Carter House Girls, Book 2)	Carlson	6	4	-2.36	-2	3
Stealing Princes: Calypso Chronicles, Book 2 (Calypso Chronicles)	O'Connell	5	3	-2.73	-2	3
Such a Pretty Girl	Wiess	1	5	1.79	4	2
Tallulah Falls	Fletcher	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Tears of a Dragon (Dragons in Our Midst, Volume 4)	Davis	4	6	0.9	2	4
The After Life	Ehrenhaft	6	2	-4.36	-4	3
The Astonishing Adventures of Fanboy and Goth girl	Lyga	5	5	-0.73	0	4
The Band: Finding Love	Garfinkle	1	2	-1.21	1	1
The Band: Trading Guys (The Band)	Garfinkle	1	2	-1.21	1	1
The Blood Confession	Libby	1	3	-0.21	2	1
The Candlestone (Dragons in Our Midst, Vol. 2)	Davis	4	6	0.9	2	4
The Case Against My Brother	Sternberg	1	4	0.79	3	1

Title	Author	Marketing Points	Sales Points	Sales Adjusted for Marketing	Difference	Quad
The Challenger (Phantom Stallion #6)	Farley	6	5	-1.36	-1	4
The Chaos Code	Richards	2	3	-0.84	1	1
The Death Collector	Richards	1	3	-0.21	2	1
The It Girl #1 (It Girl Series)	von Ziegesar	10	14	5.12	4	4
The Last Knight (Knight and Rogue)	Bell	1	4	0.79	3	1
The Lighthouse Land (the Lighthouse Trilogy)	McKinty	3	4	-0.47	1	1
The Lighthouse War: The Lighthouse Trilogy Book Two	McKinty	3	4	-0.47	1	1
The Looking Glass Wars (The Looking Glass Wars Trilogy)	Beddor	8	13	5.38	5	4
The Luxe	Godbersen	9	13	4.75	4	4
The Making of Dr. Truelove	Barnes	1	4	0.79	3	1
The Melting Season	Conway	2	2	-1.84	0	1
The Patron Saint of Butterflies	Galante	2	5	1.16	3	2
The Poison Apples	Archer	4	5	-0.1	1	4
The Possibility of Fireflies	Paul	2	3	-0.84	1	1
The Princess and the Hound	Harrison	1	5	1.79	4	2
The Principles of Love	Franklin	1	5	1.79	4	2
The Red Thread: A Novel in Three Incarnations (Richard Jackson Books)	Townley	1	3	-0.21	2	1
The Sisters Grimm Book 6: Tales from the Hood (Sisters Grimm)	Buckley and Ferguson	5	5	-0.73	0	4
The Social Experiments of Dorie Dilts: Dumped by Popular Demand	Kain	5	4	-1.73	-1	3

Title	Author	Marketing Points	Sales Points	Sales Adjusted for Marketing	Difference	Quad
The Social Experiments of Dorie Dilts: The School for Cool	Kain	3	3	-1.47	0	1
The Strongbow Saga, Book One: Viking Warrior	Roberts	2	5	1.16	3	2
The Strongbow Saga, Book Two: Dragons from the Sea	Davis	2	5	1.16	3	2
The Swan Maiden	Tomlinson	3	4	-0.47	1	1
The Taker	Steele	3	4	-0.47	1	1
The Very Ordered Existence of Merilee Marvelous	Crowley	6	4	-2.36	-2	3
The Wall and the Wing	Ruby	3	4	-0.47	1	1
The Weight of the Sky	Sandell	1	4	0.79	3	1
The Year of my Miraculous Reappearance	Hyde	4	3	-2.1	-1	3
Thick	Neenan	1	4	0.79	3	1
Thirteen Reasons Why	Asher	5	11	5.27	6	4
Tripping to Somewhere	Reisz	1	5	1.79	4	2
Under a Stand Still Moon	Creel	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Uninvited	Marrone	3	5	0.53	2	2
Unwind	Shusterman	2	6	2.16	4	2
Welcome to Wahoo	Carr	1	2	-1.21	1	1
What Happened to Cass McBride	Giles	5	6	0.27	1	4
What Happens Here	Altebrando	1	2	-1.21	1	1
What I Was: A Novel	Rosoff	10	10	1.12	0	4
What's Happily Ever After, Anyway?	Taylor	1	2	-1.21	1	1
Wicked Dead: Lurker	Petrucha and Pendleton	4	2	-3.1	-2	3

Title	Author	Marketing Points	Sales Points	Sales Adjusted for Marketing	Difference	Quad
Wicked Dead: Snared (Wicked Dead)	Petrucha and Pendleton	4	2	-3.1	-2	3
Wicked Dead: Torn (Wicked Dead)	Petrucha and Pendleton	4	2	-3.1	-2	3
Wicked Lovely	Marr	10	10	1.12	0	4
Wuthering High: A Bard Academy Novel (Bard Academy, the)	Lockwood	6	5	-1.36	-1	4

Appendix 2: Example of Form Used in Cover-Likeability Exercise

Age:	_____	Religious Affiliation:	_____	Parents' income:	_____
Gender:	_____	# books you buy in a year:	_____	Ethnicity:	_____
Home state/ Country	_____	# books bought for you:	_____	single factor influencing buy	_____

When the Cover photo is shown on the overhead, please mark how much you like it on a scale of 1-5.
1 means that you hate it and you've decided that you will NEVER buy it
5 means that you love it and if you don't already own it, you plan to go buy it after class
Go with your first gut impulse and try not to be analytical about your reactions

6X: the uncensored confession 1 2 3 4 5	Prom Dates from Hell 1 2 3 4 5
A Girl Like Moi 1 2 3 4 5	Scrib 1 2 3 4 5
All Q No A 1 2 3 4 5	Stealing Bradford 1 2 3 4 5
Angels on Sunset Boulevard (Hardcover) 1 2 3 4 5	Stealing Princes: Calypso Chronicles 1 2 3 4 5
Angels on Sunset Boulevard (Paperback) 1 2 3 4 5	The After Life 1 2 3 4 5
Becoming Chloe 1 2 3 4 5	The Coming Storm: A Biblical Epic 1 2 3 4 5
Beyond the Reflection's Edge 1 2 3 4 5	The Lighthouse Land 1 2 3 4 5
Boy Soldier 1 2 3 4 5	The Lighthouse Land (hardcover) 1 2 3 4 5
Fly by Night 1 2 3 4 5	The Lighthouse War 1 2 3 4 5

Appendix 3: Totals from Library Study: Total Sum of Books in Stock Versus Total Sum of Books Checked Out from All Libraries In Study

Title	In stock	Checked out
1000 Reasons Never to Kiss a Boy	170	79
6X: The Uncensored Confessions	116	19
A Brief Chapter in my Impossible Life	500	51
A Girl Like Moi: The Fashion-Forward Adventures of Imogene	127	28
All Q, No A: More Tales of a 10th-Grade Social Climber	202	22
Angel's Choice	102	17
Angels on Sunset Boulevard	379	72
Audrey, Wait!	425	121
AutumnQuest	43	1
Back Talk	61	6
Becoming Chloe	344	29
Beige	342	61
Betrayed	653	332
Beyond the Reflection's Edge	49	19
Black and White	651	98
Brand X: The Boyfriend Account	102	8
But I don't want to be a movie star	136	13
Carpe Diem	239	46
Chosen	629	329
Circles of Seven	53	10
Cornelia and the Audacious Escapades of the Somerset Sisters	299	50
Dairy Queen	677	133
Dead Connection	386	69
Demonkeeper	273	42
Desert Blood 10pm/9c	71	3
Divine Secrets	329	37
Dragons from the Sea	135	17
Dumped by Popular Demand	182	44
Dumping Princes	116	15
Endymion Spring	537	70
Epoch	97	18
Evolution, Me & Other Freaks of Nature	358	82
Exit Here	40	19
Fall of a Kingdom	275	58
Fly by Night	551	101
Football Genius	341	69
Football Hero	340	63

Foreign Exposure: The Social Climber Abroad	164	12
Forging the Sword	249	46
Frenemies	483	208
Gamma Glamma	68	14
Gert Garibaldi's Rants and Raves: One Butt Cheek at a Time	239	56
Glass	702	350
Glass Houses	447	135
Goal II: Living the Dream	35	4
Goal! The Dream Begins	44	8
Going Nowhere Faster	257	28
Graffiti girl	109	22
Head Case	138	11
Hershey Herself	51	9
High School Bites: The Lucy Chronicles	110	33
Holdup	174	22
Homefree	101	10
Hoops of Steel	153	14
Hotlanta	508	155
How It's Done	83	28
How to Be Bad	565	193
How to Be Popular	880	270
How to Ruin a Summer Vacation	199	50
How to Ruin my Teenage Life	150	54
I'd Tell You I Love You, But Then I'd Have to Kill You	566	289
In the Serpent's Coils	157	35
Into the Dark	336	60
Into the Woods	0	0
Is He or isn't he?	81	29
It Had to Be You	106	16
Key to Aten	14	0
Kid B	107	20
Kiss Me Kill Me	297	153
Knights of the Hill Country	342	20
Lady J	510	197
Last Dance at the Frosty Queen	164	6
Leaving Paradise	84	22
Leftovers	166	30
Leonardo's Shadow: Or, My Astonishing Life as Leonardo da Vinci's Servant	199	24
Little Brother	648	206
Little Friendly Advice	240	50
Lobsterland	50	10
Long May She Reign	153	16

Looking for Alaska	952	213
Lost Summer	45	7
Loud, Fast, & Out of Control	72	9
Love from London: The Principles of Love	56	7
Love in the Corner Pocket	95	34
Lucky: An It Girl Novel	579	104
Lulu Dark and the Summer of the Fox	163	11
Madapple	350	83
Maggie's Story	70	12
Magic City	166	5
Major Crush	171	37
Marked	734	412
Martyn Pig	267	31
Me, In Between	44	11
Mixed Bags	101	35
Moby Clique	111	29
Nothing But the Truth (and a few white lies)	426	55
Oh My Goth	138	36
Oh. My. Gods.	347	110
Once Upon a Crime	633	187
One Trick Pony	121	12
Ophelia	389	81
Out of Patience	365	22
Plan B	92	20
Played	481	147
Pool Boys	57	7
Pop!	71	24
Project Paris (The Fashion-Forward Adventures of Imogene)	110	19
Prom Dates from Hell	355	71
Quad	138	15
Red Glass	282	49
Regina Silsby's Phantom Militia	2	0
Revenge of the Homecoming Queen	93	15
Rise of a Hero	255	53
Roots and Wings	147	14
Rucker Park Setup	378	20
Running Horsemen	4	0
Sarah's Long Ride	0	0
Scrib	129	12
Sea Shadow	102	16
Secret Santa	129	26
Secrets of My Hollywood Life	286	80
Secrets of My Hollywood Life: Family	273	87

Secrets of My Hollywood Life: Family Affairs	273	87
Secrets of My Hollywood Life: On Location	267	69
Seeing Redd	387	103
Senrid	35	5
Shug	512	101
Sight	270	40
Simply Divine	192	41
Singing Hands	199	9
Skin	259	62
Skinny	184	81
Snapshots	76	8
So Lyrical	52	8
Something Rotten	211	27
Spells & Sleeping Bags	409	95
Star-Crossed	197	14
Stealing Bradford	96	24
Stealing Princes	188	24
Such a Pretty Girl	286	80
Tales from the Hood	646	193
Tallulah Falls	133	10
Tears of a Dragon	59	13
The After Life	94	18
The Astonishing Adventures of Fanboy and Goth girl	508	87
The Band: Finding Love	41	3
The Band: Trading Guys	40	2
The Blood Confession	102	37
The Boyfriend Trick	124	20
The Candlestone	78	16
The Case Against My Brother	41	6
The Challenger	75	12
The Chaos Code	216	56
The Death Collector	230	36
The Horse Charmer	100	23
The It Girl	412	141
The Last Knight	287	84
The Lighthouse Land	122	27
The Lighthouse War	83	22
The Looking Glass Wars	390	129
The Luxe	567	274
The Making of Dr. Truelove	202	30
The Melting Season	111	7
The Patron Saint of Butterflies	226	22

The Possibility of Fireflies	234	49
The Princess and the Hound	237	73
The Principles of Love	115	30
The Red Thread: A Novel in Three Incarnations	142	12
The School for Cool	80	13
The Swan Maiden	173	22
The Taker	203	48
The Very Ordered Existence of Merilee Marvelous	269	24
The Wall and the Wing	291	30
The Weight of the Sky	101	8
the Year of my miraculous reappearance	222	22
Thick	97	2
Thirteen Reasons Why	622	323
Tripping to Somewhere	70	14
Under a Stand Still Moon	16	1
Uninvited	347	137
Unwind	568	183
Viking Warrior	147	26
Welcome to Wahoo	99	11
What Happened to Cass McBride	567	82
What Happens Here	48	9
What I Was: A Novel	342	27
What's Happily Ever After, Anyway?	35	2
Wicked Dead: Lurker	113	20
Wicked Dead: Snared	117	17
Wicked Dead: Torn	152	24
Wicked Lovely	777	345
Wuthering High: A Bard Academy Novel	121	32
Grand Total	**45,556**	**11,095**

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