

‘Scribner’s Illustrated New Orleans’: Convergence Culture and Periodical Culture in Late 19th-Century America

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In the conclusion to *The Rise and Fall of Early American Magazine Culture*, Jared Gardner draws parallels between 18th-century American magazine culture and what he terms “twenty-first-century Internet culture” (2012, x). Throughout his book, Gardner argues that even if their editors often ended up writing much of the published material themselves, early American magazines routinely attempted to preserve the notion that they were “the natural outgrowth of readers who had been summoned by the periodical to be contributors themselves” (x). In this, he notes in the conclusion, they were like “the internet today, which depends inordinately on amateur contributions and a shared investment in a literary commons in which the distinction between author and reader is necessarily permeable, often even invisible” (173). He asserts that “the desire to write back, to interact, to pick up the pen and become authors themselves is clearly one that has remained intact in the two centuries since the early magazine culture faded into the background of our literary culture and marketplace dynamics” (173).

Gardner’s comparison focusses on an issue that also constitutes a central aspect of Jenkins’s concept of ‘convergence culture’: participatory culture. In fact, convergence culture’s characteristic circulation of media content across different media platforms depends upon a blurring of the strict dividing line between media

producers and media consumers, to the point where the two roles can no longer be clearly distinguished. In convergence culture, consumers routinely become producers and vice versa:

[S]ome ideas spread top down, starting with commercial media and being adopted and appropriated by a range of different publics as they spread outward across the culture. Others emerge bottom up from various sites of participatory culture and getting pulled into the mainstream if the media industries see some way of profiting from it. (Jenkins 2006, 257)

Gardner's locating of structures of participatory culture within 18th-century American periodical culture raises the question, however, to what extent convergence culture's purportedly "new forms of participation and collaboration" (Jenkins 245) and "new models of cultural production (participatory culture)" (246) are really *new*. Could the "older notions of passive media spectatorship" that convergence culture's "new" participatory culture supposedly contrasts with (3) perhaps be a relatively recent phenomenon that, in turn, contrasts with early American periodical culture's even older participatory culture? If so, where, or more importantly, *when* could we locate the end of this 'first' participatory culture? And what precisely distinguishes these 'old' and 'new' participatory cultures from each other?

This essay seeks to address these and related questions by locating manifestations of participatory culture in the representation of New Orleans in *Scribner's Monthly* (later *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*), a late 19th-century American illustrated monthly. More specifically, I employ a periodical studies approach to examine how the various journalistic, literary, and visual narratives about New Orleans that were published in *Scribner's/Century* from the early 1870s to the mid-1890s were all linked by participatory culture, with consumers (readers) turning into producers (writers and artists) and vice versa, and with the magazine thus functioning as a site of convergence. Such an analysis will have to take into account *Scribner's/Century's* practices of manuscript selection and editing – and hence also point to the limits of participatory culture at the magazine. At the same time, however, it offers an opportunity to contrast *Scribner's/Century's* conception of its audience as both consumers and potential producers with that of the first mass magazines which entered the American periodical market in the 1880s and early 1890s and which, as Christopher P. Wilson and Richard Ohmann have shown, conceived of their audience mainly as consumers, as a commodity that could be sold to advertisers (Wilson 1983, 42; Ohmann 1996, 8).

In the following, I will first briefly introduce some of the main concerns and strategies of periodical studies before discussing *Scribner's/Century* and the practices of its editorial and art departments in very general terms. While more archival research needs to be done especially on the workings of the magazine's art department, the published letters and (auto)biographies of editors and writers give us much insight into how manuscripts, whether they were actively solicited by the editors or not, and illustrations made it into the magazine. I will then examine a

selection of *Scribner's/Century's* illustrated articles and stories about New Orleans, including instalments of Edward King and J. Wells Champney's famous travel series "The Great South" as well as the short fiction and essays of George W. Cable and Grace E. King, and discuss how these texts (and the illustrations that accompanied them) are linked through participatory culture. The conclusion will offer some thoughts on the impact of the new mass magazines on participatory culture in late 19th-century American periodical culture.

Periodical Studies

The central premise of periodical studies is that magazines constitute a distinct form of publishing that calls for distinct analytical approaches and methodologies. Following the publication of Frank Luther Mott's seminal five-volume, Pulitzer Prize-winning *History of American Magazines* (1930-1968), periodical studies did not fully establish itself in the US until the early 1990s with the founding of the Research Society for American Periodicals in 1990, the establishment of the journal *American Periodicals* in 1991, the publication of monographs such as Hutton's *The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860* (1993) and G.J. Baldasty's *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (1992), and the first calls for distinct, holistic approaches to periodicals from both journalism scholars (Abrahamson 1995) and cultural critics (Price and Smith 1995). Since then, programmatic articles by scholars such as Judith Yarros Lee (2005), Charles Johanningsmeier (2012), and Sean Latham and Robert Scholes (2006) and the digitization of some major 19th-century journals in the "Making of America" project, a collaboration between Cornell University and the University of Michigan started in 1995, have greatly helped to define, theorize, and facilitate periodical studies.

Rejecting a view of magazines as mere "aggregations of otherwise autonomous works" (Latham and Scholes 2006, 521), periodical studies, first and foremost, call for the examination of "linguistic" texts along and in conjunction with all the "bibliographical codes" (McGann 1991, 57) that immediately surround them in periodicals¹ and for investigating the ways in which individual features of a magazine "call and respond" (Noonan 2010, xvi) to other articles in the same or in earlier issues. As Charles Johanningsmeier has argued with respect to the example of periodical fiction,

one cannot formulate an authoritative hypothesis regarding a periodical fiction's cultural work on a version of its text that appeared later in book or anthology form, for this linguistic text, divorced from its original contexts,

¹ These codes include, as Johanningsmeier has noted, "pre-publication advertising; the headlines for [the printed text]; its placement on the page; its typography; the accompanying illustrations; their captions; and the other printed materials that appeared nearby in the periodical" (2012, 598).

would inevitably produce effects on readers very different than those produced by the text in original contexts. (2012, 597)

In addition, and perhaps even more importantly for this essay, periodical studies also call for a serious exploration of the “means of production” (Lee 2005, 198) that characterize periodical publications. Rather than following the “Great Man [...] school of history” (197) that focusses on the lives and accomplishments of individual editors and authors, periodical scholars should, Judith Yarros Lee maintains, “examine the published periodical as the result of a collaboration among editors, contributors, readers, and other stakeholders of a particular time and place” (198). As evidenced by the recent publication of a special issue of the scholarly journal *American Periodicals* on “Networks and the Nineteenth-Century Periodical” (Fagg, Pethers, and Vandome 2013), this idea of networks (between people, but also between texts), which again links (19th-century) periodical culture to (21st-century) internet culture, seems to have become more and more important to periodical studies. Ideally, then, in periodical studies the analysis of the interrelations or networks among periodical contents is complemented by an investigation of the interrelations or networks among periodical actors, which is precisely what I will attempt to do in the following.

Participatory Culture at *Scribner's/Century*

Scribner's Monthly was launched as a national illustrated literary monthly magazine in New York City in November 1870 by publisher Charles Scribner, novelist and poet Josiah G. Holland (who acted as editor-in-chief), and Roswell Smith (as business manager). In 1881, after poet Richard Watson Gilder had replaced the ageing Holland and Smith had bought Scribner's share of the publishing company, the magazine was renamed *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* and went on to reach its peak in the mid-1880s, with its subscription numbers more than doubling to over 250,000 thanks to the popular “Battles and Leaders of the Civil War” series (Noonan 2010, 155). Starting in the early 1890s, *Century* faced increasing competition from significantly cheaper mass magazines such as *Munsey's* and *McClure's*, and its circulation slowly but steadily declined, although the magazine did not cease publication until 1930.²

Scribner's/Century offered its intended “genteel” middle-class readership a characteristic mix of what editor L. Frank Tooker has called the typical ingredients of “the traditionally perfect magazine of the day” (1924, 320): fiction (short stories and serialized novels), poetry, essays on such issues as art, science, technology, and travel, and a variety of recurring editorial departments like the “Topics of the

² For general accounts of the history and the impact of *Scribner's/Century*, see Mott (1967), John (1981), and Noonan (2010).

Time” and the entertaining and humorous “Bric-à-Brac.” If from today’s point of view, it is the magazine’s list of contributors of fiction – among them William Dean Howells, Henry James, Mark Twain, and George W. Cable – that seems particularly impressive, *Scribner’s/Century* tried to distinguish itself from its competitors, such as the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s Monthly*, primarily through its elegant design and the number and quality of its illustrations. Holland wrote in his farewell editorial in 1881: “I suppose that if any one were asked what, more than anything else, had contributed to the success of the magazine, he would answer: Its superb engravings, and the era it introduced of improved illustrative art” (303). Indeed, thanks to lavish spending, the innovativeness and ambition of the long-time head of the magazine’s art department, Alexander W. Drake, and the printing house of Theodore De Vinne, *Scribner’s/Century* significantly contributed to the development of a “New School of American Wood-Engraving” (Scholnik 1991, 54) and to “bring[ing] about a golden age of magazine illustration” (John 1981, 182).

While *Scribner’s/Century* conceived of and advertised itself, as the subtitle of *Scribner’s* proclaimed, “An Illustrated Magazine for the People,” it was also, particularly with respect to the fiction and poetry it published, a magazine *by* the people. Late 19th-century cultural and specifically literary trends as well as practices of manuscript acquisition contributed to this. Richard Brodhead has argued that especially through their promotion of American regional fiction, late 19th-century magazines such as *Scribner’s/Century* extended the opportunity to become a published author to “groups traditionally distanced from literary lives” (1993, 116):

Regional fiction set as the competence required to produce it the need to know how to write, but it set this entry requirement unusually low: since this form was heavily conventionalized in formulas [...], it did not require the more highly elaborated writerly skills that other forms asked for their successful performance. (116)

The magazines did solicit manuscripts, of course, but, as Christopher P. Wilson notes, they also heavily relied on voluntary submissions: “Articles were not ‘drummed up’ in elaborately planned promotional schemes with specific time lines; they came in irregularly. In fact, older editors had taken pride in the fact that they did not solicit content – in effect, that writers came to them. [...] Horace Scudder of *The Atlantic* boasted about never having invited a submission” (1983, 46). Due to its specific editorial policies, *Scribner’s/Century* made aspiring and hitherto unknown American writers feel especially welcome: in 1875, Holland proudly proposed to no longer print fiction “imported” from England and to “make the magazine specifically American” (123).³ While Gilder refused to relax his genteel editorial standards (epitomized by his ‘*virginibus* maxim,’ according to which the ma-

³ John argues that Holland probably made “a virtue of necessity,” as good foreign material had become unavailable (1981, 61).

gazine should print nothing to offend a virgin; Noonan 2010, 86), maintained that editors sometimes got carried away by their eagerness to discover new talent (Gilder 1896), and insisted on his authority and responsibility as editor-in-chief (see, for instance, his letter to Twain; qtd. in Cyganowski 1988, 216), he always strove to encourage submitters and to treat them with kindness, sympathy, and respect. Herbert F. Smith notes:

The Century notified writers on receipt of their manuscripts (a policy not followed by all magazines even today), paid on acceptance, and returned rejected manuscripts in plain envelopes, even to contributors who had neglected to enclose postage. Bill Nye wrote that Gilder “could return rejected manuscripts in such a gentle and caressing way that the disappointed scribblers came to him from hundreds of miles away to thank him for his kindness and stay to dinner with him!” (1970, 26)

Starting in 1882, Gilder also printed authors’ names not only in the tables of contents but directly with their contributions, a policy later also extended to illustrators and even engravers, thus offering them direct recognition by a very large audience (John 1981, 147).

The consequences of this attitude could be observed in the editorial offices (by an increasing flow of incoming manuscripts; John 116), in the magazine itself (according to John, “[o]ne of the *Century*’s two volumes in 1890 listed 123 different contributors; the *Atlantic* in the same period had only fifty-four;” 147), and even in Gilder’s private life: to a friend, Gilder wrote that he was “not very enthusiastic about meeting people, because people I meet usually carry concealed manuscripts. One man waylays me on Broadway with what you may call an airgun. He gets his poem by heart, meets me accidentally when I return to the office from lunch and recites it as we walk along” (Gilder 1916, 115).

In a slightly different form, participatory culture also manifested itself in the magazine’s art department: here, the work of illustrators and engravers regularly turned ‘readers’ into producers. Generally, as with its textual contents, the magazine strove for “variety in subject,” “variety in matter,” and “variety in artist” in its illustrations (Johnson 1923, 139). Once a manuscript was accepted for publication, a specific artist was commissioned to illustrate it (John 1981, 182). There is no evidence that *Scribner’s/Century* accepted unsolicited illustrations or that the magazine had writers provide texts for engravings (that is, had fiction or poetry commissioned to accompany pictures), a practice apparently common in the 1840s (Patterson 2010, 87-118). Artists were free to choose which scene or character they wished to illustrate (Johnson 1923, 383), but their work was at least sometimes sent to authors for approval (383) and was also scrutinized by the editors for factual errors and discrepancies with the text (Tooker 1924, 85-87) – with sometimes the picture and sometimes, especially when deadlines had to be met, the text being changed to avoid incongruities. Editor L. Frank Tooker writes in his *Joys and Tribulations of an Editor* that “times beyond reckoning, when the pictures were received

too late to make alterations, I have changed the text to gloss over the eccentricities of illustrators" (1924, 87).

After the illustrator had read and 'translated' the text into a picture, the latter had to be 'translated,' i.e. engraved, onto a woodblock. Before the widespread use of photoxylography⁴ from the late 1870s onward, pictures first had to be redrawn on the woodblock by a mediating office artist, as few artists could or would draw directly on the blocks (Holland 1879, 456; Brown 2002, 298n69). The engraver then etched the image onto the block, although he, too, could add his "own touches; if given a large expanse of sky, for instance, an engraver would often be free to determine the layout and texture of the clouds" (Schulmann 2012, 16). While Drake, as Scholnik notes, generally strove for "the truer and more exact reproduction of the work of the artist,' rather than its 'translation' into the engraver's language" (1991, 54), the entire process was still, Schulmann argues, "a collaborative one that involved both artists and engravers under the 'management' of editors" (2012, 16).

Participatory culture, then, manifested itself in *Scribner's/Century's* editorial and art departments. Though obviously limited by the editor's ultimate power of decision as well as by certain editorial principles, such as editor-in-chief Gilder's '*virginibus maxim*,' editor Tooker's rules of faithful and factually correct illustration, and art superintendent Drake's goal of reproducing artwork as exactly as possible, each issue of *Scribner's/Century* allowed consumers to become producers and vice versa: readers of essays, fiction, and poetry turned into producers of pictorial texts, viewers of images created through various techniques turned into producers of woodcuts, and, though perhaps less frequently, readers of the magazine turned into contributors. The degree of participatory culture involved in the production of the magazine becomes particularly evident when we focus, as I will do in the following section, on the textual and pictorial representation of New Orleans in *Scribner's/Century*. Indeed, the entire history of what I call here 'Scribner's illustrated New Orleans' can be described as one of consumers turning into producers.

***Scribner's/Century's* Illustrated New Orleans**

Editorials, essays, fiction, and poetry from or about both the antebellum and the Reconstruction South appeared with an astonishing frequency in *Scribner's/Century*. Smith even argues that "the magazine during the entire period of Gilder's editorship led all northern periodicals in publications by southern writers" (1970, 55) and that in relation to other American regions, the editor-in-chief published "a disproportionate amount of southern fiction" (86). Indeed, in 1890 Gilder wrote in

⁴ A process in which the picture was photographed directly onto the woodblock and which *Scribner's/Century's* art superintendent Alexander W. Drake had helped to perfect (Watrous 1984, 21; Scholnik 1991, 54; Brown 2002, 174, 298n69; Noonan 2010, 16-17).

a letter that a Northern author had asked him “when [he] was going to give the North a chance” (qtd. in Cyganowski 1988, 197).⁵ Whence this predilection for Southern themes and writers?

Were there, as Fahs intimates, “cultural and political imperatives” (2002, 219) to give a voice to the recently defeated South, which the magazine simply could not ignore? Did *Scribner’s/Century*, which assumed the role of a cultural steward, custodian, and arbiter on various matters (Noonan 2010, x, 14, 110), consciously conceive of itself as a vehicle for and promoter of the reconciliation of North and South, an active “agent in the process of national integration” (Scholnik 1991, 66n22; see also Noonan 2010, 156, 157)? Was it, as John suggests (1981, 39), the result of a shrewd business decision to win a large, national audience? After all, founded after the end of the Civil War, the magazine “escaped the onus of Abolitionism” (Smith 1970, 55) and “was well positioned to cater to the needs and desires of [...] southerners who had stopped subscribing to *The Nation*, *Harper’s* and *The Atlantic*” (Noonan 2010, xiv). Perhaps the magazine’s focus on the South was the result of a mixture of all of these reasons, yet, as editor-in-chief Gilder himself suggested, participatory culture also played a role. In a letter to James Lane Allen from 1890, Gilder wrote: “Without intending in any way to make a pet of southern literature, it has forced itself upon the attention of the editors of ‘The Century’ to such a degree, that we are supposed to make a specialty of it” (qtd. in Cyganowski 1988, 197). *Scribner’s/Century* focussed on the South, Gilder suggests here, because so many good Southern writers sent in so many good Southern stories.

The role participatory culture played in the dominance of Southern themes in *Scribner’s/Century* can be observed particularly well, as I have already argued, when we focus on the magazine’s features on New Orleans. Bill Hardwig has recently argued that New Orleans, along with Appalachia, played a central role in late 19th-century regional fiction and travel writing about the South, both because it served as a “physical point [...] of entry into the South” (2013, 15) and because its distinct cultural make-up could be used synecdochically to express the entire region’s cultural difference from the North: “[d]ue to their geographical roles as ‘ports of entry,’ [New Orleans and Appalachia] become symbols of the South’s cultural disjuncture from the rest of the nation” (15). Yet at least in the case of *Scribner’s/Century*, New Orleans also plays a central role if we wish to illustrate manifestations of participatory culture in late 19th-century periodical culture.

The first important piece on the city – the one that, in a way, started it all – was, however, not submitted to the magazine but projected and commissioned by Roswell Smith (Mott 1967, 464): “The Great South” series of travel sketches, written by journalist Edward King and illustrated by James Wells Champney, with its second and third instalments (entitled “Old and New Louisiana” and published in

⁵ Similar charges of regional favouritism in the magazine were, however, also voiced against the East and the North (Cyganowski 1988, 32).

November and December 1873 respectively) focussing on New Orleans.⁶ Smith had authorized the considerable sum of \$30,000 to fund King and Champney's travels, but the financial gamble paid off: although "The Great South" was neither the first nor the last travelogue about the South which appeared in a Gilded Age periodical shortly after the Civil War,⁷ it has been considered "an extremely lucrative business decision. As it ran, new subscriptions came in by the thousands as, postwar, *Scribner's* was the first northern journal welcomed into southern parlors" (Noonan 2010, 20).

Scholars have examined the series' depiction of the South in general and of New Orleans in particular in great detail (see, amongst others, Rainey 1993 and Greeson 2006), but what interests me here are manifestations of participatory culture in connection with the publication of "The Great South." Although the articles and illustrations had been commissioned by the magazine, there are, I suggest, at least two instances of participatory culture: the editing of Champney's sketches in the offices of *Scribner's* art department and the 'discovery' of George W. Cable by King.

While still in the field in the South, illustrator Champney would send his sketches to New York, where they were redrawn on wood and engraved by in-house artists and engravers, probably, as Sue Rainey claims (1993, 198), to meet publishing deadlines. Rainey shows, however, that although Champney often included details in the margins of his sketches to ensure faithful and accurate representations of the buildings and people he drew (204), the pictures were considerably altered during the production process in New York, particularly in the case of sketches of non-white people and ethnic minorities: "Champney's depictions of these people are frequently sensitive individual portraits. Unfortunately, many of his drawings were distorted either in the redrawing [...] or in the engraving, so that the facial expressions are changed or the individuals become types – even caricatures" (204).

Here and elsewhere, the alterations or even distortions were not the unavoidable and regrettable results of the technical reproduction process, but attest to the participatory culture prevalent at *Scribner's/Century's* art department, which was willfully acknowledged in the printed pictures. For instance, the "The Carnival: Arrival of the King" scene published in the second instalment of "The Great South: Old and New Louisiana" (King 1873, 25), which depicts participants and spectators at a New Orleans carnival parade, bears two signatures that indicate the

⁶ Both Mark J. Noonan and Bill Hardwig maintain that the series opened with these chapters (Noonan 2010, 63; Hardwig 2013, 80), but already in July 1873 the magazine had published an article entitled "The Great South: The New Route to the Gulf," which focussed on Kansas, 'Indian Territory' (Oklahoma), and Texas.

⁷ For instance, *The Nation* had published a series of articles called "The South as It Is" in 1865/1866 already, *Harper's Monthly* would print its "The New South" series in 1874, and "Studies in the South" would run in the *Atlantic Monthly* from 1882 to 1883 (Mott 1967, 47-48; Hardwig 2013, 157n4).

collaboration of three artists in the printed picture: “Champney-Sheppard” in the lower left corner identifies Champney as the original artist and W.L. Sheppard as the “redrawer” (Rainey 1993, 197-198), “C Maurand” in the lower right corner of the picture presumably identifies the engraver.

Incidentally, it was during the carnival season of 1873 in New Orleans that Edward King ‘discovered’ George W. Cable (Noonan 2010, 73). King had sought local information on New Orleans from Cable, who had written for a local paper, was interested in local history, and happened to be looking for an opportunity to publish some of the short stories he had written. In a letter to F.L. Pattee from 1914, Cable remembers:

Edward King came to New Orleans almost at the beginning of his tour of the South and we became acquaintances and friends. I asked him where to send some stories – two or three – which I had just written and he himself read and sent two to Dr. Holland [...]. Then Gilder [...] wrote me, and my lifetime acquaintance with both the *Century* and Charles Scribner’s Sons began. (qtd. in Ekström 1966, 49)

Throughout the summer of 1873, King continued to write letters to Cable, praising and encouraging him and telling him about his own efforts to turn the attention of *Scribner’s/Century’s* editors to Cable’s writings (Ekström 49-51), efforts which ultimately proved successful. Cable’s first submission, a story titled “Bibi,” was rejected; in October 1873, however, – a month before King’s first article on New Orleans from “The Great South” series appeared – the magazine printed “Sieur George: A Story of New Orleans,” the first of altogether six stories that were published in *Scribner’s/Century* until 1876 before they were collected as *Old Creole Days* in 1879. Thanks to participatory culture, and with some help and encouragement from King, Cable had turned into a published author of fiction.

Scribner’s/Century continued to accept submissions from Cable – sometimes, as in the case of the novel *The Grandissimes* (serialized from November 1879 to October 1880), even soliciting his work (Ekström 54-55) – and throughout the 1880s regularly printed his essays, short stories, novellas, and novels about New Orleans. However, just as King’s work for the magazine had, in a way, prepared the way for Cable, Cable’s writings, in turn, inspired others to write: in October 1874, *Scribner’s* published Cable’s “Tite Poulette,” a story about a quadroon called Madame John in antebellum New Orleans, who confesses that the eponymous title character is only her adopted daughter, which allows the latter to marry a white man. In response to this story, Cable received an anonymous letter from a reader who identified herself as a “poor quadroon[...].” and who urged Cable to

change the story, even yet, and tell the inmost truth of it. Madame John lied! The girl was her own daughter; but like many and many a real quadroon mother, as you surely know, Madame John perjured her own soul to

win for her child a legal and honorable alliance with the love-mate and life-mate of her choice. (qtd. in Cable 1896, vii)

Cable proposed to "answer [the letter] by another story" (viii), namely *Madame Delphine* (serialized in *Scribner's* from May to July 1881 and issued as an independent book by Charles Scribner's Sons in the same year). While in "'Tite Poulette" Cable had, as Alice Hall Petry notes, "effectively skirted the whole issue of miscegenation" (1988, 24), in *Madame Delphine* he uses a very similar ending (see the chapter "By an Oath"), but adds a final chapter entitled "Kyrie Eleison," in which this ending is revealed to be a scheme by the quadroon mother to indeed "win for her child a legal and honorable alliance with the love-mate and life-mate of her choice" (qtd. in Cable 1896, vii).

Since it is only from Cable's "Preface" to the 1896 re-edition of *Madame Delphine* that we learn about the genesis of the story (Payne 2002), we may well question the very existence of the 'poor quadroon' and her letter to Cable. If they did exist, however, we could speculate that, had this 'poor quadroon' written to Gilder instead of Cable, the editor may have encouraged the letter writer to pen the 'true' story herself (instead of leaving this to Cable), for this is precisely what he suggested to another reader of Cable's stories, Grace Elizabeth King.

In her autobiography, *Memories of a Southern Woman of Letters* (published posthumously in 1932), Grace Elizabeth King not only remembers Edward King's visit to New Orleans and his discovery of Cable (1971, 49-50), but also her own meeting with Gilder during the New Orleans Cotton Centennial Exposition in 1884. By that time, Cable had already published *Old Creole Days*, *The Grandissimes*, *Madame Delphine*, and a few essays about New Orleans Creoles in *Scribner's/Century. Dr. Sever*, another novel, had begun serialization in November 1883. Grace Elizabeth King, by contrast, had never published (or written) any fiction in her life. Walking with King after a dinner, Gilder asked her about "the inimical stand taken by the people of New Orleans against George Cable and his works" (King 1971, 60):

[King] hastened to enlighten him to the effect that Cable proclaimed his preference for colored people over white and assumed the inevitable superiority – according to his theories – of the quadroons over the Creoles. He was a native of New Orleans and had been well treated by its people, and yet he stabbed the city in the back, as we felt, in a dastardly way to please the Northern press. (60)⁸

According to King, Gilder simply answered: "Why, [...] if Cable is so false to you, why do some of you not write better?" (60). "The shot," King notes, "told" (60), and the very next day she wrote a story titled "Monsieur Motte." Although first rejected by the *Century*, it was published in the *New Princeton Review* in January 1886.

⁸ King's journal entry on Cable confirms that she especially resented Cable's favourable depiction of non-whites (King 2004, 5).

King continued to write and publish, mostly in *Harper's Magazine* (although this magazine was, King writes, “not a welcome visitor to New Orleans since the Confederate War,” 63), but when *Harper's* rejected King's “Balcony Stories” in 1891, King sent them to the offices of the *Century*, which published them from December 1892 to October 1893. The stories were, in Helen Taylor's words, precisely the “antitexts to Cable's” (1989, 48) that in 1884 Gilder had asked her (and her fellow New Orleanians) to write; and King had turned from a (disgusted) reader of Cable into a writer herself – thanks to the magazine's reliance on participatory culture.

Conclusion

At the time the *Century* serialized King's “Balcony Stories,” beautifully illustrated with woodcuts by such well-known illustrators as Otto H. Bacher and Albert E. Sterner, a new kind of monthly magazine rose to prominence on the American periodical market. *The Ladies' Home Journal* (founded in 1883), *Munsey's* (founded in 1889), and *McClure's* (founded in 1893) were cheap – the latter two sold for 10 and 15 cents an issue, while the *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, and *Century* were priced at a quarter or 35 cents (Ohmann 1996, 25). They contained many advertisements, were heavily illustrated, and spectacularly successful: *Munsey's* reached a circulation of 500,000 in 1894; that of the *Century* had never gone significantly beyond 250,000.

Perhaps most importantly, at least for my purposes here, the editors of these new magazines had a radically new conception of their role in the production of the magazine. Christopher P. Wilson argues that whereas “older” editors – the editors of magazines such as *Scribner's/Century* – considered it their main task “to sift, scrutinize, and select literary manuscripts, always watching over established boundaries of taste and propriety” (1983, 45), the “new” editor “began wholesale bidding for authors, article commissioning, and finally the formation of internal magazine writing staffs. This acceleration involved a basic restructuring of article publication” (48). Wilson quotes from a 1908 editorial in *The Independent*: “The modern editor does not sit in his easy chair, writing essays and sorting over manuscripts that are sent in by contributors. He goes hunting for things” (46).

Both Wilson and Richard Ohmann locate the new magazines with their new anticipatory production systems at the origins of an emerging American mass or consumer culture, in which readers were mainly relegated to the role of passive consumers (Wilson 1983, 42; Ohmann 1996, vii). According to Jenkins, these “notions of passive media spectatorship” (2006, 3) would later be succeeded by convergence culture with its “new models of cultural production (participatory culture)” (246). What I have tried to show in this essay, using the example of ‘Scribner's illustrated New Orleans,’ is that the period of mass or consumer culture was itself preceded by a cultural system that heavily relied on various models of participatory culture. There are, of course, significant differences between 19th-century participatory culture on the one hand, and convergence culture's participatory

aspects on the other hand. First, the latter's characteristic "flow of media content across multiple media platforms" (Jenkins 2) simply could not exist in the 19th century, as apart from the magazines and perhaps the theatre, there were few media systems available across which content could have circulated and which could have encouraged participation. Second, within the realm of the magazines, the editor always had the final word on what made it into the magazine and what did not. Nevertheless, the office doors of *Scribner's/Century* and its competitors were still remarkably more open to 'amateur' contributions than those of the newer magazines. Limited in both scope and degree as it may appear compared to convergence culture's participatory aspects, 19th-century participatory culture existed and has offered us, amongst others, the fictional renditions of New Orleans by George W. Cable, Grace E. King, and their illustrators.

And participatory culture eventually returned to the 'new' mass magazines with a vengeance. In 2012, the *Ladies' Home Journal* – the very same magazine that together with *Munsey's*, *McClure's*, and others had ushered in the demise of 19th-century participatory culture – announced that it would test a new "reader-produced content model" (Botelho 2012), in which readers interested in publishing their texts could upload them to the magazine's blog and website. "Our editors," publisher Diane Malloy explained, "will then cultivate, curate and edit [them]; and that writer, if chosen, will have the article printed in the magazine and they will get paid" (qtd. in Botelho). Should the *Ladies' Home Journal* ever need advice on how to deal with its readers-turned-writers, they may wish to take a look at the archives of *Scribner's/Century*.

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