



The Outsider's Edge: Geography, Gender, and Sexuality in the Local Color Movement¹

Wendy Griswold,² Anna Michelson³

Outsider status, especially multiple social marginalities, usually constitutes a burden. Certain combinations can be advantageous for cultural producers, however, especially when geographic marginality is part of the mix. The Local Color movement demonstrates the outsider's edge. In mid-nineteenth century in America, print technology, reduced postal rates, and mass literacy led to the golden age of magazines. Their readers sought stories about the regional cultures that were disappearing in an industrializing nation. Local Color—fiction about places outside the northeast cultural heartland—met this demand. Local Color authors shared outsider identities—geography, gender, and sexuality—that characterized and shaped the movement. Comparison with authors in the adjacent genres of Bestselling, Sentimental, and The Atlantic Monthly fiction reveals that multiple outsidersness (1) was not typical for authors of the period, and (2) advantaged women from the geographic periphery, especially those with unconventional sexual careers.

KEYWORDS: gender; literature; marginality; outsiders; region; sexuality.

INTRODUCTION: MULTIPLE MARGINALITIES, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND OUTSIDERNESS

Since sociology focuses on power and the unequal distribution of resources and influence, sociologists tend to envision social relations as involving some social or institutional boundary separating one set of people from another: insiders vs. outsiders, center vs. periphery, elite vs. non-elite, dominant vs. subordinate, normative vs. deviant, majority vs. minority, conventional vs. unconventional. Although we recognize that some people move between the sets—the boundary spanners, the socially mobile, the trans—the line between the two remains clear.

While such binary thinking is useful for theory building and empirical investigation, the social world has multiple dimensions, not just two, so the pairs and boundaries under analysis always depend on which particular dimension we are considering. This has three implications: First, one can be an outsider in one dimension and an insider in another; second, on any particular dimension, insider or outsider status may confer disadvantages or advantages; third, a person's liabilities or assets from one dimension can transfer into another (Sewell 1992).

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² Department of Sociology, Northwestern University, 1810 Chicago Avenue, Evanston, IL 60208; e-mail: w-griswold@northwestern.edu

³ Department of Sociology, Northwestern University, 1810 Chicago Avenue, Evanston, IL 60208; e-mail: annamichelson@u.northwestern.edu

Moreover, sociologists have always been of two minds about outsiders. On one hand, most often they have regarded outsider status as disadvantageous. Outsiders lack access to resources—economic, social, and cultural capital—that insiders have, and it is this lack of access to social goods that is the problem (McCall 2013). Outsider status is often conflated with minority status, and while this linguistic transfer may not always be accurate in terms of numbers (there are more women than men, more proletarians than bourgeoisie, etc.), it conveys the assumption of insider-as-norm and outsider-as-other, or insiders as the elite, outsiders as everyone else. The “stranger” (Georg Simmel 1950) or “marginal man” (Robert Park 1937) lived uncomfortably in two worlds, at home in neither; a compelling contemporary analysis of the outsider's unease is Elijah Anderson's (2015) study of African Americans in “white space.”⁴ On the other hand, a few sociologists have seen outsider status as conferring benefits. David Pedulla's (2014) research suggests that two disadvantaged attributes—being a black male and being gay—can add up to an advantage, as the latter offsets the perceived threat of the former. Outsiderness may be particularly advantageous for generating innovation. Neil McLaughlin (2001) speaks of “optimal marginality,” whereby outsider intellectuals “have access to the creative core of an intellectual tradition, while avoiding organizational, financial, cultural, or psychological dependencies that limit innovations” (273). Damon Phillips (2011) has shown how under some conditions, outsiders can have an advantage in cultural markets. Our research furthers this investigation of the relationship between outsiders and cultural innovation by considering multiple dimensions of outsiderness, specifically those of geography, gender, and sexual trajectories.

Our general topic is the cultural impact of unconventionality, especially when two or more types of outsider status coincide. (Throughout this paper we will use “unconventional” and “outsider” largely synonymously, though we note that the former term generally refers to practices, the latter to position.) Substantively, we are interested in literary regionalism, works created by people who are outside the metropolitan centers of cultural production and who write about culturally peripheral places. We call this *geographic outsiderness*. We are also interested in sexual marginality, people whose romantic or marital histories fall outside the norms of their day. We call this *sexual unconventionality*. We emphasize that these are labels imposed by the researchers to facilitate analysis. For example, we cannot claim that Sarah Orne Jewett identified as what we would today call “a lesbian,” but we can classify her living arrangement with another woman as outside of the heterosexual marriage norm of her day. Sociologists now recognize that nearly all categories are socially constructed, including sex and gender (Butler 1990; Fausto-Sterling 1993), race and ethnicity (Loveman and Muniz 2007; Mora 2014; Omi and Winant 1986), and sexual orientation (Katz 2007 [1995]; Silva 2017). The fact that such categories are constructed makes understanding their relationship *in a specific context* sociologically compelling. Because gender, location, and sexual-marital status are key identities, we are especially interested in cases where these outsider identities or marginalities pile up.

⁴ Both Simmel and Park saw a few advantages to outsiderness, as in the former's discussion of *tertius gaudens* (Simmel: 154–162) and the latter's note that the marginal individual “is always relatively the more civilized human being” (Park: 946), although these did not offset the difficulties (often legal and always generating stigma) and existential loneliness. Even Elijah Anderson's blacks-in-white-spaces, despite sensing themselves as unwelcome and disadvantaged, have at least begun to solve the access problem.

We are asking, can multiple marginalities be advantageous? Under what conditions? Specifically, we are considering the relationship among gender, geographic outsidership, and sexual unconventionality in the case of *Local Color* authors in the heyday of magazine fiction. Were they largely outsiders in terms of their geographic origins, or were they urban travel writers catering to a demand for exotica? Were they outsiders in terms of sexual, marital, and/or romantic histories? We hypothesize both outsider identities to be the case, and if so, we expect there to have been consequences for their writing careers. We further expect that outsider status may have worked differently for women than it did for men.

While these questions relate to what scholars have come to call intersectionality, they come from a somewhat different direction. Intersectionality, first labeled as such by African-American feminists, usually refers to the overlapping of disadvantageous identities, as in being both black and a woman. The assumption is that when people occupy more than one category that faces social discrimination, they are doubly jeopardized, the idea being that the overlap compounds the disadvantage.⁵ Intersectionality as a term caught on, especially among sociologists, and while it still most often refers to African-American women, it has come to apply to multiple categories of social disadvantage including ethnic minorities, LGBTQ, the disabled, the elderly, the poor, and the undocumented. Patricia Hill Collins has recently noted that, “intersectionality’s *raison d’être* lies in its attentiveness to power relations and social inequalities” (2015). It typically addresses the situation of groups on the weaker or lower end of such relations; while the overlapping categories of white, male, and heterosexual would be equally “intersectional,” they rarely would be so labeled (for an exception, see Levine-Rasky [2011]).

This leads to three points from which we want to start: First, despite intersectionality’s originating focus on social hardships, the geometry of overlapping social categories, a Venn diagram of identity features, is neutral with respect to advantage or disadvantage conferred by any single identity or by the intersection of several (cf. Carbado 2013).⁶

Second, thus every advantage or disadvantage depends on the context; being an African-American woman is disadvantageous in most contexts but advantageous in a few. We are exploring the overlap among gender, geographic outsidership, and sexual nonconformity without assuming advantage or disadvantage a priori as we investigate the cultural consequence of this particular intersection.

Third, we stress the role of geography, which studies of intersectionality have largely passed over. More specifically, we seek to examine the relationship between

⁵ As Kimberlé Crenshaw described it, “the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, [so] any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (1989). While the concept of intersectionality itself is not new, Crenshaw’s 1989 paper seems to have been the first to use the term. The intersection of gender and race had continued to be the focus of attention; e.g., Nash (2008) notes that “from its inception, intersectionality has had a long-standing interest in one particular intersection: the intersection of race and gender” (2).

⁶ Carbado (2013) refutes the “double jeopardy” argument, whereby “the greater the number of marginal categories to which one belongs, the greater the number of disadvantages one will experience,” by pointing out that intersectionality theory “does not posit, for example, that Black lesbians (because they occupy three marginal categories—they are Black, female, and lesbian) will *in every context* be more disadvantaged than, for example, Black heterosexual men (because they occupy one marginal category—they are Black)” (813; emphasis added).

cultural centers and peripheries. Cultural producers typically flock to metropolitan centers, for this is where the galleries, the orchestras, the publishers, and (critically) the audiences congregate. While not denying this tendency, recently sociologists have been showing that for cultural producers, being from the periphery can confer advantages. Damon Phillips calls this “disconnectedness.” He is particularly interested in new cultural genres where the central networks are loosely linked; in such cases the outsider is not oppositional to an established art world but outside of an emerging one. From his study of jazz music’s early recordings, Phillips (2011) finds that when a cultural producer creates a new product, its appeal is driven by how the audience (market, critics, etc.) “impute value and meaning from the producer’s level of disconnectedness. In markets in which uniqueness is given salience, disconnected producers have a novelty, foreignness, or exoticism advantage” (425).

In addition, Heather Haveman’s (2015) work on the growth of American magazines shows that developing connections between centers and peripheries, made possible in the early nineteenth century by the expanded reach of the Post Office, served to emphasize the localness of outsider cultural production: “Easy movement across space, made possible by advances in communication systems like the postal network, may actually make location even more important by heightening contrasts between local (particularistic) and non-local (foreign or universalistic) cultures, thus amplifying local attachments” (Haveman 2015). The present study draws these two sociologists’ important insights into cultural geography and extends them by bringing gender and sexuality to bear.

THE LOCAL COLOR MOVEMENT

Our empirical case is the cultural movement known as Local Color, which refers to the late nineteenth century literature that depicted America’s geographic outsiders. Following the cultural trauma of the Civil War, Americans were fascinated with regions and folkways that lay beyond the northeastern cultural heartland. Publishers in this heartland—Boston, New York, and Philadelphia—turned out short stories, novels, poems, and sketches about distinctive places and characters that their urban readership found intriguing and even exotic.⁷ The authors who produced these works were catering to an expanding market, and they drew on their own experiences of American cultural diversity beyond the metropolitan northeast.

With its emphasis on the particularities of place, Local Color is a historically specific type of regional literature. Most commentators define the movement as emerging after the Civil War (with a few harbingers just before), reaching its peak in the decades leading up to the turn of the century, and declining after about 1910.⁸

⁷ Broadhead (2005) notes the paradox whereby the Boston and New York cultural center, by giving its blessing to stories from the periphery, shores up its preeminent role in determining cultural value. “A literature of cultural enclaves was produced *as* culture not *in* those enclaves but in their antithesis. It too was produced through the journals of literary high culture, the instruments that strove to establish the ethos of a dominant social group as ‘culture’ itself” (53).

⁸ Simpson (1960) sees the movement as starting with Bret Harte’s stories about California mining camps in the late 1860s, and he ends his anthology, which is limited to short stories, at 1900. Fetterley and Pryse (1992) start earlier in 1850, thereby including Harriet Beecher Stowe and Alice Cary, and extend their discussion to 1910, while Ammons and Rohy (1998) set the movement in the 40 years between 1880 and 1920.

Fiction predominated, especially the short story. A Local Color story was set in a readily identifiable American locale. Typical attributes included: realism; attention to landscape, weather, and the natural world; depiction of the local social norms and conventions; place-specific mannerisms and concerns, often economic and/or domestic; and the use of regional dialect, idioms, or speech patterns.

To take one of the most often anthologized stories as an example, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's "A New England Nun" (1891) announces its general location in its title and specifies its *rural, northern* New England location through mention of stone walls, cows, apple orchards, blueberries, and farm wagons filled with hay. Louisa has been engaged for 15 years while Joe was off making his fortune in Australia; now he has come back to marry her. During Joe's long absence, Louisa has come to treasure the "sweet peace and harmony" of her solitude ("Louisa's feet had turned unto a path, smooth maybe under a calm serene sky . . . and so narrow that there was no room for anyone at her side"); meanwhile Lily, his mother's fresh young helper, has attracted Joe's eye. Yankee reticence and a sense of duty prevent Louisa and Joe from being honest with each other and push them inexorably toward a marriage that neither now desires ("Honor's honor, and right's right," Lily reminds Joe), until finally Louisa looks up from sewing her wedding clothes to suggest to Joe that "she had lived so long in one way that she shrank from making a change." Joe agrees with alacrity, and Louisa feels "like a queen who, after fearing lest her domain be wrested away from her, sees it firmly insured in her possession."

In this story, and in Local Color stories generally, the distance from the world of its New York and Boston readers is spatial, not temporal.⁹ The stories take place in the present, but in an agricultural-community or small-town present, one that is remote from most of the readers (and all of the publishers and editors) of *The Atlantic*, *Harper's Monthly*, and *Scribner's*. While Local Color fiction may conjure nostalgia for ways that are being threatened by urbanization and industrialization, they present socio-cultural patterns as persisting in rural American pockets.

The Local Color movement's origins lay in historical, technological, and social developments. Prior to and immediately following the Civil War, Americans were beset with concerns about sectionalism regarding, before the war, whether the union would hold together politically and, after the war, whether such disparate sections could hold together culturally. One expression of these concerns was a new fascination with the different corners of the growing nation.

Both social and technological developments catered to their fascination. At the turn of the nineteenth century "magazines were expensive to produce, expensive to send, and too expensive for all but well-to-do readers to buy" (Hutchinson 2018), but by mid-century all three had changed. In particular the expansion of the post office allowed magazines to reach rural and small town areas that had been isolated, bringing them into closer contact with the cultural mainstream (Haveman 2015). Both public education and the growth of the middle class expanded the market for leisure reading materials well beyond the elite. By the latter part of the nineteenth

⁹ Griffith (2009) suggest that early twentieth-century women writers were unsettled by the present and nostalgic for an idealized past. Her cases seem odd (she considers Edith Wharton a regionalist) and while ambivalence about social change may apply to Local Color writers, they rarely set their fiction in the past.

century, almost all white Americans and (for the first time) the majority of African Americans were literate.¹⁰ General interest magazines offered one a form of easily accessible entertainment for the entire family. And they were affordable. The steam-powered press, which led to the efflorescence of penny newspapers in the 1830s, and the rotary press, invented by Richard Hoe in the 1840s and improved by William Bullock in the 1860s so it could print two sides of a sheet of paper at once, made the mass production of newspapers and magazines possible. At the same time, the shift from rags to wood pulp in paper manufacturing dramatically reduced the cost of newsprint.

At the end of the eighteenth century, sending magazines through the mail was prohibitively expensive. During the nineteenth century, a series of Postal Acts decreased the cost, culminating in acts of 1863 and 1879 that established inexpensive second-class mail rates for magazines and newspapers. Now magazines were no longer costly to produce or to send, and readers who were not well-to-do could afford them. The results were dramatic; there were some 700 periodicals published in 1865, 1,200 in 1870, double that in 1880, and 3,300 in 1885 (Mott 1938). This explosion of magazines required *content*, and it was within this happy combination of interest and opportunity that the Local Color movement arose.

DATA AND ANALYTIC METHODS

We first identify the canonical authors of the Local Color movement. We have drawn upon the three standard anthologies that define the Local Colorists, these being Simpson (1960), Fetterley and Pryce (1992), and Ammons and Rohy (1998). Each of these sources has a bias—Simpson includes only short story writers, Fetterley and Pryce include only women, and Ammons and Rohy's "multicultural perspective" leads to a high proportion of non-white authors—but that said, these are the collections that define the canon today. ("Canons" are always defined retrospectively; strictly speaking, we are looking at the Local Color canonical authors as they were envisioned in the late twentieth century.)

Thirty-four authors are included in at least one of these three sources. Four appear in all three sources—Kate Chopin, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Mary Noailles Murfree—all women; we might think of these four as the Local Color Stars. An additional five authors appear in two of the anthologies—Mary Hartwell Catherwood, Charles W. Chesnutt, Hamlin Garland, Joel Chandler Harris, and Bret Harte—so we might think of these nine as the core of the Local Color movement as currently defined. Unless indicated otherwise, our analysis is of the 34 authors, as listed in Table I.

A look at the four Local Color Stars, all white women, suggests ways in which the movement might be especially hospitable to outsiders.

- Kate Chopin (1850–1904) was born in St. Louis, daughter of a wealthy merchant family. She married Oscar Chopin, a Louisiana Creole cotton trader, in 1870; the

¹⁰ *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Table Bc793-797 - Illiteracy rate, by race and nativity: 1870–1979. In 1900, only 6.2 % of white and 44.5% of non-white adults remained illiterate. http://hsus.camb ridge.org.turing.library.northwestern.edu/HSUSWeb/table/footnotes.do?id=Bc793-797&footnote=footnote#fn_1

couple settled in New Orleans and had six children. Widowed at 32 and never remarrying, she was strikingly independent; she shocked people by smoking in public and carried on love affairs, at least one with a married man (Toth 1990). She successfully published many short stories set in Louisiana, often showing women chafing under the limitations of conventional marriage and the conflict between sensuality and propriety, as in her masterpiece *The Awakening* (1899).

- Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852–1930) was born in Massachusetts but moved to Vermont as a child. She was the prolific author of many short stories and novels, most set in New England villages and most about women and with feminist—and in at least one case lesbian—themes. In 1902 when she was 49, she married Charles Freeman and the couple moved to New Jersey. Her husband became a hopeless alcoholic and ended up being institutionalized, after which they legally separated.
- Sarah Orne Jewett (1849–1909) was a doctor’s daughter from South Berwick, Maine, where she lived her entire life. Never married, she had an intimate friendship (known then as a “Boston marriage”) with Anne Fields, wife of James Fields, a prominent publisher and former editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* who helped Jewett launch her career. The Fields introduced Jewett to Boston literary circles, and Sarah and Annie lived together after James died. Another prolific writer, Jewett wrote about women in Maine or northern New England and many critics consider her best-known work *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896) to be the epitome of literary regionalism.
- Born on a Tennessee plantation, Mary Noilles Murfree (1850–1922) was partially disabled from a childhood illness. Her family summered in the Cumberland and Great Smoky Mountains, from where she drew her material. By the 1870s, she was writing under the pseudonym Charles Egbert Craddock. Murfree’s stories of mountaineer ways and dialect featured a common Local Color trope whereby a sophisticated outsider becomes first amused and then impressed by local ways; Jewett’s *The Country of the Pointed Firs* employs the same device. Never married, Murfree lived her entire life with her family.

So of our four stars we have two spinsters (one of whom was probably in a lesbian relationship), one young widow who never remarried and wrote about the disadvantages of marriage for women, and one woman who wrote about the contented lives of single women, married late, and came to regret it.

The critical history of the relationship between Local Color and gender has been rocky. While late nineteenth-century literary realists promoted by William Dean Howells welcomed the genre’s localism and everyday domesticity, which was often depicted by female authors, by the 1920s modernists scorned the same works and authors as sentimental. Regionalism in the hands of the Southern Agrarians rejected emotional subjectivity, and the subsequent New Criticism—John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate being key figures in both movements—that dominated critical practice from the 1940s through the 60s advocated a “universalist” (invariably male) reading of texts, marginalizing both women and localism (cf. Ewell 1997). In their rediscovery of women authors, feminist critics of the 1970s and 80s turned the tables and celebrated Local Color as a women’s genre and often a feminist one as well. For example, Josephine Donovan (1983) defines Local Color as “women’s literary real-

Table I. Local Color Authors (34)

Name	Yr BRN	STBRN	RGBRN	Ethnic	Sexual History	Notes
Women						
Austin, Mary	1868	Illinois	ENC	W	U	Married & divorced. Affairs
Brown, Alice	1857	New Hampshire	NEN	W	U	Never married; relationship with L. Guiney
Cary, Alice	1820	Ohio	ENC	W	U	Lifelong bond with sisters, never married
Cather, Willa	1873	Virginia	SAT	W	U	Never married; possible lesbian relations
Chopin, Kate O.	1851	Missouri	WNC	W	U	Widowed at 32, did not remarry; affairs
Cooke, Rose Terry	1827	Connecticut	NEN	W	U	Married at 46. Wrote about spinsters
Freeman, Mary Wilkens	1852	Massachusetts	NEN	W	U	Married at 49, wrote about spinsters, lesbians
Hopkins, Pauline	1859	Maine	NEN	AfAm	U	Never married, lived with parents
Jewett, Sarah Orne	1849	Maine	NEN	W	U	Never married; Boston Marriage w. A. Fields
King, Grace	1852	Louisiana	WSC	W	U	Never married; lived with sisters
Murfree, Mary N.	1850	Tennessee	ESC	W	U	Never married, used male pseudonym
Nelson, Alice D.	1875	Louisiana	WSC	AfAm	U	Married three times; lesbian affairs
Sui Sin Far	1865	England	NEN	Asian	U	Never married; supported family entire life
Thaxter, Celia	1835	New Hampshire	NEN	W	U	Separated, lived apart though not divorced
Woolson, C. F.	1848	New Hampshire	NEN	W	U	No known romantic involvements
Browne, Gertrude	1876	Ohio	ENC	AfAm	C	Married; very little information
Catherwood, Mary	1847	Ohio	ENC	W	C	Married; lived apart from husband late
Mena, Maria C.	1893	Mexico City	NEN	Hisp	C	Married
Stowe, Harriet B.	1811	Connecticut	NEN	W	C	Married for 50 years, seven children
Zitkala-Sa	1876	South Dakota	WNC	NtAm	C	Married, one child
Men						
Anderson, Sherwood	1876	Ohio	ENC	W	U	Married 4 times, divorced 3
Deming, Philander	1829	New York	MAT	W	U	Never married
London, Jack	1876	California	PAC	W	U	Married, divorced, affairs, 2nd marriage
Cable, George W.	1844	Louisiana	WSC	W	C	Married three times, widowed twice
Cahan, Abraham	1860	Lithuania	W	W	C	Married
Chesnut, Charles	1858	Ohio	ENC	AfAm	C	Married, four children
Du Bois, W. E. B.	1868	Massachusetts	NEN	AfAm	C	Married twice (first wife died)
Dunne, Finley P.	1867	Illinois	ENC	W	C	Married, four children
Garland, Hamlin	1860	Wisconsin	ENC	W	C	Married, children (all daughters?)
Harris, Joel C.	1848	Georgia	SAT	W	C	Married, nine children
Harte, Bret	1836	New York	MAT	W	C	Married, four children
Lewis, Alfred H.	1857	Ohio	ENC	W	C	Married, no children
Page, Thomas N.	1853	Virginia	SAT	W	C	Married, widowed, married again
Posey, Alex	1873	Oklahoma	WSC	NtAm	C	Married, two children

ism.” More recently some scholars have debated its relationship with gender (e.g., Lutz 2004), and some have even denied the predominance of women writers (e.g., Ammons and Rohy 1998). As we have seen, while the four Stars were all female, four of the nine authors who appeared in the two collections not restricted to women were men, leaving the question of gender specificity open.

In order to ascertain the gender issue and what else might be distinctive about the Local Color authors, we need some comparisons; Griswold (1987) has long maintained that sociologists cannot comprehend a cultural object until they compare it to others in the same category. Therefore, we need to consider Local Color authors relative to other writers of fiction at that time. Therefore, we are comparing the Local Color authors with authors of Bestsellers of the period, with the popular sentimental authors of the mid-nineteenth century, and with authors of fiction that appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, a leading general interest magazines of the day.

Our outsider’s-edge hypotheses are that, compared with those working in these other genres,¹¹ Local Color authors were:

1. More likely to be female (based on the feminist critics’ rediscoveries);
2. More likely to be non-white (based on their geographic dispersion and on the readers’ demand for novelty);
3. More likely to come from outside the northeastern cultural heartland (based on the assumption that authors write from their own experience); and
4. More likely to be unconventional in their sexual or marital histories (based on the atypical patterns of the genre’s four stars).

We will assess these hypotheses by comparing the Local Color authors with authors from adjacent genres: Bestsellers, Sentimental fiction, and fiction from *The Atlantic Monthly*. We have constructed our comparison sets as follows.

Bestsellers: In his analysis of twentieth-century bestsellers, Michael Korda (2001) lists the top-selling 10 works of fiction for each year, clustered by decades—1900–1909, 1910–1919, and so forth. We have taken his first decade for our comparison because of its overlap with the Local Color period. Given his ten-by-ten structure, 1900–1909 has a total of 100 books for this (and every other) decade. Twelve books appeared in the top ten for two years in a row, so out of these 100 there are 88 individual titles. Moreover, in addition to the repeats, a number of authors had more than one title on the lists.¹² All in all, there were 54 individual Bestseller authors.

Sentimental Authors: Among the most popular novels of the nineteenth century were domestic novels that featured the triumph of female virtue over adversity; in many respects these were popularized versions of eighteenth-century works like *Clarissa*. The Sentimental authors were all women, few of whom expressed any artistic aims;

¹¹ In using the term “genre” we are following Griswold (1987): “Genre is the key to analytic comprehension. Genres, as they have been understood in literary theory, are classifications based on similarities and differences. . . . Since the Renaissance, the dominant view among critics has been that genres are arbitrarily defined; such definitions are often practical, though the critic should not fall for the ‘superstition’ that such genres have any ontological status” (17). While we could substitute the term “category” for our analysis, the term “genre” seems more relevant to the literary objects under consideration.

¹² The most prolific was George Barr McCutcheon, with seven individual titles; Winston Churchill had five, Mary Johnston and Harold MacGrath had four, and Alice Hegan Rice and Rex Beach had three

they wrote formulaic novels to please a middle-class audience.¹³ It was this group, specifically Maria Cummins, that Hawthorne scorned when he referred in a letter to the “d__d mob of scribbling women.” We have identified 13 of the most popular of such scribblers to use as our comparison set: Carolyn Chesbrough, Lydia Maria Child, Maria Cummins, Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson), Carolyn Lee Hentz (Whiting), Mary Jane Holmes, Maria Jane McIntosh, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, E. D. E. N. Southworth, Anna Sophia Stevens, Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune (pseud. Marion Harland), and Susan B. Warner. Most feminist critics have disparaged the sentimental novels as fictional acquiescence to patriarchal norms, though Weinstein (2004) argues that they broke with convention in reconfiguring what constitutes a family by bringing in ties of affection that displace ties of blood. Sentimental and Local Color fiction overlaps in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, but most of the Sentimental authors were born in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, whereas most Local Color authors were born in the second or third quarters.

The Atlantic Monthly Authors: Because we wanted to set Local Color Authors next to other authors of magazine fiction, we selected *The Atlantic Monthly* for our comparison group. Founded in Boston in 1857, it was the most prestigious of many general interest magazines and, more important for our purposes, it published an unusually high number of Local Color authors.¹⁴ Part of the cultural trend mentioned previously, this emphasis on geographic outsiders was particularly due to the tastes of William Dean Howells, America’s most influential man-of-letters in the last half of the nineteenth century, who was the magazine’s assistant editor for 1867–1871 and its editor-in-chief for the next 10 years. Growing up and starting his career in “the west” (Ohio) and now navigating the chilly waters of Boston and Cambridge, Howells was keenly aware of his own outsider status. A proponent of realism and democracy in fiction, he encouraged writers from beyond the urban northeast, becoming friends with many of the most successful, including Bret Harte, Sarah Orne Jewett, Celia Thaxter, and George Washington Cable; he was especially close to Mark Twain as well (Goodman and Dawson 2005).¹⁵ Howells’s tastes toward

¹³ Goshgarian (1992) summarizes that the “scribblers focus on middle-class home life; appeal massively to their readers’ tenderest emotions; deal in types rather than psychologically individuated characters; write with evangelical ends in mind; and compulsively chronicle the improbable career of a pious, nubile, aboriginally middle-class but temporarily déclassé white American girl whose exemplary fortitude under a storm of adversities is rewarded with a spouse, solvency, and salvation” (9). See also Baym (1993).

¹⁴ Frank Luther Mott’s five-volume *A History of American Magazines* remains the standard reference. In Volume 3 (1938) he comments, “There have always been some irreverent ones to dispute the primacy of *The Atlantic Monthly* among American literary magazines, but throughout all its nearly eighty years of existence it has not lacked readers have believed it the beneficiary of a kind of divine election to leadership in American letters” (493). Its prestige has continued into the twenty-first century.

¹⁵ In Boston and its suburbs, Goodman and Dawson (2005) note, Howells felt unease at being an outsider: “Even in Cambridge, however, he could not shake off the chronic sense of being apart: at ease in Zion but at heart a tourist” (117). He put his geographic sensibilities into his early writing, working with Ohio’s state librarian on *The Poets and Poetry of the West* (Coggeshall 1860) and writing *Suburban Sketches* (1871) about his adopted city of Cambridge, in which “his unsentimental scrutiny would provide a model for the *Atlantic*’s new wave of local color writers” (118). It should also be remembered that magazines of the late nineteenth century did not have elaborate reviewing procedures; their editors’ tastes and inclinations were the deciding factors in what they accepted for publication.

regionalism and realism, as well as his high literary standards, was emulated by *The Atlantic Monthly's* subsequent editors.

Since its editors presumably had the same standards for all authors, we can consider those *Atlantic Monthly* authors *not* in the Local Color canon as representing magazine authors in general at a specific level of literary quality. We have taken the population of authors of fiction (short stories and serialized novels) who published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1880, early in the Local Color movement, under the editorship of William Dean Howells, and in 1900, when the movement had peaked, under the editorship of Bliss Perry.¹⁶ We have created a biographical profile of these authors to compare with the Local Color authors. In the two years of our analysis, 45 works of fiction appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Two men, William Dean Howells and Henry James, had pieces in both the 1880 and the 1900 volumes, so there were a total of 43 individual authors. However, seven of these are Local Color authors, leaving 36 *Atlantic Monthly* authors outside the canon.

FINDINGS

So were the Local Color authors different from the others? Our general hypothesis has been that compared with Bestseller authors, Sentimental authors, and their *Atlantic Monthly* peers, the Local Color authors would be atypical across the four dimensions of gender, race/ethnicity, geographic origins, and sexual/marital histories. We will now assess the findings in order.

Gender: Were Local Color authors predominantly female? Our hypotheses that they were might not seem very daring, based as it is upon the longstanding critical view, celebrated by feminist scholars of the 1970s and beyond, that categorized Local Color as a woman's genre, and upon the prominence of a handful of writers such as our four Stars. This assumption has come to be questioned, however. Ammons and Rohy (1998) claim that, "U.S. local color was written by as many men as women" (xix); they suggest that commentators had conflated the "minor literature" status of the short story and the literary marginality of women writers. Lutz (2004) says it's a matter of debate: "It's women's province; no, it isn't" (26). Let's take a look.

Of the 34 canonical Local Color authors, 20 (59%) were women, while 14 were men. We have suggested that these come from the three canon-defining texts so these thirty-four, by definition, *are* the canonical authors. However, one of our three texts (Fetterley & Pryce) included only women writers, so as a second step we removed the four authors found in this text but none of the others. This left thirty authors, of which 16 (53%) were women and again 14 men. From this, we conclude that the Local Color canon, as it has been defined in the last half of the twentieth century, was majority but not overwhelmingly female. How does this compare with the other genres?

Compared with Bestseller Authors: Of the 54 Bestseller authors, 35 (65%) were men and 19 (35%) were women. Furthermore, we note that four of the six most prolific

¹⁶ Perry carried on Howells's editorial tastes and reformist politics (for example by publishing I. K. Friedman's fiction about the labor movement) and he continued to publish women writers. Half of the stories in the 1880 volume were by women, and slightly more than half of those in 1900 were.

authors were men, with McCutcheon and Churchill leading the pack. So a Local Color author was considerably more likely to be a woman than a Bestselling author of the period.

Compared with Sentimental Authors: The sentimental authors were all women, by definition.

Compared with The Atlantic Monthly Authors: Not including the Local Color authors, the fiction of 36 authors appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* during 1880 and 1900. Of these, 16 (46%) were men and 19 (54%) were women (the sex of one is unknown), virtually identical to the sex ratios of the Local Color authors.

Overall, we see that while only a minority of bestselling novelists were women, among the magazine authors and the Local Color authors women were in the slight majority. While Local Color may be seen as a woman's genre, it appears to have been no more so than the other magazine fiction of the period.

Race: We expected that Local Color authors might be racial-ethnic outsiders as well, and this turned out to be the case. Of the 34 Local Color authors, nine (26%) were non-white. This included one Chinese American, five African Americans, two Native Americans, and one Hispanic. In contrast, all of the Bestselling authors, all of the Sentimental authors, and all of *The Atlantic Monthly* fiction authors (including the seven Local Color authors) were white.¹⁷

Geography: In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Boston and Philadelphia were the centers of American publishing, with New York surpassing them by mid-century. The northeast—Mid-Atlantic States and southern New England—continued to be the cultural heartland into the twentieth century.¹⁸ Publishers, printers, booksellers, and readers clustered in urban Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and eastern Pennsylvania. Given that this was the center of literary activity, and given that the giants of mid-century American fiction—Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville—were all northeasters, it seems likely that most writers would come from this area as well. Therefore, we define geographic outsiders as authors born outside of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, or Pennsylvania.

Local Color authors were indeed from outside the cultural heartland. Of the 31 born in the United States, 25 (81%) came from states outside of the northeast. This was equally true for both men (10/13 or 77%) and women (15/18 or 83%). Moreover, they did not cluster and form schools outside of the mainstream, as some artists outside the central core have done (Oberlin and Geiryn 2015); instead, they were scattered through northern New England, New Orleans, and the Midwest. The frontier was moving west during the century, however, so was this true for authors in other genres as well?

¹⁷ The minority authors are not simply from Ammons and Rohy (1998); while five appeared only in that collection, four others (Charles Chesnutt, Alice Dunbar Nelson, Sui Sin Far, and Zitkala-Sa) appeared in one of the other collections as well.

¹⁸ While this is largely the case, there were some other centers for writers and publishers. In the ante-bellum period Charleston was the center for southern publishing. By the late nineteenth century, Chicago had emerged as a literary and cultural powerhouse. And New Orleans had maintained a Francophone and later Anglo literary community since early in the century.

Compared with Bestseller Authors: As we had expected, the Bestseller authors were not as geographically marginal as the Local Color authors. Nevertheless, we were surprised to find that of those born in the United States, 25 (63%) came from outside the northeast. This was somewhat more the case for the men (67%) than for the women (54%).

Compared with Sentimental Authors: Unlike the Bestseller authors, the Sentimental authors were very geographically concentrated. Six of the 13 came from Massachusetts alone, two from New York, and one from Connecticut, so only 31% came from outside of the northeast heartland.

Compared with Atlantic Monthly Authors: Half of the U.S. born *Atlantic Monthly* authors (14/29) came from the cultural heartland, half (15/29) from outside. As with the Bestsellers, women were more likely to come from the northeast (10/16, 63%) than men (5/13, 38%).

We hypothesized that Local Color authors would be geographic outsiders more than authors of other genres would be, and this has been borne out. We observed something unexpected, however: In our three comparison genres, women were less geographically marginal than men, while this was not true for Local Color authors. This suggests that in general, women from outside the northeast had greater difficulty accessing literary institutions than did their male counterparts, but geographic outsiderhood was not a disadvantage for those working in the Local Color genre.

This brings up another point regarding the multiple dimensions of outsider status: Local Color authors were not “outsider artists” according to the usual sociological definition. Outsider artists are those without the conventional training or institutional connections typical of their genre (Fine 2004; Zolberg and Cherbo 1997). Such artists may not regard what they are doing as art at all, seeing it more as a craft (Becker 1982) or a private practice. They are not oriented toward achievement within an art world, only becoming “artists” when they are discovered and labeled as such; such labeling confers upon them the desirable aura of authenticity (Fine 2004; Hahl et al. 2017). However, Local Color authors, male and female, were not outsider artists in this sense. Although they were working decades before the post-World War II rise of creative writing workshops and MFA programs (Bennett 2015; McGurl 2011), they were educated and usually from advantaged backgrounds, they were keenly aware of the market for fiction, and they aspired to succeed as writers. They understood the institutional system of monthly literary magazines like *The Atlantic Monthly*, and they cultivated connections with editors and publishers. Nor were they social outsiders; their fathers were businessmen or professionals, and although the authors themselves were not wealthy, they were firmly middle-class.

Sexuality: The sexual conventions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were that both men and women married, they married when they were young, and they stayed married until one of the partners died. The median age of marriage for women was 22.0 in 1890 and 26.1 for men; it edged lower each of the next few decades.¹⁹

¹⁹ By 1920 it was 21.2 for women, 24.6 for men. *U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Social and Economic Supplement: 2003*. Table MS-2. Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to Present. Internet release date: September 15, 2004

Two-thirds of women over 15 years of age had married, as had 60% of men.²⁰ Divorce was extremely rare, experienced by only 0.5% of women and 0.3% of men. Therefore, we are defining sexual unconventionality as including those who never married, those who entered marriage 15 years or more above the median for his or her sex, and/or those who divorced.

We are also including people with same-sex partnerships among the sexually unconventional, irrespective of their marital histories. Before the twentieth century, passionate attachments between two women—what were called “romantic friendships” in the eighteenth century and “Boston marriages” in the nineteenth—seemed neither surprising nor necessarily sexual, not warranting social opprobrium or even concern; if anything, they were encouraged (Faderman (1991; see also 1981). Not until the early twentieth century did sexologists and Freudians brand such relationships as deviant and rooted in sexuality, thereby establishing hitherto unknown classifications such as “sexual inverts” and “lesbians.” The late nineteenth century was a paradoxical hinge, for it saw the rise of sexologists—medical men who elaborated sexual typologies rooted in eugenic assumptions—and of feminists in both ideology and of practice. New educational opportunities, notably women’s colleges, offered middle-class women the chance for professional lives and incomes independent of marriage. Once women could support themselves individually, it followed that arrangements of mutual support between women—emotional, financial, practical, and with or without an erotic element—became more common.²¹

Our analysis of the core group of Local Color authors reveals that while the men were largely conventional in their sexual and marital histories, the women were largely unconventional. As Table I shows, over three quarters (11/14, 79%) of the men followed the conjugal norms of the day. They married at the usual age, and if they were widowed, they married again. George W. Cable married at 25, was widowed, married again, was widowed again, and married a third time. Most of the other men remained married to their first partner, regardless of the quality of their marriages (Bret Harte’s was an unhappy union). Most had children, with Joel Chandler Harris topping the list with nine. Of the 14 male authors, only three followed a different path. Jack London’s first marriage ended in divorce. He had affairs, one with a married woman; eventually she divorced and married London. Sherwood Anderson demonstrated his scorn for *Winesburg, Ohio* propriety by marrying four times, the first three ending in divorce. And Philander Deming, known as being extremely shy, never married.

In contrast, three quarters (15/20) of the women Local Color authors had unconventional sexual histories. Nine never married; three married and divorced;

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1999. 20th-Century Statistics*. Table No. 1418. Marital Status of the Population, by Sex: 1900 to 1998. At the time of the census 57.0% of women were currently married and 11.2% were widowed; for men the figures were 54.6 and 4.6 respectively.

²¹ Faderman (1991) argues that “By the end of the [19th] century, ambitious women of the middle class who loved other females no longer needed to resign themselves to marriage in order to survive. They could go to college, educate themselves in a profession, earn a living in a rewarding career, and spend their lives with the women they loved” (12). While this may be true, Faderman’s assertion is unnecessarily narrow; women who did not love other women, who had no love interests, or who loved men but not enough to give up their independence could similarly arrange to live middle-class, professionally active lives outside of marriage.

two did not marry until they were in their late forties. Kate Chopin, one of the Local Color stars, was widowed young, never remarried, had love affairs, and wrote extensively about how marriage restricted women's freedom. In "The Story of an Hour," for example, a wife learns that her husband has died in a train wreck and withdraws to her room; everyone thinks she's mourning, but in fact she's whispering to herself, "Free. Body and soul free!" When the husband suddenly reappears, she drops dead with a heart attack, which everyone assumes is from joy.²²

At least five of the Local Color women—Alice Brown, Willa Cather, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Alice Dunbar Nelson (Cather, Freeman, and Jewett were three of the four Local Color Stars)—had Boston marriages or other romantic attachments with other women. Jewett's case is the best known; she spent three decades in a Boston marriage with Annie Adams Fields, literary hostess, poet, and widow of publisher James Fields. Alice Brown had a long-lasting partnership with Louise Imogen Guiney, a sexually ambivalent poet who sometimes dressed in men's clothing; they founded an association for women travelers together and seem to have had some sort of romantic relationship. Alice Dunbar Nelson's husband complained about her lesbian affairs, and she was involved in an African-American bisexual network in Boston.²³ Mary Wilkins Freeman, who did not marry until she was 49 (and then it was a disaster), wrote about lesbianism in both a novel and a short story; her best-known story, "A New England Nun" (discussed above), takes a dim view of heterosexual marriage compared to a single woman's freedom to control her own life. Finally, Willa Cather, never married, had a romantic friendship with Isabelle McClung when she was young, later claiming to have written all of her books for Isabelle; she lived in New York with another woman friend and assistant, Edith Lewis, for 39 years. In addition, Alice Cary, Grace King, and Mary Noailles Murfree lived with their sisters for all of their adult lives.²⁴

Compared with Bestseller Authors: Like their Local Color counterparts, Bestseller men were largely conventional in their marital histories (29/35, 83%). Though several married fairly late—Emerson Hough at 40, George Barr McCutcheon at 38—they did not

²² While most of Chopin's heroines are destroyed by marriage, at least one is not. "The Storm" unexpectedly traps a married woman together with a former lover, also married. They end up spending a blissful afternoon making love, and afterwards both return to their married lives. "Devoted as she was to her husband, their intimate conjugal life was something which she was more than willing to forego for a while. So the storm passed and everyone was happy."

²³ "The 1930s diary of Alice Dunbar-Nelson, a middle-class black woman reveals the existence of an active black bisexual network among prominent "club women" who had husbands but managed to enjoy lesbian liaisons as well as a camaraderie with one another over their shared secrets. Dunbar-Nelson herself felt that she had to practice some discretion in front of her husband, who nevertheless knew she was bisexual. His occasional rages over her lesbian affairs did not stop her from preserving for posterity her love poems about lesbian passion and seduction" (Faderman 1991).

²⁴ Although we do not include Alice French (Octave Thanet) in our set of Local Color authors because she does not appear in our three sources, we note that she fits the profile in many respects. French wrote about small-town Iowa and Arkansas and published in the usual Local Color outlets of *The Atlantic* and *Scribner's*. Biographically she fits the type: Her father was a successful businessman and manufacturer of agricultural equipment; she was educated at Vassar; born in Massachusetts, she lived most of her life in Iowa and Arkansas, part of the New West and far from the East Coast cultural centers; she never married; and she had a lifelong lesbian relationship with Jane Allen Crawford. Other prominent local colorists who were not included in our three canonical sources include Edward Eggleston, Zona Gale, Ellen Glasgow, and poets such as James Whitcomb Riley and Sidney Lanier.

reach our 15-year definition of being atypical. Most were like Maurice Thompson or Henry Van Dyke Jr.: They married in their 20s, had children, and stayed married, or else, like Thomas Page they married, were widowed, and married again. There were six exceptions: James Lane Allen never married, both John Fox Jr. and William Locke married in their late 40s (Fox divorced later), Upton Sinclair and Booth Tarkington both divorced and remarried, and Robert Hitches was homosexual and never married.

The Bestseller women were less conventional, half (9/19) following different marital paths. Four never married, three divorced, Elinor Glyn married but had numerous affairs, and Lucas Malet (a pseudonym for Mary St. Leger Kingsely) married, separated, and lived for many years with a younger woman who was her cousin, adopted daughter, and romantic friend.

Compared with Sentimental Authors: Despite their formulaic writing where virtue finds its reward in a good husband, the Sentimental authors' marital histories were not all conventional. Four of the 13 never married, and a fifth (Elizabeth Stuart Phelps) married at 44 to a man 17 years younger. Eight others had married at the usual age and stayed married. One of these, E. D. E. N. Southworth, is hard to categorize. She married at 21 and had two children, but her husband left to seek his fortune in South America and never returned. While her situation was unusual, given that they never divorced it meets our definition of conventional.

Compared with Atlantic Monthly authors: Although we were not able to ascertain the marital histories of all of the 36 non-Local Color *Atlantic Monthly* authors, we know them for 15 men and 14 women. The men were largely conventional, with 12 (80%) marrying at the appropriate age, most with children. Associates considered William Dean Howells, the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* from 1871 to 1881, as having a particularly happy marriage, and there is no indication that any of the others were troubled. Three never married, one of whom, Henry Fuller, was homosexual. Again, we see the pattern of the women being somewhat less conventional than the men, for while 10 married at the usual age, three never married and one, Mary Tracy Earle, did not marry until she was 42. (Ellen Olney married at 37, so she just squeaks into our classification of conventional marriage.)

To sum up what we have found: The Local Color movement included both men and women; it was a female genre only to the degree that magazine fiction in general was. The four best-known Local Colorists were all women, however, and they and other Local Color authors wrote about women's issues, often with an explicitly feminist focus. These two facts along with a late-twentieth century interest in women's writing may explain why Local Color is thought of as predominately a women's movement. While women were not marginal to the literary world, Local Color authors were atypical in other ways: Some were non-white, most were geographic outsiders, and many were sexually unconventional.²⁵

²⁵ Despite its sociological importance, we are not emphasizing the racial/ethnic makeup of the authors because of the small numbers involved and because Ammons and Rohy's desire to have a multicultural anthology may have contributed to an over-representation of non-white authors in the Local Color canon.

“BODY AND SOUL FREE!”: OUTSIDERNESS AND CULTURAL ADVANTAGE

Local Color authors were outsiders, most often by gender, in many cases by race, almost always geography, and usually by their sexual-marital careers. In all of the genres under consideration, and especially for the Local Color authors, women were more sexually unconventional than men, often being unmarried or married very late, and, in the case of the Local Color writers, being involved with other women in Boston marriages and/or lesbian relationships. Why might this be the case?

There are at least three reasons why sexual unconventionality, that of both unmarried women and women with romantic ties to other women, might enhance the likelihood of a woman becoming a Local Color author. The first is economic: Women who could not depend on the support of a husband usually needed to earn a living, and often they were supporting other family members as well. Grace King, for example, came from a wealthy New Orleans family that lost everything in the Civil War. The eldest of four sisters, she wrote to support her family; on his deathbed her father asked her to care for her sisters, which she indeed did (Bush 1983).

The second is access: Women's friendships brought opportunities through network connections. James Fields, Annie's much older husband, was a bookseller and publisher, at one point both owning and editing *The Atlantic Monthly*, and Annie herself came from a wealthy old Massachusetts family. The couple held a salon in their Beacon Hill house that was patronized by the cultural elite, and Sarah Orne Jewett became friends with them when James was still alive. Afterwards her association with Annie gave Jewett access to literary circles of Boston and New York, access that a spinster from small town Maine would not have had otherwise. Annie played a similar role for another woman friend and Local Colorist, Celia Thaxter; upon the latter's death Annie published *Letters of Celia Thaxter* (1895).

A third reason would be that unmarried women often had the time to write, freedom from both domestic and maternal responsibilities as well as those going with being someone's wife and helpmeet. Even Annie Fields felt the contradiction between being a wife and being a writer: “Despite her own genteel reticence, Fields herself occasionally complained that her responsibilities thwarted her poetic ‘genius’” (Gollin 1999). Edith Lewis was Willa Cather's secretary and personal assistant, whatever else she may have been. Grace King's sisters did the housework while she was doing the writing.

Literary access and female support would be especially crucial for women coming from outside of the northeastern cultural heartland. Without it a would-be writer from rural Maine (Jewett) or from an island off the New Hampshire coast (Thaxter) would have found it hard to break into publication. Alice Cary, for example, came from an Ohio farm. She and her sister Phoebe had published a few poems, but her literary career was going nowhere until they moved to New York and set up a five-sister household in support of Alice's writing. “The household Cary established included both Phoebe and another younger sister, Elmina, and two servants who were also sisters. Although marriage was apparently a possibility, Cary chose to make sisterhood her primary bond, living out her life with her surviving sisters [two

had died] while never ceasing to mourn those she lost in 1833. Privately nourishing, the bond between sisters became a public force as well. For 15 years, the Cary sisters hosted a reception on Sunday evening to which came such figures as Horace Greeley, J. G. Whittier, James and Annie Fields, Gail Hamilton [an ardent feminist], and William Lloyd Garrison" (Fetterley and Pryce 1992).

Being disconnected, outside the centers of cultural power, is typically a disadvantage for writers trying to establish careers, for it means they lack social and sometimes cultural capital. This accords with the two-dimensional sociological binary mentioned previously. American magazines of the late nineteenth century and the emergent demand for fiction offered opportunities for such writers, however, due to the public's demand for regional stories and the proliferating magazines' need for content. The outsider position vis-à-vis the world of literature that women had held based on their gender ended once there came to be a literate, middle-class, and substantially female market. Geographic outsiderhood went from being a problem to being an asset, something to celebrate and represent, as long as you could write about it, could be seen as authentic, and could connect with a publisher. Indeed, writers from the geographic margins might have felt a "categorical imperative" to "write what they know," leveraging their outsider status to appeal to publishers seeking authentic local color fiction (Zuckerman 1999).²⁶ Sexual unconventionality made such writing both possible and sometimes necessary, and it could provide linkages of access and support, especially among women. *Thus, the overlap of outsider, marginal, and typically disadvantaged identities amounted to an advantage in the context of America's late nineteenth-century literary system.*

It is important to emphasize the contextual and historical specificity of this case. For example, though the women in our study seemed to benefit from an unconventional marital status, 97% of debut female novelists in 1955 were married (Ekelund and Borjesson 2002). We may infer social changes in the feasibility of balancing marital domesticity and a writing career, but at the very least it demonstrates that what is advantageous in one context (e.g. publishing Local Color fiction in 1890) is not necessarily advantageous in another (e.g. publishing a novel in 1955). Rather than limiting the significance of our findings, however, specificity strengthens our claim: multiple marginalities can, *in some cases*, amount to advantage. We demonstrate that Local Color fiction is one such case, and we explore some contextual reasons, such as advances in magazine distribution and a growing reading public. It is part of the ongoing sociological project to explore how, and why, multiple socially constructed marginalities interact in different ways at different times.

As sociologists, we agree with the general import of the Matthew effect that privilege begets privilege, and in addition we heartily agree with Collins's point, quoted earlier, that "intersectionality's raison d'être lies in its attentiveness to power relations and social inequalities." Disadvantages typically exacerbate one another. Nevertheless, our findings suggest that cultural success is more complicated than the Matthew effect would imply, and we join in Phillips's (2011) call for a "sociology of

²⁶ The literary establishment seems to still reward outsiders for "writing what they know." Studying the Booker Prize (1983-1991), researchers found that the contest favored "subaltern" voices (post-colonial males, Celtic authors, and British females), especially novels where author and main character attributes (gender, racial/ethnic background) aligned "almost identically" (Childress et al. 2017).

disconnectedness.” Thus we encourage consideration of the multiple dimensions in which people live their lives. As a specific application of such multi-dimensional thinking, we suggest that cultural analysis move beyond race, class, and gender to take account of other forms of marginality such as geographic and sexual outsider-ness, and to consider their interactions. The cultural consequences of stacked-up outsider identities can be both significant and surprising.

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