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# Canonicity and the American Public Library: The Case of American Women Writers

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## Abstract

Beginning with an overview of the debate over American women writers and the academic canon, this essay inventories four clusters of American women writers—domestic novelists, regionalists, modernists, and writers of diverse ethnicities—within a representative sampling of small-town public libraries across the Midwest from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The survey reveals some surprising disjunctures that run counter to trends in the academy. It also highlights the role publishers and bibliographers have played in establishing favored texts for a general readership and demonstrates that publishers of literary classics and bibliographies geared toward librarians have not always promoted the same texts as their academic counterparts. On the whole, it concludes, women writers fared quite well in the hands of publishers and public libraries promoting “the classics” at the same time that they suffered at the hands of major textbook publishers and scholarly editors intent on defining “the canon.”

At the 1981 Modern Language Association annual convention, a “New American Literary History” forum sponsored a special session on the topic “A New American Literature Anthology.” Led by Judith Fetterley and Joan Schulz of the MLA’s Commission on the Status of Women, the session sparked a lively dialogue on the

neglect of women writers in American literature. The commission had recently undertaken a study of the representation of works by women in standard classroom anthologies, and the results were discouraging. As Fetterley noted, "In three of the latest anthologies—Norton (1979), MacMillan (1980), and Random House (1981), the space given to women authors varies between 7% and 14%" (Fetterley & Schulz, 1982, p. 4). Even that, however, was an improvement on anthologies of the 1960s and early '70s: according to Schulz, in a sampling of anthologies from these decades, "women authors were given between 4% and 10% of the space" (p. 5). The bottom line, Fetterley and Schulz concluded, was that "even tokenism has only a tentative foothold" within the anthology establishment (p. 15). To the commission, neglect of women writers in mainstream anthologies designed for college use amounted to a nearly categorical exclusion resulting from the persistent devaluing of the genres and modes in which women writers had traditionally predominated.

The dearth of prominent women writers in popular anthologies of American literature for most of the twentieth century presents an inviting backdrop against which to consider the representation of female authors in American public libraries from the turn of the twentieth century to the late 1960s, when assumptions about canon formation underwent increasing scrutiny. At a glance, it appears that as a group, women writers suffered little if any neglect in public libraries. Yet important questions remain: Are the emerging, newly recovered, and now canonical women writers who were routinely omitted from standard anthologies of American literature for much of the twentieth century also absent from "typical" American public libraries during the same period? In other words, were major women writers as invisible to readers on Main Street as they were to students in English 101 prior to the canon wars of the 1980s and '90s? What can the historical records of public libraries in "Middle America" tell us about the relationship between canonicity and "ordinary" readers? For that matter, in what ways is the concept of a literary canon relevant to the history of the American public library, and vice versa? Beginning with an overview of the debate over American women writers and the canon, in this essay I inventory four distinct clusters of American women writers—domestic novelists, regionalists, modern writers, and writers of diverse ethnicities—within a representative sampling of small-town public libraries across the Midwest from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. My aim in doing so is to address these questions and arrive at a better understanding of the fissures between "the canon"—the contested cornerstone of academic anthologies and the courses that depend on them—and that time-honored public library staple, "the classics."

## The Canon and the Classics

In *Canons and Contexts* (1991), Paul Lauter defines the American literary canon as "that set of authors and works generally included in basic American literature college courses and textbooks, and those ordinarily discussed in standard volumes of literary history, bibliography, or criticism" (p. 23). As editor of the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, Lauter played a leading role in ushering into the canon a host of American writers who had been "lost" for generations. The 1989 publication of the *Heath Anthology* (Lauter et al., 1990) and of a number of competing anthologies with similarly revisionist agendas closely track a paradigm shift in literary studies that fueled the recovery of many writers from underrepresented groups, including the women writers whose absence the MLA's Commission on the Status of Women deplored.<sup>1</sup> Despite corrective measures taken by this new generation of anthologies, however, the issue of women's representation in the study of American literature is far from resolved.

In fact, in the thirty years since Fetterley and Schulz's report, women's representation in American literature anthologies and, by extension, on the syllabi of college courses in American literature has been continuously debated. A number of scholars have undertaken probing studies of the rise and institutionalization of American literature as an academic discipline, searching out the entrenched biases and tacit agendas of the cultural opinion makers who helped shape the field. Not surprisingly, gender bias, along with race, has been of

paramount concern. As Nina Baym observed in her pioneering study *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820–1870* (1978), “Of the many clearly major American women writers—Emily Dickinson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, Ellen Glasgow, Kate Chopin, Gertrude Stein—until recently only Dickinson was universally acknowledged to be of classic stature” (p. 14). For Baym, the exclusion of American women writers from the academy resulted from the agenda of conservative cultural leaders of the late nineteenth century who promoted the Puritan New England heritage as *the* definitive American character in order to fabricate a unitary—and supposedly unifying—national identity. Taking her cue from Baym, Elizabeth Ammons subsequently elaborated, “The political agenda of this concerted installation of a white, male, Protestant, New England literary canon at precisely the time that immigrants, non-New Englanders, Jews, Catholics, blacks, Asian Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and more and more white women were publishing at an unprecedented rate is not hard to grasp” (1994, p. 32). A decade later, in his foreword to Joseph Csicsila’s *Canons by Consensus*, Tom Quirk asked, “Why aren’t the names of Mary Noailles Murfree, Constance Fenimore Woolson, Zona Gale, Ruth Suckow, Fannie Hurst, Dorothy Parker, Helen Hunt Jackson, or Edna Ferber more visible in the literary classroom? . . . My point here is that supposedly ‘inclusive’ as contemporary notions of the canon seem to be, there remains some sort of, perhaps unexamined, exclusionary principle at work.” As a result, Quirk concludes, “unquestionably talented writers (Ellen Glasgow, for example) may be in danger of being wholly forgotten” (2004, p. xi–xii). Still more recently, in a 2009 article in *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, Nicole Tonkovich renewed the claim that “gender still silently determines the canon of American literature” (2009, p. 243).

Not all participants in the debate have drawn similarly bleak conclusions about the causes of women’s underrepresentation, however, and a few have disputed that women were systematically excluded at all. Csicsila’s study of more than eighty major American literature anthologies published between 1919 and 1999 concludes that women writers were underrepresented only during the New Critical phase of anthology history (1947–mid-1960s) and that over the entire eighty-year span, the selection of texts was shaped most forcefully by prevailing critical trends grounded in the period’s aesthetic values—not by overt sexism or cultural chauvinism (2004, pp. xvi, 133–34, 164–65).<sup>2</sup> Yet even as Csicsila’s research offers a valuable counterpoint in the canon debates, his conclusion about the highly influential New Critical period begs the question of the degree to which “aesthetic” criteria are themselves susceptible to gender bias. Michael Ryan, in an otherwise positive review of *Canons by Consensus*, objects that “Csicsila too readily dismisses claims by critics of anthologies that they serve a cultural filtering function that often reflects the interests of dominant social groups such as white heterosexual men. He also does not note how canons preserve biased acts of exclusion that become less visible with time” (2005, p. 126).

While literary historians such as Baym, Ammons, Csicsila, Lauter, and Quirk have surveyed the content of major anthologies and attempted to trace their impact on the literary canon as a whole, other scholars have analyzed the place of specific authors and texts vis-à-vis the canon. In her study of early twentieth-century poetry anthologies, for example, Amanda Gailey argues that Emily Dickinson “was included . . . not in spite of her gender but because of it.” Gailey goes on to argue, however, that “the virtual *tabula rasa* of her life and poetics allowed early anthologists to construct in her the image of a female poet who satisfied the increasingly standardized, male-dominated ‘notion of Americanness’” (2005, p. 64). Pursuing a different trajectory, in her article “Becoming Noncanonical: The Case against Willa Cather,” Sharon O’Brien explores Cather’s rise and fall in the canon of American literature. She links Cather’s descent from “major contemporary writer” to “minor” literary figure to the cultural and gender politics of academics during a critical stage of the professional development of American literature when male “scholars, critics, and reviewers were increasingly concerned with defining and codifying an American literary canon” that “could both reflect and justify their own professional enterprise” (1989, p. 249). Concluding that the cultural and gender politics of the early twentieth-century literary establishment played a large role in consigning Cather to the margins, O’Brien’s case study

illuminates the web of external influences that operate on texts and contribute to their reception and reputation.

In addition, studies focusing on single texts, such as Cathy N. Davidson's 1989 analysis of Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple*, Michelle Moylan's 1996 study of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*, and Barbara Sicherman's research (2010) on Alcott's *Little Women*, explore relationships between the material text and its reception, charting the way readerships, contexts, and the physical formats of texts change over time. As these studies make clear, anthologies designed for college use may be important vehicles for canonization, but they are not the only instruments of canon formation. In fact, if there are any recurring principles that emerge from the plethora of articles and books that touch on canon formation in the past thirty years, they are (1) that there is no royal road to canonization, and (2) the canon is an ever-evolving entity subject to a broad range of external factors rather than a fixed set of "timeless" texts.

In "Constructing Our Pedagogical Canons" (2010), Joan L. Brown outlines a complex set of variables that contribute to a text's potential for incorporation into the literary canon. Grounding her analysis in evidence drawn from graduate-level reading lists in Spanish and Latin American studies and gathered from a wealth of scholarly articles, pedagogical guides, and bibliographies, Brown extrapolates a generalized, broadly applicable list of extrinsic factors (tradition and inertia; recognition; importance for groups and individuals; availability) and intrinsic factors (place in literary history; informative content; aesthetic superiority; ability to entertain and move the reader) that influence admission into the academic canon. Acknowledging that the relative significance ascribed to these factors is the result of subjective judgments, Brown's article presents a useful rubric for understanding both the fuzziness and the logic of canon formation. It also provides insight into the sometimes contradictory position of American women writers with respect to the two most influential, enduring, and ubiquitous institutions involved in establishing, promoting, and perpetuating the pantheon of literary greats: the college classroom and the public library.

To investigate the problem of women's representation in the literary canon from a library perspective, I turned to the Main Street database, which documents the contents of five small-town public libraries in the Midwest (located in Osage, Iowa; Sauk Centre, Minnesota; Rhinelander, Wisconsin; Morris, Illinois; and Lexington, Michigan) roughly between the turn of the twentieth century and 1970. My goal was to identify specific nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century American women writers who tend to surface in the canon debates (whether as writers who have been overlooked, recently recovered, or generally recognized and valued) in order to better understand their position in public libraries and the relationship of that position to the way these authors have fared in the academy. My analysis spans the entire historical range covered by the Main Street database (1890s to 1970), although I have focused on four distinct clusters of American women writers active between 1850 and 1950. Not only did my survey of American women writers on Main Street reveal some surprising disjunctures that run counter to trends in the academy, it also highlights the role publishers and bibliographers have played in establishing favored texts for a general readership. Although carrying out a function similar to that of the academic publishers responsible for college literature anthologies, publishers of literary classics and bibliographies geared toward librarians have not always promoted the same texts as their academic counterparts. On the whole, I argue, women writers fared quite well in the hands of publishers and public libraries promoting "the classics" at the same time they suffered at the hands of major textbook publishers and scholarly editors intent on defining "the canon."

## Domestic Fiction

In *Woman's Fiction*, Nina Baym explicates a neglected body of nineteenth-century fiction that she identifies as belonging to the most popular genre in the period in which it was written. As Baym defines it, works of "woman's fiction" share three important criteria: they were "written by women, are addressed to women, and

tell one particular story about women.” These narratives “chronicle the ‘trials and triumph’ . . . of a heroine who, beset with hardships, finds within herself the qualities of intelligence, will, resourcefulness, and courage sufficient to overcome them” (1978, p. 22). One of the major conclusions of *Woman’s Fiction* is that by the late 1860s and 1870s, “the genre had run its course” (p. 13), although it “remained a dominant fictional type until after 1870” (p. 22). As Baym observes, “After the great vogue of this fiction had passed its practitioners were forgotten. By the end of the nineteenth century a canon of classic American writers was being fixed, and of the many active women authors only Harriet Beecher Stowe and Louisa May Alcott survived the winnowing process” (p. 23). Moreover, she continues, “By the early decades of the twentieth century these two women had also disappeared from the pantheon,” and “until recently, nothing was remembered of this great burst of feminine literary activity among readers or even scholars at large” (p. 23). The claim that readers, as well as scholars, quickly forgot the tremendously popular women writers discussed in *Woman’s Fiction* is not substantiated, however. A comparison of Baym’s bibliography of woman’s fiction and the authors and texts in the Main Street database reveals that in many cases, these authors and their works enjoyed a surprising longevity well into the twentieth century.

Although Catharine Maria Sedgwick—the author who, according to Baym, initiated the genre of woman’s fiction—is absent from the five Main Street collections, the libraries carried moderate numbers of texts by Maria Susanna Cummins, Augusta Jane Evans (Wilson), Marion Harland (Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune), Mary Jane Holmes, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward, Susan Warner, and E.D.E.N. Southworth, as well as smaller numbers of works by Sarah Josepha Hale, Emily Edson Briggs, Harriette Newell Woods Baker, and Miriam Coles Harris. Although all these authors appear in Baym’s bibliography, the turn-of-the-century bibliographical guides that many librarians relied upon included only a few. In fact, in the first such guide, *Catalog of “A.L.A.” Library: 5000 Volumes for a Popular Library Selected by the American Library Association and Shown at the World’s Columbian Exposition* (1893), the only one of these authors to be included is the prolific Elizabeth Phelps Ward, only one of whose works, *The Silent Partner* (1871), was listed. A decade later Melvil Dewey edited a new edition of the guide, *A.L.A. Catalog: 8,000 Volumes for a Popular Library, with Notes* (1904), which included two of the most popular domestic novels of all time—Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* (1850) and Cummins’s *The Lamplighter* (1854)—along with Ward’s autobiographical *Chapters from a Life* (1896). The next edition of this ALA guide covered the years 1904–1911 with little mention of titles published prior to 1904 (1912). Although it included two recent volumes by Ward—*The Oath of Allegiance and Other Stories* (1909) and *The Empty House and Other Stories* (1910)—the *A.L.A. Catalog, 1904–1911* effectively marks the point by which early twentieth-century librarians had ceased to consider the mid-nineteenth century classics of women’s fiction as public library staples.

Yet despite their omission from the bibliographical guides that librarians increasingly consulted as the twentieth century progressed, several of these nineteenth-century domestic novels continued to hold their place in Main Street libraries, even in locations like Rhinelander, Wisconsin, which was staffed by librarians trained at the University of Wisconsin Library School, and Morris, Illinois, where librarians attended a summer certification program at the University of Illinois. Collectively, the database lists fourteen copies of *The Lamplighter*, nine copies of *The Wide, Wide World*, eight copies of Evans’s *St. Elmo* (1866), and six of Southworth’s *Ishmael* (1863). In a few cases, new copies may have been added to replace those that were lost or damaged, while others may have been gifts (such as Lexington’s 1963 acquisition of *St. Elmo*). On the whole, however, the multiple copies of these books suggest that these texts remained in demand. In Osage, Iowa, for example, five copies of *The Lamplighter*, four of *The Wide, Wide World*, three of *St. Elmo*, and three of *Ishmael* helped to ensure that patrons seeking out these novels would not walk away disappointed. Acquisition dates provide another indication that at least some of these texts continued to be sought by readers well into the twentieth century; the library in Osage added its fifth copy of *The Lamplighter* in 1926; Sauk Centre added a third copy in 1931; and, although Lexington and Morris each carried only a single copy of *The Lamplighter*, Rhinelander, which acquired

its fourth copy of *The Lamplighter* in 1919, kept Cummins's novel on the shelf until 1953, one hundred years after the novel achieved a best-seller status that to most literary historians has been persistently construed as inversely proportional to a text's capacity to endure.

A closer look at the bibliographical data of the volumes of "woman's fiction" in the Main Street libraries reveals one more telling detail: although the early copies of these novels were in editions brought out by many different publishers, mainly in New York, the later copies, representing the furthest reaches of these authors' popularity and enabling their continued circulation, were largely the productions of a single publisher—A. L. Burt of New York. From 1890 until the 1930s, A. L. Burt published a popular yet selective series called Burt's Home Library. Although the series title may evoke the kind of extensive, disreputable "libraries" issued serially in flimsy bindings by Gilded Age publishers (the Seaside Library, for example), Burt's Home Library distinguished itself from these cheap paperbound series with its format as well as its titles. Hailed in the firm's advertisements as "popular literature for the masses, comprising choice selections from the treasures of the world's knowledge, issued in a substantial and attractive cloth binding, at a popular price," the series offered more than 400 titles for one dollar per gilt-topped volume. As Raymond H. Shove notes, Burt's Home Library was "an early example in this country of well-printed cloth-bound classics issued as a 'library,'" and it "had a wide sale for many years" (1937, p. 138). The line featured authors such as Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper, Benjamin Franklin, Francis Bacon, Charles Dickens, Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, Rudyard Kipling, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Matthew Arnold, Charles Lamb, along with Plato, Virgil, and the Koran. It also included novels by "woman's fiction" authors Augusta Jane Evans, E.D.E.N. Southworth, Maria Susanna Cummins, Mary J. Holmes, Susan Warner, and Miriam Coles Harris, whom Baym identifies as "the first fully developed American example that I have found of . . . the so-called 'gothic romance'" (1978, p. 273). Yet unlike cheap series in the popular dime and half-dime format, Burt's Home Library was not inflated by the inclusion of hundreds, if not thousands, of titles and authors that have little currency with literary scholars today. The series consisted chiefly of the most undisputed of canonical authors and texts in the European and American traditions—plus these chestnuts of American's woman's fiction together with an array of their British counterparts.

Not coincidentally, A. L. Burt specifically targeted the library market in its advertisements, asserting that the series was so carefully selected and well made that it was sure "to win . . . millions of readers and the approval and commendation, not only of the book trade throughout the American continent, but of hundreds of thousands of librarians, clergymen, educators and men of letters interested in the dissemination of instructive, entertaining and thoroughly wholesome reading matter for the masses" (Advertisement, 1900). The Main Street catalogs' strong showing of volumes published in Burt's editions suggests that the firm played a significant role in legitimizing and providing access to woman's fiction long after the date that scholars consider the genre to have been essentially forgotten by readers and critics alike.<sup>3</sup>

According to Baym, "two publishing events"—the appearance of the first "Elsie Dinsmore" book by Martha Finley and the publication of *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott (1868)—"marked . . . the decline of woman's fiction . . . because they represent the transformation of woman's fiction into girl's fiction" (1978, p. 296). Although I disagree with the implications of Baym's assertion (Wadsworth, 2006, 66–67), I would add that many of the women who wrote woman's fiction also wrote juvenile fiction—an enduringly popular genre in American public libraries and one that tends to be transmitted from generation to generation. Before the advent of Young Adult fiction, these authors often provided a bridge for individual readers between childhood reading and literature for adults. In the Main Street libraries, Alcott's books—especially the *Little Women* series—as well as Finley's "Elsie Dinsmore" series are extremely well represented, with Alcott accounting for 335 volumes and Finley for a more distant but still significant 83. Although Finley wrote neither classics nor canonical texts, Alcott wrote both, and her case is illuminating.

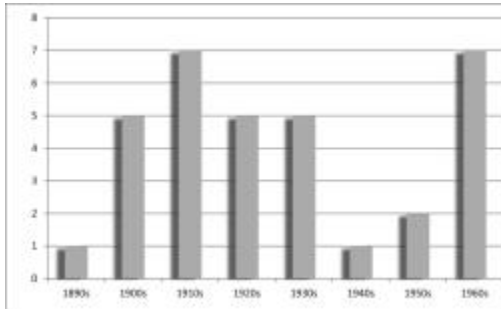
Recent classroom anthologies of American literature tend to include Alcott's abolitionist and Civil War pieces, such as the short story "My Contraband," or "The Brothers," and excerpts from *Hospital Sketches* (1863), or, alternatively, the satirical autobiographical sketch "Transcendental Wild Oats." Although the Main Street database includes *Hospital Sketches* and some of Alcott's other literary fiction written for adults, these volumes appear only in small quantities: *Hospital Sketches*, three; *Moods* (1864), four; *Work* (1873), three. The vast majority of the Alcott titles on Main Street belonged to the Little Women series, with *Little Women* alone accounting for fifty-three volumes—a showing consistent with the way Alcott's works were presented in the contemporary bibliographic guides librarians used. While the 1893 "A.L.A." *Catalog* included *Hospital Sketches*, along with *Little Women*, *Little Men*, *Jack and Jill*, *An Old Fashioned Girl*, and *Under the Lilacs*, and the 1904 A.L.A. *Catalog* (Dewey) included *Hospital Sketches* and a mix of Alcott's novels and short story collections for young readers, later guides omit *Hospital Sketches* and adopt an increasingly narrow view of Alcott's juvenile contributions: The 1950 *Fiction Catalog* (Cook & Fidell, 1951) includes only the March trilogy, and the 1960 *Fiction Catalog* (Fidell & Flory, 1961) omits *Jo's Boys*, listing only *Little Women* and *Little Men*. As Alcott's gradual eclipsing suggests, the distinction between "classic" and "canonical" has, for much of the twentieth century, coincided with the division between juvenile literature and literature for adults. The 2001 publication of *Little Women* in the Modern Library, its 2005 appearance in the Library of America, and, most tellingly, its 2003 release as a Norton Critical Edition (where it is joined by critical editions of *The Secret Garden* and *Anne of Green Gables*) are strong indicators, however, that this conventional barrier to canonicity is finally being dismantled.

Alcott's case is instructive for another reason as well. Like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Helen Hunt Jackson, and the writers of woman's fiction cited earlier, Alcott wrote very popular books, and in the case of nineteenth-century writing for women, popularity is a highly charged attribute. As Jane Tompkins observes in *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (1985), "the popularity of novels by women has been held against them" and "popular fiction, in general, at least since the middle of the nineteenth century, has been rigorously excluded from the ranks of 'serious' literary works" (p. xiv). Challenging this trend and its underlying assumptions, Tompkins invokes the idea of "cultural work" to anchor a system of literary value based on what texts *do* for their readers at particular moments in history. Incorporating popular literature into the critical discussion of American literature, Tompkins explains, allows us "to explore the way that literature has power in the world, to see how it connects with the beliefs and attitudes of large masses of readers so as to impress or move them deeply" (p. xiv).

For Tompkins—and in the Main Street public libraries—*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a case in point. As Tompkins, writing in the mid-1980s, describes it, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is one of the texts "the current canon has blotted from view" (1985, p. xii). Yet the Main Street records indicate that Stowe's novel (together with numerous volumes of her regionalist fiction) remained squarely in view at these small-town midwestern libraries through the twentieth century. Cumulatively, the five libraries housed forty copies of the novel (as well as nine volumes of Grace Duffie Boylan's adaptation *Young Folks Uncle Tom's Cabin*) and continued to add or replace volumes throughout the entire span covered by the database records. (The last volume acquired was in Osage in 1968.) Although *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was excluded from the academic literary canon until the late 1980s, evidently the text continued to resonate in public libraries all the way to—and even through—the Civil Rights era. In fact, based on thirty-three volumes for which acquisition dates are available, more new copies were added in the 1960s than in any other decade since the 1910s (fig. 1). And, as contemporary bibliographies of fiction for public libraries suggest, librarians were attuned to the shifting significance of this novel as well as its enduring interest and historical importance even as most academics ignored it. Featured in both the 1893 *Catalog of "A.L.A." Library* and the 1904 A.L.A. *Catalog*, the text was described in the latter as "one of the most famous of 'timely' books . . . written with passion and prejudice and it accomplished what all the cool, judicial statements in the world have failed in" (p. 206). Although by 1960 Stowe was represented in the standard bibliography of fiction



for libraries by only one volume—*Uncle Tom's Cabin*—in that year's *Fiction Catalog*, its editors were able to recommend three separate editions of the novel, all packaged as "Classics": Houghton Mifflin's illustrated Riverside Edition, a Modern Library edition, and, most significant, a volume in Dodd's Great Illustrated Classics, with introductory remarks and captions by Langston Hughes. In Rhinelander, which of all Main Street libraries owned the most copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the Dodd, Mead edition was one of twelve copies (plus two copies of *Young Folks Uncle Tom's Cabin*) the library acquired between 1904 and 1961.



**Fig. 1.** Acquisition of copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by decades.

In *Sensational Designs*, Tompkins explains that popular texts such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Wide, Wide World* that were written "in order to win the belief and influence the behavior of the widest possible audience" perform cultural work by "offer[ing] powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment" (1985, p. xi). That *Uncle Tom's Cabin* remained available to patrons on Main Street suggests a need to recalibrate the duration of the "particular historical moment" in which Stowe's novel had currency, and thus to examine anew the way the novel, and the enduringly popular volumes of woman's fiction discussed earlier in this section, continued to "articulate and propose solutions for the problems" that shaped the twentieth century, as well as the nineteenth.<sup>4</sup>

## Regionalist Fiction

In addition to her two abolitionist novels, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*, Stowe wrote many volumes of regionalist fiction, a genre in which women writers gained a firm foothold in the literary canon as well as in the popular imagination. Although Fetterley and Schulz remark that "the category of regionalism . . . has for a long time served to contain these writers in the backwater of a single story in an occasional anthology" (1982, p. 12), they also allow that "the, by now, predictable triumvirate of Jewett / Freeman / Chopin" appeared regularly in the anthologies they examined (p. 9). Although in the Main Street database Kate Chopin is represented by only a single volume of *Bayou Folk* (1894) (in Sauk Centre), the Main Street libraries stocked abundant supplies of books by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman and Sarah Orne Jewett, as well as an impressive number of titles (some in multiple copies) by the more recently canonized regionalist writers Mary Austin and Constance Fenimore Woolson (table 1). Consistent with these figures, most of these regionalists were well represented in turn-of-the-century ALA catalogs. And, although the majority of these authors had fallen out of mid-twentieth-century editions of *Fiction Catalog*, the 1960 *Fiction Catalog* (Fidell & Flory, 1961) still recommended Gene Stratton-Porter, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Zona Gale, Gertrude Atherton (though only her historical fiction), Sarah Orne Jewett, and Ruth Suckow; and the 1950 edition recommended all of these authors as well as Margaret Deland, Mary Noailles Murfree, and Mary Austin. The cases of Wilkins Freeman, Gale, Jewett, Murfree, and Austin, in particular, illustrate intersections of Main Street interest and acceptance in the academy and thus register rare instances in which "the canon," "the classics," and "the popular" coalesce.

As suggested by Fetterley and Schulz's mention of Jewett, Freeman, and Chopin, American literary regionalism has been disproportionately represented in academic anthologies by New England writers, with writers of the

Deep South coming in for a distant second. Although the same northeastern writers acclaimed by academics were readily available on Main Street, women regionalists of the Midwest and West had a much stronger presence in the Main Street libraries than they attained in conventional academic anthologies (table 1).<sup>5</sup> In fact, although three of the best represented regionalist women writers in the Main Street collections are New Englanders (Alice Brown, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Harriet Beecher Stowe) and two others are Southerners (Ellen Glasgow and Mary Noailles Murfree), a striking feature of table 1 is the predominance of midwestern writers. Topping the list, Indianan Gene Stratton-Porter has a triple-digit presence that (as in the case of Alcott) reflects her books' status as girlhood classics. Other women regionalists from the Midwest with a strong presence on Main Street shelves include Wisconsinite Zona Gale; Illinoisan Mary Hartwell Catherwood; Iowan Alice French [pseud. Octave Thanet]; and Constance Fenimore Woolson, who set her regionalist fiction in the Great Lakes areas of Ohio and Michigan, as well as in Florida and North Carolina. The fact that several of these writers wrote in multiple modes—regionalist along with domestic (Stowe), young adult (Porter), "New Woman" (Deland), historical (Catherwood and Atherton), or international (Woolson) —prevents a straightforward comparison of the numbers, as does the absence of comparable data for libraries in other regions of the United States. Nevertheless, the data shown in table 1 suggest that these writers enjoyed a heightened interest and appreciation in their home region.

**Table 1.** Cumulative number of volumes by regionalist writers in the Main Street collections. Midwestern authors are set in boldface; writers of the Western states are set in italics.

<b>Gene Stratton-Porter</b>	164
Margaret Deland	93
Mary Wilkins Freeman	78
Alice Brown	72
<b>Zona Gale</b>	67
<i>Gertrude Atherton</i>	56
Sarah Orne Jewett	54
Harriet Beecher Stowe	
(omitting <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> and <i>Dred</i> )	48
Mary Noailles Murfree	
(pseud. Charles Egbert Craddock)	47
<b>Alice French (Octave Thanet)</b>	36
<b>Mary Hartwell Catherwood</b>	34
Ruth McEnery Stuart	31
<i>Mary Hallock Foote</i>	30
<b>Ruth Suckow</b>	27
<i>Mary Hunter Austin</i>	21
<b>Constance Fenimore Woolson</b>	20
Harriet Prescott Spofford	10
Rose Terry Cooke	4
Celia Thaxter	3
Kate Chopin	1
Grace E. King	1

To investigate a possible correlation between region of origin and representation in the Main Street libraries, table 2 illustrates the number of volumes at each of the five Main Street libraries for the six

midwestern writers with at least twenty volumes in the cumulative Main Street collection. As this table makes clear, with only a slight variation (twenty-two volumes of Iowan Octave Thanet [Alice French] in Osage), the best represented of these midwestern women writers in all the libraries, apart from girlhood favorite Gene Stratton-Porter, was Zona Gale. Although Gale is absent from current editions of the *Norton*, *Bedford*, and *Heath* anthologies, her work does appear in more narrowly delimited anthologies, such as *American Women Regionalists: A Norton Anthology* (Fetterley & Pryse, 1995) and *The Portable American Realism Reader* (Nagel & Quirk, 1997).

**Table 2.** Number of volumes by regionalist women writers of the Midwest in each Main Street library.

	Porter	Gale	Catherwood	Thanet	Suckow	Woolson
	(IN)	(WI)	(IL)	(IA)	(IA)	(MI)
Osage (IA)	54	20	10	22	11	10
Morris (IL)	50	14	5	1	6	0
Lexington (MI)	12	5	3	2	1	3
Sauk Centre (MN)	11	17	6	3	5	1
Rhineland (WI)	37	11	10	8	4	6

As a writer whose status with respect to the canon has been particularly contested, Zona Gale warrants closer inspection. Gale published numerous volumes that these libraries purchased: cumulatively, the Main Street libraries carried twenty-one of Gale's thirty-four books. Only two of Gale's texts, however—*Miss Lulu Bett* (1920) and *Faint Perfume* (1923)—were available in all five of the libraries. At least one of these (*Miss Lulu Bett*) was a best-seller, and both were made into plays. With eleven copies across the Main Street collections, *Miss Lulu Bett* dwarfed Gale's other titles on Main Street shelves. It was also the text that launched its author into literary history. When Gale was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1921 for the staged version of *Miss Lulu Bett*, she became the first woman to earn a Pulitzer Prize for drama. Of the ten volumes of this novel for which acquisition dates are available, only one was acquired in 1920, the year of the novel's release. Five others were acquired in 1921, the year Gale received the Pulitzer Prize, with other volumes joining the Main Street collections in 1927, 1929, 1930, and 1935. Altogether, the history of *Miss Lulu Bett* in the Main Street libraries suggests a flurry of interest in response to the Pulitzer announcement and continued engagement for at least fifteen years following the novel's publication. In the middle of the twentieth century, however, contemporary bibliographical guides for librarians point to a sharp decline in Gale's overall visibility. While the 1950 edition of *Fiction Catalog* included half a dozen of Gale's books (Cook & Fidell, 1951), the 1960 edition listed only *Miss Lulu Bett* (Fidell & Flory, 1961).

In "Reading *Miss Lulu Bett*: The Reception History of a Midwestern Classic" (2003) Marcia Noe and Nancy Neff trace the critical response to Gale's most famous novel from the time of its initial publication to the present. Noe and Neff demonstrate that *Miss Lulu Bett* received highly positive critical appraisals at the time of publication, but contrary to the trajectories of many "forgotten" women's texts, the novel continued to be included and praised in scholarly works for the next fifty years. The neglect, Noe and Neff argue, occurred later, at precisely the time many other women's texts were being recovered.<sup>6</sup> In light of this retrograde trend, it is interesting to note that one of the reasons Noe and Neff offer for Gale's neglect is that "Portage, Wisconsin, was certainly not the center of the literary universe" and "Gale's star was in the ascendancy as long as realistic literature from the Middle West dominated the literary scene" (p. 15). Quoting from Gale's obituary, Noe and Neff point out that *Miss Lulu Bett* was "exactly contemporaneous with [Sinclair Lewis's] *Main Street*" and "hardly less influential in establishing a new tone in fiction dealing with provincial America" (p. 15). Portage, Wisconsin was, indeed, far from the nation's literary and cultural centers; yet it was also (more or less) at the geographical

center of the Upper Midwest, where the “revolt from the village” model may have retained its cultural currency beyond the duration of its brief critical vogue.<sup>7</sup> Thus for patrons of Main Street public libraries, Gale’s regional portraits of village life may have continued to engage readers even after its village theme passed from prominence in the country’s cultural centers.

For multiple reasons, regionalism as a genre resists easy definitions. Attempts to delimit it by time frame, gender, length of text, and other factors that blur the line between extrinsic and intrinsic attributes fail to establish convincing, broadly applicable criteria that consistently schematize the generic parameters of regionalist texts. Is Cather a regionalist author? Or does her status as a modern writer locate her as postregionalist?<sup>8</sup> Is Gene Stratton-Porter a regionalist? Or is that term reserved for an elite coterie of writers who steered clear of the bustling young-reader marketplace and best-sellerdom? If the academic approval signaled by the republication of *A Girl of the Limberlost* (1909), *The Keeper of the Bees* (1925), and other of Stratton-Porter’s works in Indiana University Press’s Library of Indiana Classics attempts to “brand” her fiction as “classic”—perhaps even canonical—one might consider other writers whose prolific careers and popular successes consign them more clearly to a mass market far removed from academic prestige: Louisiana writer Frances Parkinson Keyes, for example, whose 108 volumes in the Main Street libraries represent thirty-eight different titles, many of them in four, five, or six copies, and one of them, *Joy Street* (1950), in eight copies across the five libraries.

In light of this definitional quandary, it is noteworthy that the “triumvirate” of securely canonical American women writers identified by Fetterley and Schulz consists solely of late nineteenth-century regionalists who specialized in easily anthologized periodical fiction. In Csicsila’s analysis, “regional women writers, including Stowe, Freeman and Jewett,” particularly “benefited . . . from [the] effort by early anthologists to provide full coverage of America’s literary heritage” and “present the variety of the American experience” (2004, pp. 10–11).<sup>9</sup> Ironically, the early admission of Jewett, Freeman, and Chopin into the canon may have prompted efforts to place these three women writers at the theoretical center of literary regionalism and hence to inscribe the boundaries of the genre around this late nineteenth-century compass point. The canonical status of a growing number of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century regionalist writers whose work falls within the scope of the genre as demarcated by Jewett, Freeman, and Chopin may thus have excluded other regionalists whose work lies beyond the circumference of this canonical core.

## Modern Fiction

The first half of the twentieth century is instructive to explore in this context because this period is contemporaneous with the growth of the Main Street public libraries. Modernism itself was in its nonage when the library buildings donated by Andrew Carnegie came into existence and developed concurrently with the Main Street collections. In a sense, Carnegie’s philanthropy can be considered one of the last great expressions—perhaps the pinnacle—of the kind of top-down benevolence, belief in self-culture, and faith in the uplifting power of knowledge that earlier in the century fueled such institutions as the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in Great Britain and the Lyceum and Chautauqua movements in the United States. Modernism, on the other hand, is often regarded, in part, as a reaction against the conventional certainties of the late Victorian period.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 3.** Number of volumes by modern writers in the cumulative Main Street collections. Women writers are set in bold.

<b>Pearl S. Buck</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>Edna Ferber</b>	159
John Steinbeck	82

<b>Willa Cather</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Edith Wharton</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Ellen Glasgow</b>	<b>68</b>
Ernest Hemingway	56
William Faulkner	30
<b>Susan Glaspell</b>	25
F. Scott Fitzgerald	24
Thomas Wolfe	21
<b>Katherine Anne Porter</b>	<b>8</b>

As table 3 shows, several modern American women writers had a very strong showing in Main Street public libraries. At the top of the list is Pearl S. Buck, a writer whose omission from the canon prompted Tom Quirk to write: “The absence [from anthologies] I find especially mystifying is the near total neglect of Pearl Buck, our second Nobel Prize winner” (2004, p. xii). A close second, Edna Ferber was (like Zona Gale) a “Middlebrow Modern” whose Wisconsin origins may have enhanced her popularity among Main Street patrons and librarians.<sup>11</sup> As in the cases of Cather and Iowa writers Ruth Suckow and Susan Glaspell, Ferber’s high Main Street visibility raises questions about the impact of place on the reception of literature, although without comparative data for other regions it is impossible to gauge the influence of region. Sandwiched between John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway in the tabulation of numbers of titles, the data for Cather, Wharton, and Glasgow suggest that these writers, too, were embraced by Main Street readers.

Not coincidentally, the bibliographies librarians frequently consulted included all of the modern women writers considered here. As early as 1904, Wharton and Glasgow appeared in the *A.L.A. Catalog*, and Ferber, Cather, and Wharton appeared in *A.L.A. Catalog, 1912–1921* (1923). A decade later *A.L.A. Catalog, 1926–1931* (1933) featured Buck, Ferber, Cather, Wharton, and Glasgow, all of whom, together with Katherine Anne Porter, are represented by multiple titles in the 1950 and 1960 editions of *Fiction Catalog* (Cook & Fidell, 1951; Fidell & Flory, 1961). This finding not only reflects the library profession’s engagement with current publishing trends. It also points up the fact that librarians responded with alacrity to readerly interest generated by recent publications.

## Women’s Writing across Cultures

If the lineup in table 3 suggests that the process of canonization continues to grapple with the “problem” of popularity as an obstacle to academic prestige, another cluster of writers during this period illustrates a different pattern of reader interest. In his analysis of pre-1970s literature anthologies, Csicsila (a skeptic on the subject of gender bias) finds a “near-wholesale disregard of African American writers” (2004, p. xvi). Kenneth Kinnamon, in considering the literature anthologies of the not-too-distant past, also reports “a pattern of exclusion by omission, an absence of Chesnutt, Dunbar, and Johnson attributable perhaps to ignorance as well as prejudice” (1994, p. 144). In addition to noting such widespread omissions of African American writers, contributors to Quirk and Scharnhorst’s *American Realism and the Canon* point to the omission of Chinese American, American Indian, and Jewish writers from the traditional (i.e., prerevisionist) canon (1994). While it would be going too far to say that parallel omissions did not occur in the Main Street public libraries, it is worth noting that the cumulative records of these libraries contain entries for Zitkala-Ša (five copies of *Old Indian Legends* [1901]); Zora Neale Hurston (one copy of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* [1937] in Sauk Centre, one copy of *Seraph on the Suwanee* [1948] in Osage); Jessie Redmon Fauset (two copies of *Chinaberry Tree* [1931]—one in Osage, one in Rhinelander); Mary Antin (six copies of *The Promised Land* [1912], five copies of *They Who Knock at Our Gates* [1914]); Anzia Yezierska (one volume each of five separate texts—three of them in Morris);

and Onoto Watanna (Winnifred Eaton) (five separate titles, totaling thirteen volumes across the five libraries).<sup>12</sup> (See table 4.)

In some cases, the presence of these authors seems to be linked to patron interest in related nonliterary subjects. American Indian subject matter is abundant in the Main Street libraries, and, as Patricia Okker observes, the canonization of Zitkala-Ša “ironically began with the popular fascination with the ‘exotic Indian’ at the beginning of the twentieth century,” when her periodical writing “appeared alongside literature by whites about Native Americans” (1994, p. 89).<sup>13</sup> In the Main Street libraries, Zitkala-Ša’s *Old Indian Legends* was assigned to the Dewey class designating folklore (398), along with anthologies of myths, legends, tall tales, nursery rhymes, *The Arabian Nights*, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s *Indian Legends*, Margaret Bemister’s *Thirty Indian Legends*, Hal Borland’s *Tipi Tales*, and Joel Chandler Harris’s *Uncle Remus*.

**Table 4.** Number of volumes by African American, Native American, Asian American, and Jewish writers in Main Street collections.

Paul Laurence Dunbar	22
Richard Wright	17
<b>Onoto Watanna</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Mary Antin</b>	<b>11</b>
James Baldwin	7
<b>Anzia Yeziarska</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Zitkala-sa</b>	<b>5</b>
Standing Bear	5
Ralph Ellison	3
<b>Zora Neale Hurston</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Jessie Redmon Fauset</b>	<b>2</b>

As in the periodicals Okker references, Zitkala-Ša’s text was thus arranged shoulder-to-shoulder with texts by white authors. This classification is consistent with the way Zitkala-Ša was presented in the *A.L.A. Catalog* for 1904, where *Old Indian Legends* was listed under “Folklore, proverbs, etc.” (DDC 398), and in the *A.L.A. Catalog, 1912–1921*, where it was listed under “Children’s Books,” classified under “Legends and Fairy Tales” (also under DDC 398), and described as “Short fairy tales of the Dakota Indians” (1923, p. 276). (A note explained, “Librarians will differ in their classification of these [books], but most will want to bring them together on the fairy tale shelf” [p. 272].) Similarly, a lively interest in immigration and the journey to American citizenship is reflected in numerous children’s books as well as in informational texts in the Main Street libraries. And, as Sanford E. Marovitz observes, immigrant autobiographies and autobiographical novels by writers such as Antin and Yeziarska enjoyed considerable popularity in the early twentieth century (1994, pp. 117–118). In the *A.L.A. Catalog, 1912–1921*, Antin’s *The Promised Land* is, like Zitkala-Ša’s *Old Indian Legends*, identified as a children’s book. Classed as “Individual biography” (DDC 921), Antin’s text is described as “the story of a Russian girl’s life in America” (p. 289). While neither Zitkala-Ša nor Antin is represented in later bibliographic guides I consulted, the *A.L.A. Catalog, 1926–1931* (1933) contains an entry for Jesse Redmon Fauset’s *Plum Bun* (1929), and the 1950 edition of *Fiction Catalog* includes entries for Anzia Yeziarska’s *Hungry Hearts* (1920) and *The Bread Givers* (1925), Fauset’s *The Chinaberry Tree*, and Zora Neale Hurston’s *Jonah’s Gourd Vine* (1934) and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, described in the guide as a “warm human story” (Cook & Fidell, 1951, p. 248).

If the popularity of the women writers shown in table 3 and the relative obscurity of the writers (from the Main Street perspective) shown in table 4 only heightens the ambiguity of these writers’ status on the scale of literary

capital, one might look to the publishing industry for clarification. For if, as Kenneth Kinnamon asserts, “today, more than ever, the canon is what professors say it is” (1994, p. 143), then, by the same token, “the Classics” are, more than ever, what consecrated book publishers present them to be. Indeed, attaching the label “Classic” as a branding technique has been a popular marketing strategy for generations, effectively deployed for reprint series of paperbacks such as Penguin Classics, Oxford Classics, Collier Junior Classics, and many others, as well as for hardback tomes such as the Modern Library and the Library of America. Just as Burt’s Home Library helped ensure the continued circulation of domestic novels in the early twentieth century, these series have facilitated the circulation of important literary texts (including many by women) from the mid-twentieth century up to the present day.

Established in 1979, the Library of America came into existence too late for its titles to be reflected in the Main Street database—but the Modern Library was launched in 1917 and grew steadily over the period for which historical records of the Main Street libraries are available. Of the seventy-one volumes identified in the Main Street database as Modern Library publications, only two are by American women (Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence* and Cather’s *Death Comes for the Archbishop*), and only two additional titles were authored by women of other nationalities (Isak Dinesen’s *Out of Africa* and an omnibus volume titled *Six Novels by Colette*). Recently, however, both the Modern Library and the Library of America have shown great initiative in incorporating women writers, with Stowe, Wharton, Chopin, Jewett, Alcott, Gilman, Hurston, Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O’Connor, Gertrude Stein, Eudora Welty, Dawn Powell, Carson McCullers, Elizabeth Bishop, and Shirley Jackson represented in the Library of America, and many of these writers appearing in the Modern Library as well. In addition, the Modern Library now includes Nella Larsen, Mary Austin, Susanna Rowson, Harriet Jacobs, Helen Hunt Jackson, and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton. Like A. L. Burt’s Home Library a century earlier, these prestigious trade imprints have staked their success on the longevity of texts by women for whom the literary canon was, for much of the twentieth century, a closed book.

## Conclusion

In his *PMLA* article “Canonicity” (1991), Wendell Harris cites Alistair Fowler’s analysis of six types of canons (potential, accessible, selective, official, personal, and critical) and points to the need for “additional classifications” (p. 112). Certainly, one additional canon that might be added to the list is the library canon. Like the critical canon (or, in Joan Brown’s terms, the pedagogical canon), the library canon is variously defined and loosely constructed. In the first attempt at a formal articulation of this professionally approved body of texts, the U.S. Bureau of Education published the *Catalog of “A.L.A.” Library: 5000 Volumes for a Popular Library Selected by the American Library Association and Shown at the World’s Columbian Exposition* (1893). The introduction of this volume stressed that its compilers made no claim that it represented an “ideal selection,” but at the same time, it reflected “the best thought of competent judges in various departments” (p. vii).

Like the critical or pedagogical canon, the library canon continually undergoes revision and responds to an array of external influences and pressures. Yet in the mix of factors Joan Brown outlines in her rubric of canonicity, one might suppose that ability to move and entertain readers might rank more highly in the library canon, while place in literary history might be less heavily weighted. Although the library canon is shaped by professional librarians and influenced by bibliographies geared toward librarians, publishers (especially those who target the library market), literary prizes, and media buzz, general readers have played a large role in determining which books public libraries acquire. The library canon is, in this sense, more democratic than the carefully picked selections of a handful of anthology editors, which are winnowed further by those members of the academic elite who design their course reading lists around these aggressively marketed textbooks.

While the economics of publishing “classic” texts and the cultural politics of literary prizes have only recently begun to receive intensive scholarly attention,<sup>14</sup> a generation of culture wars has brought the political

implications of canon-building into sharp focus. The critical attention devoted to anthologies and reading lists has raised awareness of the ways that the principles of inclusion and exclusion shaping the canon can mimic and even perpetuate the social mechanisms that produce gender bias, racial privilege, and class hierarchy. In the context of public libraries, analogous issues surface. In light of the ALA's mission to "enhance learning" and "ensure access," together with its commitment to the "promotion and development of library collections and services for all people," (2011ba; 2011b), the function of canons is as weighty a matter for public libraries as it is for universities. And, as this essay suggests, the elision of public libraries from the discourse of canon formation has contributed to a rather large blindspot. As the records of five small-town Midwest public libraries demonstrate, although many important women writers were effectively lost to the academy, they could be found all along on Main Street.<sup>15</sup>

## Notes

1. Other canon-enlarging anthologies include *The American Tradition in Literature*, *The Harper American Literature*, and, most recently, the five-volume *Norton Anthology of American Literature*.
2. Csicsila discerns three distinct phases in the history of American literature anthologies, which he defines as follows: the historiographic phase (1919–46); the New Critical phase (1947–mid-1960s); the multicultural phase (1967–present) (2004, p. xx).
3. The Main Street Public Library Database contains more than two thousand entries for books published by A. L. Burt. Although the records do not indicate how many of these were part of Burt's Home Library, the catalog of A. L. Burt shows that many of the nineteenth-century women writers discussed in this section were published in Burt's Home Library.
4. See Hochman (2011). As Csicsila cautions, "it is easily possible to overstate the degree to which Stowe's reputation and that of her famous novel diminished among scholars in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s" (2004, p.140).
5. A factor that must not be ignored in surveying the representation of these authors is that some writers simply produced more than others. With only two volumes of short stories—*Bayou Folk* and *A Night at Acadie*—Kate Chopin, for example, could not rival more prolific writers in terms of number of volumes in circulation. And while the number of volumes in print is not a significant factor to anthologists and instructors selecting canonical texts, sheer productivity creates its own momentum in the library acquisitions process, as it does in the literary marketplace generally. Number of pages (not only number of volumes) is another factor that bears on anthologies and libraries differently: as with the case of domestic fiction, narrative length (i.e., novels as opposed to short fiction) may have increased a text's Main Street appeal while short forms are more readily incorporated into anthologies.
6. Noe and Neff offer several explanations for this neglect. One reason they suggest is that unlike Cather and Wharton, both of whom "opted to follow the male model [of authorship] of focusing on their individual careers," Gale "embraced a more communitarian aesthetic which conceived of the artist as a social being who mentored other writers and diverted time and energy to social and political causes" (2003, pp. 14–15).
7. See also Susan Tomlinson's "Curiously without Body," which argues that "Gale's obscurity results, in part, from her modernist refashioning of critically unfashionable concerns" (2006, p. 571).
8. On Cather's dual affiliations with regionalism and modernism, see Squire (2011).
9. For Csicsila's perspective on Stowe, Jewett, and Freeman, see *Canons by Consensus* (2004), pp. 133–65.
10. On Carnegie's philanthropy, see Abigail A. Van Slyck (1995).
11. As Csicsila points out, the literary careers of Wharton, Cather, and Glasgow overlap in several ways. "All three," writes Csicsila, "established what might be called a distinctively 'regional' outlook; each had powerful advocates in early-twentieth-century American literary criticism championing their work; and all attained major critical success, including the Pulitzer Prize, during their lifetimes" (2004, p. 205). Yet despite these convergences, these authors fared quite differently among anthology editors, a divergence that, for Csicsila, underscores the complexity of the canonization process (pp. 205–206). On



"Middlebrow Moderns," including Ferber, Gale, and several of the writers mentioned in the next section (Winnifred Eaton, Yeziarska, Fauset, and Larsen), see Botshon & Goldsmith (2003).

12. In contrast to the abundance of texts by Watanna, the Main Street libraries carried no texts by her sister, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maude Eaton). According to Amy Ling, the disparity in popularity between the two sisters can be ascribed to Watanna's cultivation of a Japanese persona in an age of widespread prejudice against the Chinese (1994, pp. 72–73).

13. On *Old Indian Legends*, see Okker (1994, p. 91).

14. See, for example, Jay Satterfield (2002), and James F. English (2005).

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