


How textbook genres make readers, disciplines, nations: A qualitative and quantitative corpus approach

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- Goals
 - “American Literature” Anthology Con/texts
 - Rhetorical and corpus analysis of gender representation in American anthologies

Goals

- Of whole project
 - ▣ Name and analyze textbook apparatus texts as genres that do particular work and merit analysis

- In American Literature
 - ▣ Introduce new sites and methods for interrogating representation in American literature through text-internal and external corpus approach

American Literature Anthologies: Texts and Contexts

“American literature”

- Survey courses, often mandatory, introduce U.S. American literature from “start” to “finish”
- Function as mass, mandatory introduction to what matters in U.S. culture, schooling
- American literature curriculum on the university level (including anthologies) taken up by many other levels of schooling

Changes in thinking about “American” Literature, 1970-2009

- Nature of literature: values and processes influence its construction
 - Privilege and prejudice
 - Classrooms, teaching (Jay; Lauter; Graff)

- Nature of texts: What we read and write is enacted, enabled by multiple con/texts
 - Genres as typified rhetorical ways communicants come to recognize and act in all kinds of situations
 - Genres regulate, construct expectations and identities; are sites of constraint and choice
 - (Todorov, Miller, Bawarshi, Devitt, Frow, Swales)

American literature: a thing we make

- Attention to the constructedness of American literature
- Response: demands to “make it” better; i.e. make the canon more diverse
- More rarely: draw attention to, interrogate institutional and pedagogical processes, presentations

Pedagogical sites of such issues and changes

- American literature anthologies
 - Literature in a (shared, celebrated) national context and chronology
 - Pedagogical, institutional/ized textbooks
 - Sites of canon wars
- Genres that comprise anthologies
 - Anthology cover, title page (Genette's paratext)
 - **Editorial preface** - **Editorial period overviews**
 - Editorial author intros - "Literary" texts

Responses to textbooks

- Textbooks “deaden the academic study of almost anything”(Sale 195)
- They are “benevolently manipulative” toward students (Cain 564)
- They “trivialize” their content (Popken 26)
- Publishers and academic culture are discouraging (Gale and Gale; Olson)

Textbooks: What to do?

- Yet...
- Crucial for how American literature has been disseminated to perhaps its widest audience (Shumway)
- What to do?
- Embrace or dismiss them outright
- Throw them in the fire (Bleich)

Or...

- **Approach** these genres as opportunities for disciplinary, rhetorical, and canon analysis
- **Draw on** resources in genre and anthology studies, corpus linguistics
- **Respond to** work on textbooks in the sciences (Kuhn, Myers); and Biber et al, Bhatia's notion of text-internal and external approaches to genre

Norton and Heath Anthologies of American Literature

- Reflect, Construct canon debates
- Leading, model anthologies
 - ▣ **Size** (approximately 3200 pages, in editions of 2 volumes [until 2003] and 5 volumes [after 2003])
 - ▣ **Organization** (chronological-national-historical)
 - ▣ **Compilation** (by a general editor with a team of editors deemed to have period expertise)
 - ▣ general **Purpose** (typically in year-long undergraduate survey American literature courses)

The Heath

vs

the Norton

- “Revisionist”
- Goals:
- To “seek out the large number of lost, forgotten, or suppressed literary texts” that emerge from and show US diversity

- “Traditional”
- Goals:
- “Reflect innovation and tradition” of US Lit
- “Redress the long neglect of women writers” and “do justice” to contributions of black writers

Corpus and rhetorical analysis of the apparatus: An intervention

Corpus

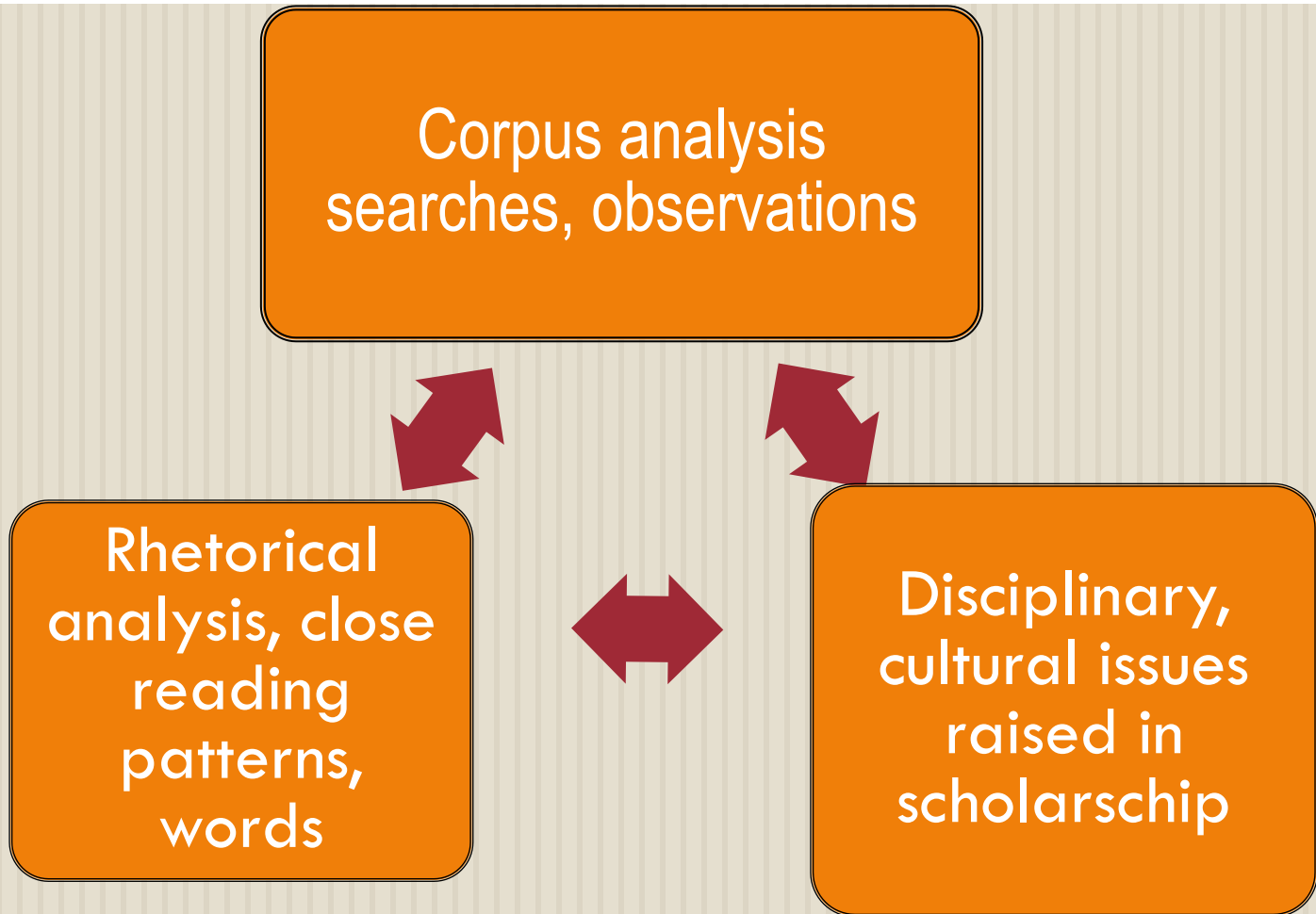
- Prefaces and period overviews of all editions
- Norton American Anthology (7 editions: 1979-2007)
- Heath American Anthology (6 editions: 1989-2009)
- 1,157,422 words

Analysis

- Text **internal** and **external** approach (Bhatia)
- Internal: discursive patterns and writer/reader relations
- External: generic norms and conventions and disciplinary culture; relevant “system of genres”(Bawarshi)

- Ex: Consideration of scholarship on the “add women and stir” model of canon expansion; examination of disciplinary, anthology claims of gender representation; consideration of patterns of gendered pro/nouns in anthologies

Analysis



Gendered nouns and pronouns in the Heath and the Norton

- Women, Men
- He, She
- Her, His/Him

Pronominal anaphora

- Repeated pronoun, uninterrupted by another noun, is a simple and cohesive way to elaborate in a text and is easily understood by text-readers (Bartkute, Rose)

Examples of pronominal anaphora

- When the newly unemployed Hawthorne remarked in "The Custom-House" preface to The Scarlet Letter that **his** Puritan ancestors would have been aghast at the thought that **he** was a mere "writer of storybooks," **he** was also speaking to **his** self-conscious sense that **he** was failing to live up to contemporary expectations of manly republican authorship (Norton 7th 1820-1865).
- Harriet Jacobs survives the rigors of nearly seven years hiding in an attic through the support of **her** family, which, much of the time, **she** can only hear (Heath 6th 1800-1865).

Heath Anthology all editions, all prefaces and period overviews (Total words: 777498)

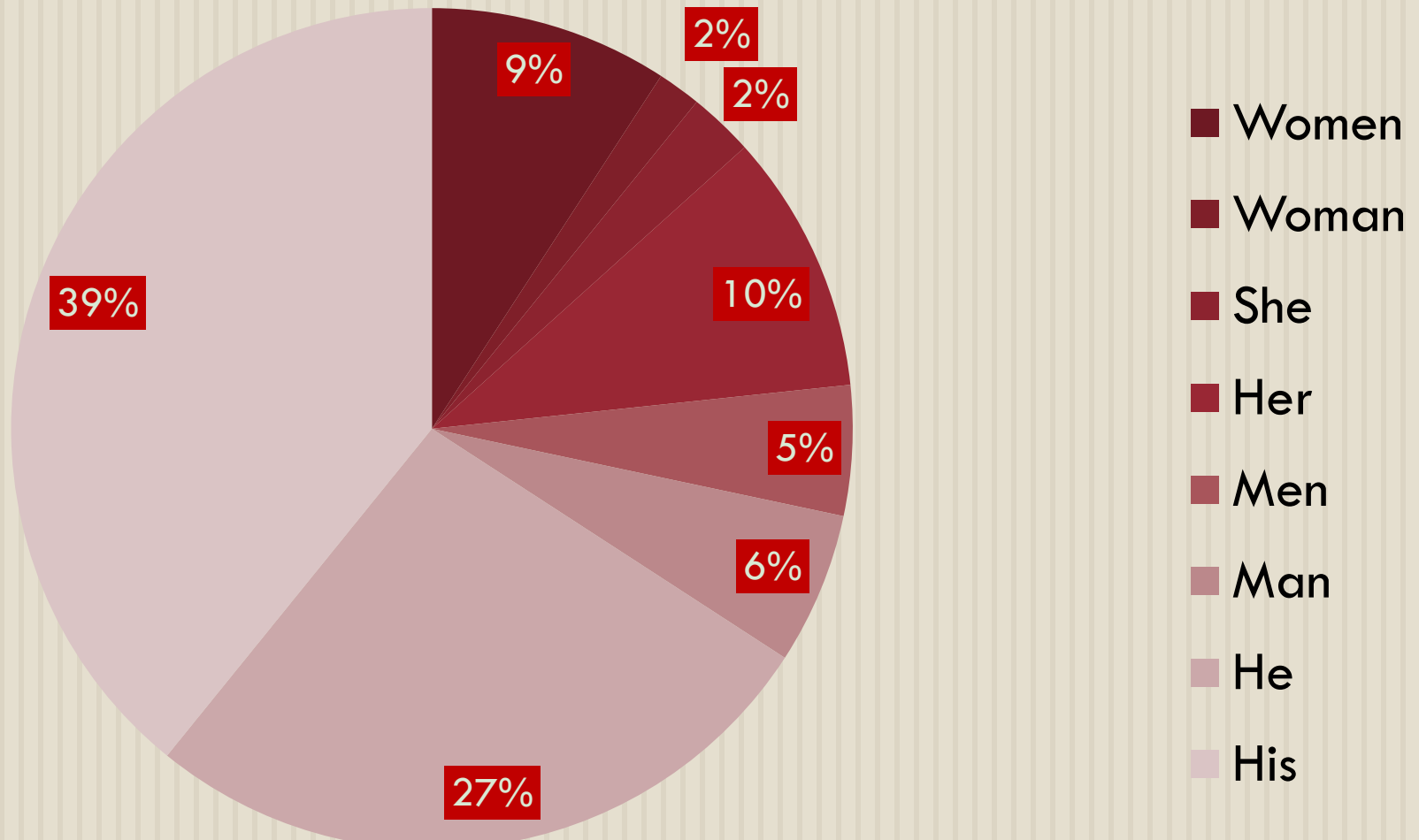
Word	Relative normalized frequency	Word	Relative normalized frequency
Women	29	Men	10
Woman	6	Man	7
She	6	He	24
Her	16	His	33

Norton anthology all editions, all prefaces and period overviews (Total words: 345893)

Word	Relative normalized frequency	Word	Relative normalized frequency
Women	11	Men	6
Woman	2	Man	7
She	3	He	32
Her	12	His	47

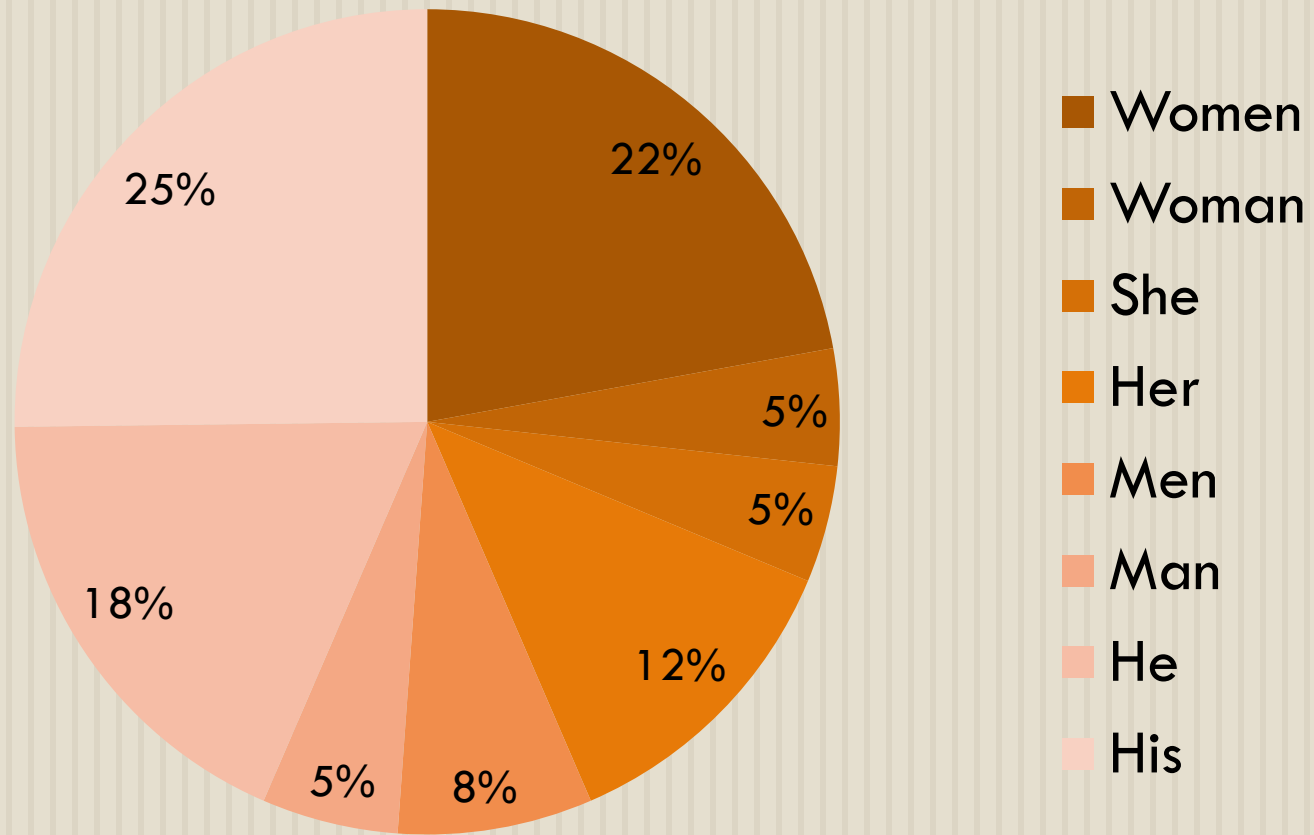
Norton: Distribution of gendered nouns and pronouns

(all editions, all prefaces and overviews)



Heath: Distribution of gendered nouns and pronouns

(all editions, all prefaces and overviews)



Contemporary overviews only

Heath 6th edition (2009)

Norton 7th edition (2007)

Volume E:

1945 to the present overview and subsections

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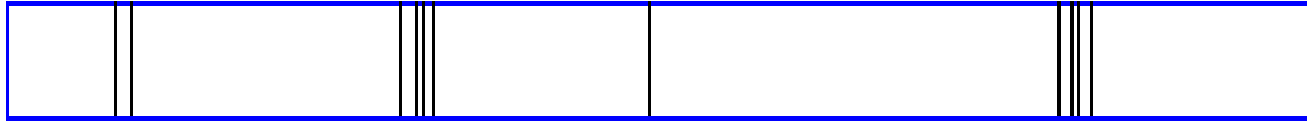


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Her (19 hits)

**Concordance Plots: 1945 – present
overviews in Norton and Heath**

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Women (29 hits)

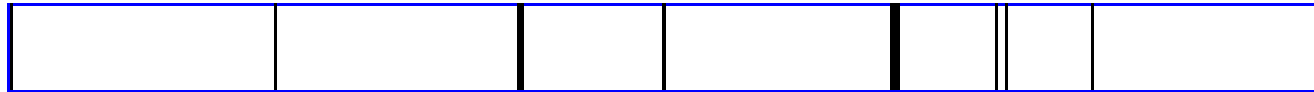
Concordance Plots: 1945 – present
overviews in Norton and Heath

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File Length (in chars) = 32704

HIT FILE: 4 FILE: Norton 7th ed Vol E subsections.txt



No. of Hits = 4
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His (41 hits)

Concordance Plots: 1945 – present
overviews in Norton and Heath

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HIT FILE: 3 FILE: Norton+7th+Edition+Volume+E+American+Literature+Since+1945.txt

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Men (7 hits)

Concordance Plots: 1945 – present
overviews in Norton and Heath

Concordance examples

Representing individuals

- Writers' influences and experiences: two most frequent nouns collocating with *his* and *her* are “life” and “work”
- “Just as *his* contemporaries in poetry and fiction were changing and questioning their forms, so Eugene O'Neill sought to refine *his*. *He* experimented...”
- “Zora Neale Hurston drew on *her* childhood memories of the all-black town of Eatonville, Florida, for much of *her* best-known fiction...” (Norton 7th 1914-1945 period overview; emphasis mine).

Representing groups

- "women organized to pursue their legal rights..."(Norton 7th), or "cultural norms for women"(Heath 6th)
- "In the United States, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, as the men and women who wrote..."(Heath 6th).
- Following the liberation achieved by the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s, the roles and expectations of American women in general had changed dramatically. The works of Anzaldúa, Morrison, and Walker are deeply concerned with this change, as is virtually every other female writer in this section.

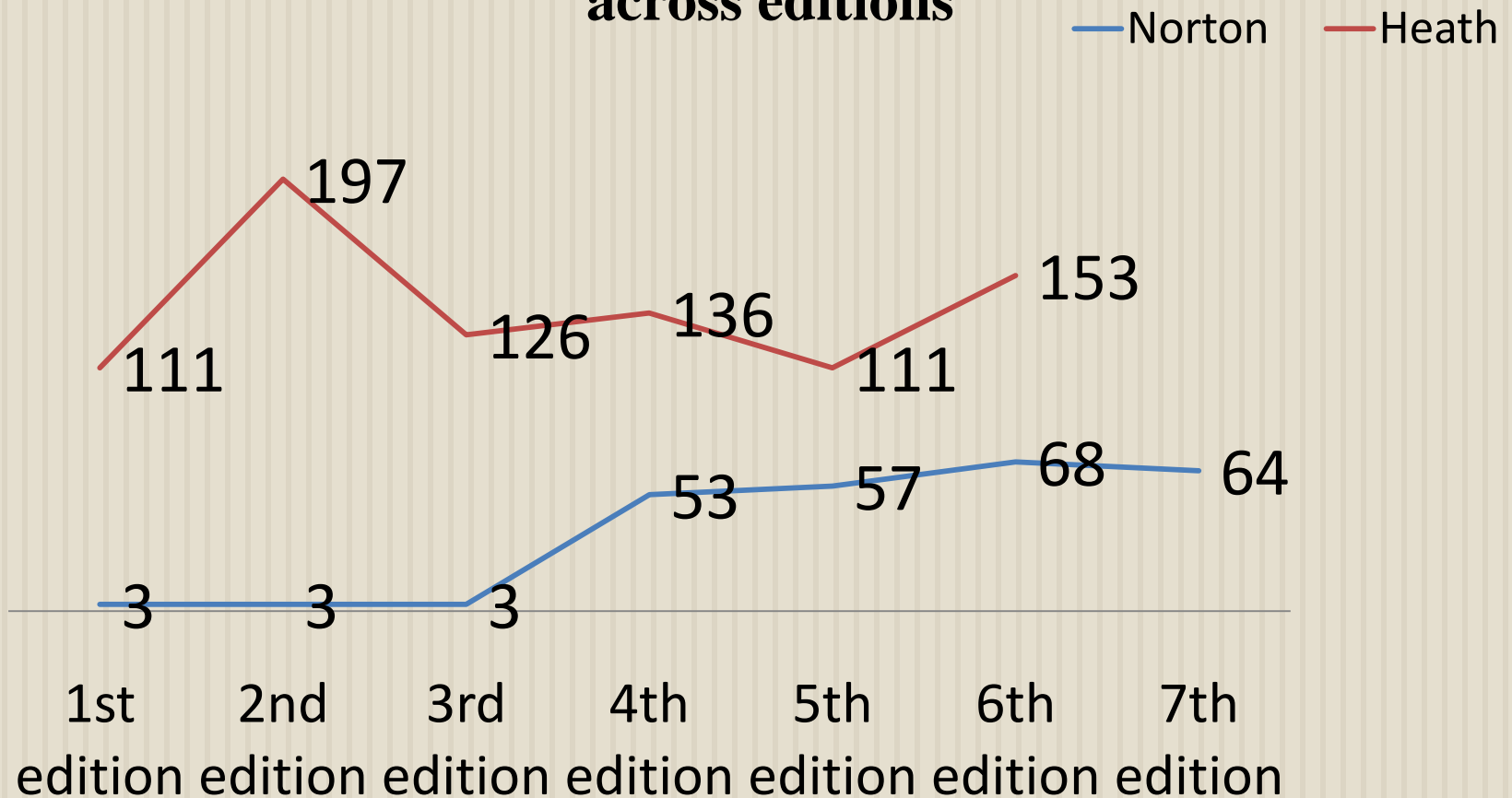
Significance:

Depth and breadth of coverage

- Males referenced more as individual figures of importance; Women discussed as a group of importance
- Across two anthologies, editions, and period overviews
- It is not enough to “include”; such patterns expose the need to interrogate the ways we “include” underrepresented groups

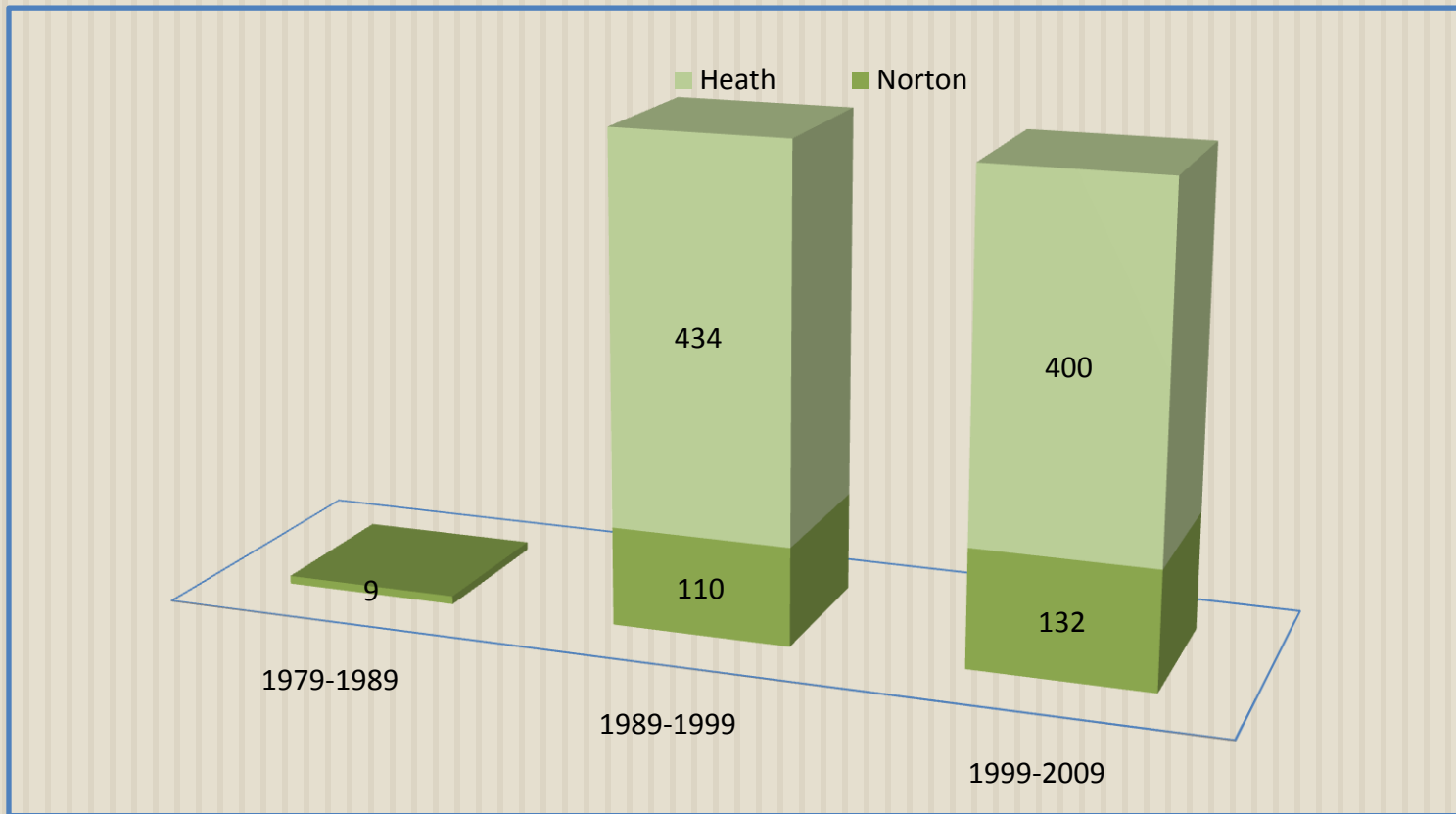
Additional example of explorations: Cultural/ethnic designations

**Appearances of words "Native/s" and "Indian/s"
across editions**



Cultural/ethnic designations

Appearances of words "Native/s" and "Indian/s" over time



But individual texts matter...

- Mary Rowlandson, who had been captured by the **Indians**, saw her captivity as a lesson in the life of a representative soul who once wished to experience affliction and later experienced it only too well. Her **Indian** captors were, to her, more than uncivilized savages; they were devils incarnate.
- [Edwards] spent his last years as a missionary to the **Indians** in Stockbridge, Massachusetts...
- American Indians function primarily as parts of the narratives of Anglo Americans

Conclusions

- Without critically assessing the content of promotional pedagogical materials, **including both quantitative and rhetorical language analysis**:
 - discursive patterns remain largely invisible though they contradict ostensible disciplinary and anthology goals re: redress/representation
 - American literature and the “canon” appear as *and are used as* stable, “objective” entities

Further questions

- Are “multicultural” textbooks are at all efficacious pedagogical tools for cultural and literature representation?
- Is “the canon” an effective organizing principal for multicultural literature, practices, and positions?
- Do digital anthologies offer an alternative?

Closing thoughts

- The modern university is expected to preserve, transmit, and honor our traditions, yet at the same time it is supposed to produce new knowledge, which means questioning received ideas and perpetually revising traditional ways of thinking.
~ Gerald Graff, *Beyond the Culture Wars*
- Such questioning should include new sites and methods for exploring representation in and of the many genres in our institutions and classrooms

Thank you

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