Origins and Orthodoxy: Anthologies of American Literature and American History

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how the new “multicultural phase” anthologies of American literature treat American history. Anthologies of American literature are more historical, more diverse, and more multidisciplinary than ever before, but they have over-extended themselves in both their historical and representational reach. They are not, despite their diversity and historicism, effective vehicles for promoting critical discussions of American history in the classroom.

Chapter One outlines a brief history of anthologies of American literature, while also introducing the terminology and methodology used in this study. Chapter Two explores the role of the headnote as a vehicle for American history in anthologies by focusing on headnotes to Abraham Lincoln in multiple anthologies. Chapter Three examines how anthologies frame Native American origin stories for their readers. Chapter Four focuses on the issues raised by anthologizing texts originally composed in Spanish, and Chapter Five argues for a transnational broadening of the “slavery theme” in anthologies to include Barbary captivity narratives and texts that reference Indian slavery.

INDEX WORDS: Anthologies of American Literature, Anthologies, Abraham Lincoln, Multiculturalism, Native American Origin Stories, Slave Literature, Literary History.
ORIGINS AND ORTHODOXY:
ANTHOLOGIES OF AMERICAN LITERATURE AND AMERICAN HISTORY

By

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INTRODUCTION

The genre of anthologies of American literature\(^1\) has attracted little scholarly attention, despite the fact that, as Joseph Csicsila notes in the opening of his own excellent book on the subject, “most scholars would agree that American literature as a field, American literature anthologies, and criticism of individual American authors have essentially evolved together since the early 1920s” (xv). Anthologies themselves are hardly ignored by the profession; scholars, critics, and literary historians often cite them for evidence when making arguments about who and what should be included in discussions of American literature, and books and articles about “the canon” find anthologies a useful source of evidence. Instructors of American literature treat them with grudging respect; everyone can pick their favorite from the handful they have on their bookshelves, and it wouldn’t be difficult to start a lively debate among colleagues over the competing virtues of the Norton and Heath anthologies of American literature. For better or worse, these textbooks have become indispensable to the profession of literary studies.

But despite the ubiquity of comprehensive anthologies, the profession has

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\(^1\)My study focuses on anthologies that cover the entire field of American literature, from the Colonial Period to the present, in one or two volumes.
mostly ignored their form and function. Anthologies are treated as receptacles for literary works—handheld libraries where literature can be scanned, read, and surveyed for specific pedagogical and scholarly purposes. Consequently, selection is most often the main criteria for discussing comprehensive anthologies of American literature.

Comprehensive anthologies of American literature have traditionally done far more than simply collect literary works for the college classroom in their 150-year history. They have also served as home libraries, patriotic primers for immigrant secondary school students, nationalistic histories for college students, and most recently, as aids in promoting multiculturalism in the academy. They are both cultural artifacts and dispensers of culture. They have served both as tools of reform and instruments of orthodoxy.

Anthologies of American literature are also profoundly historical. They arrange texts chronologically, beginning in the Colonial Period and terminating in the present. In their basic structure and organization, they closely shadow American history, periodizing literature according to major eras in American history like the Colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War. They prominently feature texts that explicitly document the religious, cultural, and political origins of the nation-state. The main consequence of all this historicism is that comprehensive anthologies like the Heath and Norton construct historical

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2 This historicity is less prevalent in the second half, or second volume, of these anthologies. They tend to become more belletristic in the twentieth century, focusing on genres like poetry and the short story that are associated with “literature for literature’s sake.” But even in the twentieth century, anthologies tend to organized themselves along historical lines, dividing the century into pre- and post-World War II sections, for example.
narratives in addition to collecting literary texts for use in the college classroom. Whose history is this? What does this history say about the origins, purpose, and basic characteristics of the United States and the people who live there? What is the ideological posture of this history? I have tried to answer each of these questions in this dissertation by focusing on a handful of literary historical texts and historical themes common to all the major comprehensive anthologies of American literature currently in use in college classrooms. Rather than address the selection of texts and authors in various anthologies as a means to support a canon, revised canon, or theory of canonicity, I have focused instead on how the form of these textbooks shapes their presentation of American history.

The influence of historicism on academic formulations of American literature is undeniable. Writing in Sewanee Review in April 1927, anthologist Franklyn B. Snyder of Northwestern University asks whether we should not frankly recognize the fact that American writers have been more successful in mirroring social and economic and political conditions than in creating works of art, and should so shape our courses as to make them courses in American civilization, reflected in American literature, and not primarily courses in American belles-lettres. (qtd. in Csicsila 6)

Snyder’s blunt assessment of the historical purpose of American literary study serves as a reminder that historical concerns are ever present in academic formulations of American literature, from Samuel Knapp’s seminal Lectures on
American Literature (1829), which is steeped in the history of the Colonial Era and the Early National Period, to the latest editions of the *Norton* and *Heath* anthologies of American literature, which are filled with texts that point to key moments or themes in American history: William Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*; selections from John Smith; observations by Columbus, Cortez, and Bartholome de las Casas; Abraham Lincoln’s “Second Inaugural Address”; Standing Bear’s “What I am Going to Tell You Here Will Take Me Until Dark,” Cochise’s “I am Alone,” and “The Cherokee Memorials”; and Meridel Lesueur’s “Women on the Breadlines,” to name just a few.

Most anthologies of American literature have tethered the evolution of American literature to the cultural or political evolution of the state, a linkage that has sometimes created tension between belleuristic and historical justifications for reading and studying literature. The New Critics, for example, were notoriously adverse to historicism as a category for reading and interpreting literature, and in a period that lasted from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s, they reacted against Snyder’s generation of “historiographic” anthologies by producing collections that emphasized “artistic excellence” over historical value (Csicsila 15). These anthologies sometimes featured as few as twenty-five authors—a handful were comprised of twelve or eight—giving particular weight to a short list of “aesthetic” writers that included Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, Melville, Whitman, Thoreau, Dickinson, Mark Twain, and Henry James (15). But for all its anti-historicism, New Criticism could not dehistoricize the anthology entirely. Even at the height of this anti-historicist
period, anthologies continued to organize themselves chronologically while featuring “historical” authors like William Bradford, Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Adams, and Abraham Lincoln. The historicist instinct could not be entirely extinguished.

New Criticism encouraged sharp distinctions between aesthetic and historical literature, but these divisions were often vague and difficult to support. In the introduction to their 1973 anthology *American Literature: The Makers and the Making*, Cleanth Brooks, R. W. B. Lewis, and Robert Penn Warren argued that the works in their anthology could be divided into “primary” and “secondary” literature:

> By primary literature we mean writing that was printed and transmitted as formal literary art—in this book mainly fiction and poetry, though we do include three plays. By secondary literature we mean writing that, however ‘artful,’ was regarded by the author as an instrument for achieving some extrinsic and nonliterary purpose—works such as essays, letters, travel writing, nature writing, diaries, philosophy, and history; or compositions that have basically survived by oral transmission or at least by reason of something like ‘folk consciousness.’ (xx)

Today, these distinctions seem rather arcane; indeed, in the era of New Historicism, it is nearly impossible to distinguish between “literary” and “nonliterary” works in anthologies. When the New Critical consensus finally dissolved, American literary discourse plunged headlong back to the future by embracing a kind of historicist restoration that returned to Snyder’s notion
that American literature is valuable for the window it provides into the social, economic, and political conditions of America. More diverse and less obviously nationalistic than previous historicist regimes of literary study, this restoration occurred under the new banners of multiculturalism, feminism, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies; though far more critical of “American Civilization” than its predecessors, this amalgam of historicist approaches to literary study has again made history a primary justification for reading and studying literature in the academy.

One of the consequences of this historicist realignment of the discipline is that literary historians must now approach their subject differently than the New Critics did. The belletristic definition of literature encourages a literary history that focuses on intellectual and artistic movements like Transcendentalism, Naturalism, and Modernism that have both generated literature and the categories for interpreting it, but this historical narrative is no longer sufficient to explain the body of works one finds in contemporary anthologies of American literature, which catalog an expansive and growing list of genres and textual forms. Browsing through the *Heath Anthology of American Literature, 5th Edition* (2006), for example, I am astounded by the variety of textual and oral expression represented in this voluminous production. Faced with this diversity, the literary historian wonders how it is possible to draw a boundary around a literary subject sufficient to historicize it. The familiar and well-rehearsed litany of major literary movements can no longer explain the origins of a literature that includes Zuni oral tales of
creation, journal entries from Columbus’s first voyage, a letter by Don Antonio de Otermin on the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, Thomas Morton’s observations of Native “manners & customs,” Jonathan Edwards’s “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” David Walker’s “Appeal,” and selections from Harriet Jacobs *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. The Zuni storyteller and the nineteenth-century Transcendentalist philosopher share almost no cultural or historical common ground except for the fact that late-twentieth-century anthologists and literary historians have identified them as exemplars of American literature.

This historical realignment of the profession raises other important questions as well. If literature is again valuable for its window into history, what vision of history will predominate? It is naïve to think that historicity flows naturally from a selection of texts, with each text generating its own discourse on its own historical moment. Literary historians, scholars, and anthologists are not neutral interpreters of American history; they are influenced by movements and intellectual schools of thought that shape their conception of history.

And finally, the discipline of literary studies faces questions about how it will handle nationalism. Since the late eighteenth century, literature has been associated with notions of national identity; this sense of literary nationalism survives even in the era of Multiculturalism and Postcolonial Studies, in the literature wing of the English department, which clings to nationalist models for structuring courses and departments, envisioning, for example, clear distinctions between American and British literatures and offering “core
“curriculum” survey courses on American literature that essentially reify well-circulated ideas about American national identity. Comprehensive anthologies like the *Norton* and *Heath* are produced for a profession that still believes that an “American literature” is possible; they have recently revised previous conceptions of national identity by adding more women and minorities to their author lists, but comprehensive anthologies of American literature still rely on a basic conceit of national identity. Is this newer, more multicultural national literary history “progressive” as many have claimed, or is it merely a renewed nationalism with a multicultural face? Does this new literary historical narrative, with its slave narratives and texts by Native American, Hispanic, black, and other marginalized writers, support the interests of the state or offer resistance to these interests? Will the multicultural canon be successful in its grand project to widen the definition of “American” in a full sense of that word, or will this new expanded canon simply champion a revised bourgeois nationalism that ultimately upholds middle-class values and works to ensure the survival of consumer capitalism? I have pursued each of these questions vigorously in this dissertation.

The good news about anthologies is that they are more historical, more diverse, and more multidisciplinary than ever before. In the last three decades, textbook companies have not only added dozens of texts by women, African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics that were previously excluded from these collections, they have also added significant new historical themes as well, such as the treatment of indigenous people in America and slavery.
These improvements have made anthologies more relevant for a more diverse student body. The bad news is that comprehensive anthologies have over-extended themselves in both their historical and representational reach, and they are not, despite their new historicism, effective vehicles for promoting critical discussions of American history in the classroom.

These problems stem mainly from the textual limitations of the anthology itself rather than any broad ideological biases held by their creators. For example, the textual apparatuses anthologies use to deliver history—the headnote and the section or period introduction—construct static, “tame” historical narratives that do not encourage debate or highlight alternative readings of history. I examine this problem in Chapter 2, “Abraham Lincoln: Challenging the ‘Headnote Magister’ in Anthologies,” finding that anthology headnotes tend to sanitize Lincoln by omitting biographical data that would complicate the portrayal of him as a “cautious emancipator.” The Lincoln headnotes I examined obfuscate on some of the less savory aspects of Lincoln’s life and presidency, such as his support for Negro colonization and his suspension of habeas corpus during the war.

Anthologies have made their Early American literature sections more multicultural and transnational by adding texts produced by Native Americans, and Spanish and French explorers, but sometimes the desire to “represent” previously marginalized groups through literature overextends the pedagogical capacity of anthologies of American literature. I explore these issues in my chapter on “Native American Origin Stories: Making Textual History the
Centerpiece,” demonstrating how anthologists have often pre-dated published origin stories attributed to indigenous people by several centuries in order to construct a pre-Columbian origin point for American literature in anthologies of American literature. I argue that this move succeeds in representing Native American identity before the arrival of Columbus, but fails to offer students an engaging or interesting encounter with these texts, or with the cultures that produced them.

I continue these speculations in Chapter 4, which argues that like Native American origin stories, the inclusion of Spanish colonial texts by Christopher Columbus and Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca in anthologies represents the outer limits of a more multicultural American literature. Columbus is part of a revised Early American literature that promises to be more diverse and more transnational than its predecessors, but anthologies fail to address the original language of these new texts. Consequently, “culture” is rendered in only the most superficial ways in anthologies that promise to more culturally diverse.

Modern anthologies of American literature also open a narrow “nationalistic” window into American history that basically respects the geographic integrity of the United States while ignoring important transnational dimensions of that history. Despite the addition of a few authors like Columbus and Olaudah Equiano who are supposed to make the anthology more transnational in scope, anthologies still trace the evolution of a unified, though pluralistic, nation-state. In my chapter on “The Slavery Theme,” I show how the portrait of slavery in most anthologies follows the contours of this
narrow nationalism, offering a “small picture” rather than transnational “Big Picture” perspective on slavery. In this chapter, I argue for a broader definition of slavery in anthologies, one that would cover the international dimensions of chattel slavery in the U.S. as well as other forms of bondage experienced by people in North America, most notably Indian slavery and “Barbary” captivity.

I have addressed each of these problems in this dissertation, hoping to challenge textbook companies to improve their treatment of American history in anthologies of American literature. Unlike others who write about anthologies, I have mostly avoided issues of selection, focusing instead on how selected texts are framed for publication in anthologies. The trouble with anthologies, from my perspective, is not what they choose to anthologize, but how they frame the texts they select. Wherever possible, I have suggested new ways to arrange texts and rewrite introductions, headnotes, and footnotes to improve them. Most of these suggestions can be found in the individual chapters.

My list of recommendations to textbook companies is short and mainly covers issues related to the “framing” of literary texts for publication:

1) Emphasize the original language of translated texts by rendering English and original language versions in a “side-by-side” format, using either facsimile or transliterated versions of the original text.

2) Add references to introductions and headnotes so the sources used to create the textual apparatus of anthologies are transparent, and therefore more useful to students conducting research.

3) Highlight the hybrid or cross-cultural dimension of works taken from the “oral tradition” by including textual histories that focus on the conditions under which the story passed from the oral tradition to written text.
4) Adopt a “Big Picture” view of slavery that would show more clearly the transnational and dimensions of slavery.

5) Offer alternatives to the chronological arrangement of American literature.

In each of my chapters, I also offer pedagogical solutions to the most glaring flaws and omissions in the historical material found in the major anthologies. Often, a good anthology can be made even better with the right supplementary material. I have written each chapter with the instructor in mind, hoping that they will find in my work a supplementary manual for teaching some of the same texts and authors I have found so interesting and challenging.
CHAPTER ONE

SPEAKING OF ANTHOLOGIES:

TERMINOLOGY, HISTORY, AND METHODOLOGY

One of the great challenges faced by anyone who hopes to speak of anthologies of American literature is how to describe them. These collections are at once straightforward and terribly complex. On one level, the anthology appears to be simply what its etymology suggests—“a gathering of flowers,” a collection of literary works similar to collections that have existed in one form or another since the Middle Ages. But the “literaryness” of anthologies often conceals a much more complex cluster of functions: Anthologies circulate a wide variety of non-literary discourses as well—on authorship, history, culture, academia, and the publishing industry. Anthologies are used most often in the literature classroom, but they are inherently interdisciplinary, which means they can, under the proper circumstances, inspire conversations about a wide variety of academic subjects. At the same time, a deceptive halo of totality surrounds the anthology, perhaps because we can hold it in our hands, like a bible or a dictionary, and because it is packaged with the promise of providing comprehensive coverage of its subject. “American literature” appears to live somewhere in the anthology’s pages, and many scholars treat anthologies as if they contain within them evidence of an essential core or “canon” of the
national literature. But as we peruse the title pages of comprehensive anthologies, we are aware of the highly subjective forces standing behind these textbooks—the contributions of individual scholars, editors, and writers—each with his own point of view—the collective will of an editorial board, and the dictates of the marketplace. The comprehensive anthology of American literature is thus always more than the sum of its literary works, but this sum is always more difficult to calculate than we might imagine.³

Two distinct discourses on comprehensive anthologies of American literature emerged in the twentieth century. The first is pragmatic rather than theoretical and arises from the structural limitations of the anthology as a classroom tool. This conversation, which has changed little in the past eighty years, treats the anthology as a mildly irritating and limited, but arguably indispensable, pedagogical tool. Writing in 1922, Philip Churchman laments: “The arguments against anthologies are familiar and obvious. Instead of an intense intimate friendship with the choicest flowers in the garden of literature, it is felt that they give us the bird’s-eye view from the far-off airship that takes in everything and penetrates nothing” (149). In 2004, renowned canon scholar and Heath General Editor Paul Lauter echoed Churchman’s sentiments, without reference to the zeppelin: “The usual rap against anthologies was that they were superficial, offering a hop, skip, and jump through literary history instead of providing in-depth views of truly great works” (19). Such apologetics

³The process of “selection” is itself a contentious one, where a table of contents is assembled only after intense argumentation, compromise, and negotiation that occurs behind the scenes.
are still commonplace, and much of the discourse on anthologies continues to revolve around the practical concerns hinted at by both Churchman and Lauter—the inability of anthologies to present longer works, the question of how well they “cover” the field, and their role in identifying a canon of American literature.  

A significant and potentially promising new discourse on anthologies emerged during the 1980s and 1990s, when canon scholars began to consult them in order to illuminate new social and cultural trends in literary studies and, by extension, the society and culture at large. The anthology was seen not only as an instrument for measuring the dimensions of an “expanding canon” but also as a window into the culturally contentious process of canonization itself. The anthology thus became a barometer for social, political, and cultural changes that presumably defined, and redefined, literature in the aftermath of the 1960s. Often, these trends were dramatically demonstrated by comparing contemporary anthologies with earlier editions from the 1950s and 1960s, but the methodology used to illustrate these changes was rather unsophisticated. Anthologies were used as source material for crudely mathematical attempts to quantify the illusory notion of an “expanding canon” or complex shifts in the underlying social order. In his 1990 essay “Defining the Canon,” for example, Harold Kolb uses the Norton’s girth as evidence that literary textbooks mirror

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an increased commitment to inclusion in the “society at large” over the past three decades: “[. . .] the Anthology has expanded to an extraordinary 4,951 pages, twice the size of the 1957 Tradition, thus making room for twenty-nine female and fourteen black authors” (38). Kolb and many others treated the “anthology,” the “canon,” and the representational capacity of American culture as nearly synonymous constructs, assuming that to literally measure one was the same as measuring the others. From this perspective, the rather dubious claim that the canon had “expanded” could be demonstrated by simply counting pages and authors in the increasingly voluminous popular anthologies of American literature.

Anthologies were also used to demonstrate the progress made by marginalized groups in literary historiography and discussions of canonicity. A 1981 “dialogue” between Judith Fetterley and Joan Schulz captures the rather humorous excesses of this approach:

Fetterley: [. . .] 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%.

Schultz: Well, “yes and no” as to whether we’ve come much distance. In various anthologies of the 60’s and early 70’s, women authors were given between 4% and 10% of the space, not much space but not very significantly less either.

Fetterley: Perhaps the raw numbers make the point even better than the percentages. For example, in the most recently published anthology,
Random House (1981), of 145 authors represented, only 28 are women.

Schulz: Four thousand two hundred pages of text . . . .

Fetterley: 295 of which are taken up with selections by women. (4-5)

The giddy rush to quantify supposed changes to the canon during the 1980s and 1990s obscures the complexity, and even futility, of such an enterprise. How, for instance, can we account for significant cultural differences among women authors by merely counting their names in various tables of contents? Surely Rita Dove and Mourning Dove are separated by a cultural divide that would erase many of the similitudes produced by their gender alone. Any attempt to shoehorn these two writers into the same box labeled “women” must immediately invite suspicion. Following a similar thread, one could argue that Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson share more cultural common ground than Fuller and Phillis Wheatley do. The mathematics of canon formation thus always yield numbers to support overly simplistic originating questions about the dimension and content of the canon, and the cultural identities represented by it.

Neither of the discourses I have just described sufficiently describes the complexity and dynamism of these collections, however. This insufficiency led me to rethink the ways in which anthologies are most often discussed. To this end, I have introduced some new language about anthologies, which I will present in this chapter: the comprehensive anthology of American literature, the literary historical object, author profiles, framing, the anthology timeline, and anthology themes.
The Comprehensive Anthology of American Literature

In this dissertation, I have focused exclusively on what I call the comprehensive anthology of American literature as a species of literary textbook. By comprehensive, I refer to anthologies that cover American literature from the Colonial or Revolutionary eras or earlier to the present. There are a myriad of other more specialized anthologies on the market, but I have ignored them because I am mainly interested in examining the relationship between American literature and American history. Some of these more narrowly focused anthologies are historical, but none of them packages American history as thoroughly as those that cover the entire field of American literature.

The bulk of my research examines the five most popular anthologies of American literature, which together comprise the bulk of the college and university market—The Norton, Heath, Bedford/St. Martin’s, Prentice Hall, and Longman anthologies. I studied all of the various versions and multiple editions of these collections, but I drew the bulk of my conclusions from the most recent editions of each of their two-volume or concise editions. I limited my focus in this way because I was interested in studying the relationship between anthologies and the American Literature survey class rather than specialized literature classes. The large five-volume editions available are more like textual libraries than discrete course textbooks; specialized classes are more likely to utilize one or two volumes of these libraries rather than the entire set.

I have focused on comprehensive anthologies because of their pedagogical
value in the present, but this genre of textbook has a history that stretches back into the nineteenth century and touches on less academic rationales for their existence. The first comprehensive anthology of American literature was Evert and George Duychinck’s often-discussed *Cyclopaedia of American Literature* (1855). Compiled mainly in the two years before it was published, the illustrated two-volume *Cyclopaedia* is remarkable for its breadth and scope, given the difficulties of travel and communication in mid-nineteenth-century America (Vanderbilt 77). Viewed from contemporary standards, the *Cyclopaedia* might best be described as a hybrid between an encyclopedia and anthology, interweaving illustrations and biographical notes with copious miscellany-style selections from its featured authors. Its publication was a landmark, both for its influence on future anthologists and literary historians.

Between the publication of the *Cyclopaedia* and the first specifically college-

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5 The comprehensive anthology of American literature evolved from more specialized anthologies in the early nineteenth century. “America from the beginning of the Republic has produced a steady stream of anthologies,” wrote scholar and anthologist Fred Lewis Pattee in a 1934 edition of *Colophon*. “No other nation has produced so many.” Perhaps because of its relative youth among nations, late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century America seemed eager to catalog, list, and collect its own writers, and the anthology, a textual form inherited from England, was one of the tools available for this project. Pattee lists 82 anthologies published between 1776 and 1861. The vast majority of these are poetry collections like *The Beauties of Poetry* (1791), *American Poems* (1793), and the *Columbian Muse* (1794), though a handful also combined poetry and prose. The earliest of these, *The American Museum, or Repository of Ancient and Modern Fugitive Pieces, &c. Prose and Poetical* was published in 12 volumes over six years beginning in 1787. Another, *The Class Book of American Literature*, published in 1826, featured 53 authors, including William Cullen Bryant, James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

6 Moses Coit Tyler, the author of *A History of American Literature During the Colonial Period, 1607-1765* (1878), studied the work carefully and was heavily indebted to its treatment of early American literature (Vanderbilt 82).

7 How should this extraordinary work be categorized? Kermit Vanderbilt refers to it using the word “cyclopaedia; more recently, writing in *Canons by Consensus*, Joseph Csicsila uses the word “anthology” to describe it.
level anthologies of the 1920s, publishers experimented with formats, hoping to find the right balance between literature, biography, and history. The 1870s and 1880s saw the publication of “handbooks” and “manuals” of American literature: In form and content, they often looked like slimmer versions of the Duyckincks’ masterpiece rather than the anthologies currently used in college classrooms. Charles Richardson’s 1885 American Literature, for example, takes a rather novel approach by dividing itself into two parts—the first, a history, the second, presenting the literature itself. Books from this period that are classified as literary histories often contain copious extracts from the literature, making them appear to straddle the line between history and anthology. Donald G. Mitchell’s American Lands and Letters, published by Scribner’s in 1899, interweaves photographs, etchings, facsimiles of Longfellow’s and Hawthorne’s handwriting, and excerpts from writers within individual prose chapters.

The form of modern comprehensive anthologies owes much to the poetry anthologies of the early nineteenth century. Samuel Kettel’s influential three-volume Specimens of American Poetry (1829), for example, was arranged in an anthology format that would be instantly recognized by the modern reader,

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8 One early version that perhaps served as a model for others was Joseph Gostwick’s Hand-book of American Literature, published in London in 1856, covered American literature back to 1620, offering discrete chapters on “poetry,” “prose-fiction,” “backwoods’ literature,” “history,” “biography,” “voyages and travels—natural history,” “theology and moral philosophy,” and “essays, reviews, and orations.” The Hand-book, like the Cyclopaedia, is a miscellany-style publication that mainly features biographical headnotes, plot summary, and excerpts from the literature assembled into a rambling, rather casual history of American literature. Other literary textbooks published during this period also followed this format as well. Notable among these is John Seely Hart’s Manuel of American Literature (1875), which is mostly comprised of excerpts from the literature and very few complete texts, with biographical headnotes dividing the sections, often on the same page.
with brief introductory headnotes followed by multiple selections from the author. There was little “historical” data in these collections; they focused primarily on the texts. Rufus Griswold’s *Poets and Poetry of America* (1846) and *Prose Writers of America* (1851), as well as Charles D. Cleveland’s *Compendium of American Literature* (1864) were indebted to this form. They present literary texts as the main attraction, organized chronologically on a timeline that terminates in the present, like the English poetry collections of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries.

The first market for comprehensive anthologies was commercial rather than academic. College-level curriculum did not begin to generate a significant market for anthologies until the 1890s (Vanderbilt 111). Griswold’s various anthologies sold vigorously to ordinary readers. Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Macky Hutchinson’s 1891 eleven-volume *Library of American Literature* was almost entirely targeted to the “home reader” market (Vanderbilt 111). At the turn of the century, the largest audience for anthologies of American literature may have been the nation’s high schools.9

Joseph Csicsila credits Fred Lewis Pattee’s *Century Readings for a Course in American Literature* (1919) with ushering in the “first phase” of the college-level anthology of American literature,10 but the “collection” anthology had already

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9 Evelyn Bibb, in her study titled “Anthologies of American Literature,” suggests that publishing companies did not begin to differentiate between textbooks for college as opposed to high school students until the 1920s.
10 Csicsila provides an excellent three-part rubric for differentiating between periods or “phases” of anthologies in the twentieth century. The first is the “historiographic phase,” which lasted from the 1920s through the 1940s and produced anthologies that focused predominantly on historical themes. In the “New Critical phase” that followed, anthologies narrowed their lists of authors while greatly expanding the number of texts selected to represent them. This period lasted from the late 1940s through the mid-1960s and was followed up by the current “multicultural phase,” which is still
established itself in the nation’s high schools before it was adopted by colleges and modified in the early twentieth.\textsuperscript{11} By 1920, numerous “compact” anthologies were circulating that covered American literature from the colonial period onwards. \textit{Readings from American Literature: A Textbook for Schools and Colleges} (1915) and \textit{Selections from American Literature} (1919) are but two examples of this species. These textbooks were often merely readers with little or no apparatus surrounding the texts, and though they are often dismissed or ignored by literary historians as lacking in critical sophistication, they are nevertheless an important ancestor of the modern college-level anthology of American literature. Before the 1920s, these anthologies were created for, and marketed to, both high school and college classrooms; they also share many features in common with the modern comprehensive anthology: their chronological arrangement of American literature, use of period sections, and even specific lists of authors are often remarkably similar to the vaunted and much-studied “college” anthologies that would follow them.

This complex history of the anthology suggests A) that the desire to catalog a national literature is broadly cultural rather than institutional, and B) that the form of the comprehensive anthology evolved to satisfy this cultural desire. When viewed from this perspective, rather than the narrowly institutional one that claims the anthology as a species of the academy, the comprehensive

\textsuperscript{11} Some historians have sought to create a clear division between the high school and college anthology. Evelyn Bibb identifies a “clear-cut differentiation between high school and college textbooks” beginning in the 1920s. In Canons by Consensus, Joseph Csicsila quotes Bibb and more or less supports this dividing line. Such distinctions are always artificial and reveal the historian’s institutional biases, which often dictate that the anthology be associated first with academia. It seems clear, however, that the comprehensive anthology of American literature evolved with the participation of multiple institutions—publishing companies, high schools, colleges, and universities.
anthology can be seen as multivalent vehicle for culture, history, and literature.

**The Literary Historical Object**

My study of comprehensive anthologies focuses mainly on a handful of *literary historical objects*—my term for works like Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address,” Jefferson’s “Declaration of Independence,” William Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*, John Smith’s *Generall History of Virginia, New England & the Summer Isles*, Christopher Columbus’s *Diario*, and “The Cherokee Memorials”—texts that document the history of the U.S. while also serving as exemplars of its literature. As I wrote earlier in the Introduction to this dissertation, scholarly definitions of American literature have always straddled the line between the literary and historical; my work highlights this line by focusing attention on a handful of writers and texts whose purpose in anthologies is obviously both literary and historical.

My use of the word “object” borrows from an older tendency for anthologies to refer to themselves, and their contents, using museum metaphors. Anthologies resemble museums at the etymological level. The word anthology is derived from the Greek word *anthologia*, which is itself a neologism that combines *anthos* [flower] with *logia* [collection]. The *anthologia* first denoted a collection of the “flowers” of verse. The word emerged in France in the eighteenth century, at a time when the act of collecting had achieved a rather new cultural status in Europe. Private natural history collections and the first
public museums began to appear in Europe and the U.S. in the second half of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth. Perhaps because of these collections, words like “repository,” “reliquary,” or “museum,” found usage as synonyms for collections of literary works, and texts were sometimes referred to as “specimens” or “relics.”

Because of this etymology, the museum hovers in the background of any attempt to define the anthology and its function. I was reminded of this fact recently in reading about the traveling exhibition titled “Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World,” which was touring the country in 2007. This exhibit is a movable feast of Franklinalia assembled to honor the tricentenary of Franklin’s birth—his favorite books, his cufflinks, his original printing equipment, the electric battery he built, and so on. In the final room of the exhibition, the original manuscript of Franklin’s Autobiography is reverently displayed under the imposing gaze of a large-scale version of Franklin’s famous bi-spectacles. In this final act of the exhibition, the Enlightenment thinker finally manifests through the great medium of Enlightenment thought—evidence that the text can, and often does, serve as a relic, even a sacred object, in American history-making.

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12 A short list of book and periodical titles from the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s reveals this tendency: Relics of Literature (1823); The Curious Book; or, literary relics (1826); The Canadian Magazine and Literary Repository. Vol VI. (1825); Saxon Relics. Featured in The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction (1833); The Museum of Foreign Literature and Science (1833); Readings in English Prose Literature; Containing Choice Specimens of the Works of the Best English Writers, From Lord Bacon to the Present Time with an Introductory Essay on the Progress of English Literature (1835); The Philadelphia Book; or, Specimens of Metropolitan Literature (1836); The Ladies’ Repository, and Gathering of the West: A Monthly Periodical Devoted to Literature and Religion (1845); Literature, Ancient and Modern, with Specimens (1845).
The fate of Franklin’s *Autobiography* in this modern museum setting brings to mind the role anthologies play in the manufacture of American history and culture. Roy Wagner, writing in his slim but insightful book *Invention of Culture* (1975) explains that museums metaphorize specimens and data by analyzing and preserving them, making them necessary to our own refinement although they belong to some other culture. The totem poles, Egyptian mummies, arrowheads, and other relics in our museums are “culture” in two senses: they are simultaneously products of their makers and of anthropology, which is “cultural” in a narrow sense. Because the medicine bundles, pots, blankets, and other items were elemental to the museum’s definition and reconstruction of their “cultures,” they came to have the same significance as the strategic relics that we seek to preserve: the first sewing machine, revolutionary war muskets, or Benjamin Franklin’s spectacles. The study of “primitives” had become a function of our invention of the past. (27-8)

The modern anthology of American literature similarly collects and arranges texts to construct the past, with its Native American “origin stories” at the head of the chronology; its valorization of the “Declaration of Independence,” Thomas Paine, and “The Gettysburg Address”; and its fugitive slave narratives testifying

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13 Paul Lauter, general editor of the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, recently wrote that “the anthology can be looked at, indeed indexed, as a vast museum of literary forms: chants, lyrics, sermons, narratives, dramas, chronicles, memoirs, tracts, songs, letters, political documents” (338).
to the horrors of slavery. On the surface level, these texts appear to be “stories” of the past, each vocalized by an independent author, each with its own perspective that can be neatly assigned to its authorial box and triangulated against other texts and authors, but this is only a surface illusion. Each of these texts, like Franklin’s *Autobiography*, signifies something greater than its author intended by virtue of its selection and arrangement in an anthology. The anthology, like the museum, gathers artifacts towards some greater act of cultural production. They “metamorphize” specimens in order to tell a story that is itself greater than the explicit goal of the exhibition. Franklin’s electric battery signifies much more than Franklin’s genius as an inventor—the entire Enlightenment project, with its “search for a better world,” is also on display. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan contains much more than paintings; it also reaches out to construct narratives of religion and culture and history by literally reconstructing building facades and medieval church naves and an ancient Egyptian temple, stone by stone. Anthologies similarly attempt to manufacture culture in their pages by assembling texts whose purpose is clearly historical as well as literary.

**Author Profiles and “Framing”**

Texts and authors alike can be classified as literary historical objects, because anthologies profile both. In order to discuss the authorial presence in anthologies, I sometimes refer to *author profiles* in this book. As I have already noted, anthologies are often treated according to the etymology of the word
itself—a gathering of flowers, a collection of literary works. This perspective makes the text the centerpiece of the anthology, while relegating headnotes, footnotes, and section introductions to a supporting role, barely worth mentioning and often ignored in discussions of anthologies. Anthologies are most often discussed in terms of their selection of texts with little attention given to how these texts are actually packaged for publication. But anthologies also shelve texts by author name, thus creating discrete chapters devoted to individual authors, who are profiled both through the selection of texts to represent them, and by various textual apparatuses like introductions, headnotes, and footnotes attached to these texts. This means that authorship is often the focus rather than the text.

The notion of “framing” a text or an author is essential to understanding how anthologies work. Another trip to the museum will hopefully illustrate my point: A few years ago, I toured an exhibit of “Picasso in Portraiture” at the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan with a friend. Reflecting on the event afterwards, my companion expressed amazement over how much her enjoyment of the exhibition depended on factors other than the paintings themselves—the lighting, the explanatory placards, the choice of display rooms, the chronological arrangement of the walk-through, the auspicious locale, the marketing, and the cultural mystique surrounding Picasso’s name. “If someone was selling postcard-sized images of the same paintings from the sidewalk,” she admitted, “I’d probably just keep walking.”

This admission points to the “slight of hand” required to display paintings
in a museum, or literary objects in an anthology. Anthologized texts are accompanied by textual apparatuses that frame them for the reader—headnotes above them and footnotes at the bottom of each page, as well as the less visible processes of editorial mediation required to extract this passage from an existing work and edit it for display in the anthology. Like the lighting, display glass, and hidden machinations of manuscript librarians in a museum, these apparatuses and “processes” are clearly present in and the around the “work.” When properly displayed and illuminated, the work becomes the focus of this exhibition and the apparatus fades into the background. But how does one show these forces at work? The museum metaphor is easily stretched thin when pressed to this duty. Additionally, there is a point past which the whole notion of the anthology as a “space” dissolves and must perhaps be replaced with a new metaphor entirely.¹⁴

Anthologies also frame authors for display. At first glance, the author’s name appears to simply shelve texts for easy access. This classification system makes sense, especially considering the key role of authorship as a defining concept in the Western discourse on literature. Most readers of anthologies, after all, will look for authors before they look for individual texts, in large part

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¹⁴While it is sometimes useful to call authors and texts “objects” or “specimens,” I am also aware of the limitations of these metaphors, especially in light of the recent poststructuralist revolution that followed the work of theorists like Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault. The museum metaphor works well when we want to explain how anthologies arrange texts and authors for display, but it fails to explain the fundamentally discursive nature of anthologies. The poststructuralist revolution challenges most of the traditional modes of speaking of anthologies. The move from “work to text” and the “death of the author”, for example, have unsettled the boundaries that once marked the limits of the literary work for many scholars and critics, while also raising important questions about how the author’s name functions within literature. Authors can only be “counted,” for example, if the counter has first accepted the conceit that authorship itself is a stable construct. And works of literature can only be clearly aligned with individual authors if we accept that these works possess an easily discernible coherence and unity. Additionally, authors and works can only be aligned with underlying identity groups if we entirely ignore the poststructuralist challenge to identity.
because teachers and students have been trained to regard authorship as a key concept in classifying literature. But the shelf metaphor is quite limited. By treating the text as the principal object on display in anthology, we perhaps miss the obvious point that authors are also on display through their works. Just as anthologies can be understood as museums for texts and genres, they can also be understood as reliquaries for authors, who are made manifest through a combination of textual apparatuses and selected writings.

Under the most pristine conditions, authorship is an “uneven” construct, but this unevenness is especially evident in the anthology, which surveys a wide spectrum of different kinds of authorship. The Norton, for example, features transcribed works, works in translation, and unauthored oral tales alongside works in English that satisfy all the standards of publishing traditionally associated with authorship. Seventeenth-century author Mary Rowlandson is listed in the table of contents of many anthologies—a writer about whom little is known—along with Li-Young Lee, a living author who was born in 1957 and still gives readings and interviews. Allen Ginsburg and Ernest Hemingway may be included as well, but so too is Cochise, the Apache chief who could not write in English and whose speech “I am Alone” was transcribed from memory by Henry Stuart Turrill; Black Elk, speaking through John Neirhardt; and the entire Cherokee Nation, “memorialized” in the Congressional Record. Each of these texts merits a listing in the table of contents, each with its own introduction, and to the extent possible, each is ascribed authorship within the anthology’s authorial classification system.
Because anthologies rely so heavily on this system, they must uphold authorship as a construct. But this illusion of stable authorship is a kind of inoculation against the underlying reality that ALL anthologized texts are the product of editorial mediation.

Anthologies thus present discourses on authors. A discourse makes its object real by narrowing the field through which it can be viewed. Readers know the anthologized author, for example, by that which was excluded rather than included under her name. Most of what any writer has written will also be excluded. Usually only a sliver of the author’s production will be included under his name, and most of what is known about the life of the author is left out as well. Only tiny pieces of the secondary literature find their way into introductions and footnotes; the rest lies on the cutting room floor or perhaps was never even considered to begin with. Even as a sign, the anthologized author’s name exists only partially within the confluence of corporate-academic power that stamped it in the anthology, living simultaneously in multiple locales—in academic discourse; in the anthology, or in multiple anthologies; on the internet; in the cultural iconosphere. In each of these environments, the author’s name possesses a cultural currency of its own, radiating its own light.

15 This seemingly counter-intuitive statement follows Foucault’s description of basic changes in human perception during the early period of the Enlightenment. He uses the microscope as a metaphor for these changes. The microscope seems to magnify that which is in its visible field, but Foucault argues that the microscope actually makes objects visible by excluding most of what appears in the field. In the field of biography, this same principle works through the author’s selection of events, facts, or quotations from the voluminous record of her subject’s life and work to represent the subject. In most cases, it would be impossible to publish everything that can be known about a person, so the biography is, like the view through a microscope, a significant narrowing of the field that allows a thing to come into clear focus. Just like the view through a microscope, the clarity of the image tends to obscure the act of exclusion that has made this clarity possible.
and energy into the anthology from the outside, but also radiating out from the anthology itself.

The act of excluding most of what can be known about the author thus produces a discourse on the author, a significant narrowing of the field of vision that allows us to apprehend her. These discourses are unique, but they also contain dimensions that are common to other anthologies, and some that are common to all anthologies. Imagine the individual author’s name as a narrow port through which discourse about the author flows. Most anthologies, for example, contain a “Henry David Thoreau” port that has been shaped to similar specifications; the Thoreau section nearly always features “Resistance to Civil Government” and recounts the story of his sojourn to Walden, and his night in a Concord jail. These features represent common discursive currents that can be traced across multiple anthologies currently in circulation, and in previously published anthologies dating back more than a century. The Thoreau “port” is therefore an inherited feature of the comprehensive anthology of American literature, a textual structure that also conveys a measurable content across generations.

The Timeline

The anthology timeline is an important term in my work that refers to the main structuring device in all comprehensive anthologies—the chronological ordering of authors and texts. In its most obvious denotation, a timeline is a graphic representation of the passage of time as a line, but in using this word, I
do not refer to the actual timelines featured in some anthologies; rather, I mean the timeline that is implicit in the table of contents of each of these anthologies, which can also be traced throughout the entire collection. In anthologies, a timeline is embedded beneath the more obvious function of listing authors and works in the table of contents, and less visibly, but more importantly, as the spine that holds the entire collection together. This “embedded” aspect allows the anthology timeline to hide just out of sight, tucked beneath the surface of the table of contents. Sometimes it may sound as if I am using timeline as a synonym for table of contents; I am not. The table of contents is an actual list of authors, texts, and sections always found at the beginning of the book; the timeline is a rubric that runs throughout the entire book but is most visible in the table of contents.

Timelines are vital to the study of anthologies because they are the most visible indicator of an anthology’s posture towards history. Imagine the anthology as a space—another museum perhaps—wherein texts have been arranged quite deliberatively to place the nation on display. Moving from one room to the next in the intended order, the visitor to this museum stops first in the Colonial section, gazing upon John Smith and Pocahontas, Plymouth Plantation, and Columbus meeting the Indians. The visitor listens to Indian origin stories and Puritan poetry. He hears Jonathan Edwards preach. Next, he moves on the Revolutionary War room, finding the words of Jefferson and Madison and Paine inscribed there. From here, he moves to the early nineteenth-century room, where he can trace the effects of slavery on the
nation and the march towards Civil War. In this way, anthologies guide readers through important periods in American history. The timeline is thus vital to understanding the relationship between American literature and American history in comprehensive anthologies.

The timeline entered anthologies during a crucial period in European history when nationalism was beginning to reshape the social order at the end of the eighteenth century. This was also the period when national literatures began to emerge in Europe. “Anthologies have been produced and published for centuries,” observes Julia Wright, “but the chronological arrangement of material with which we are now so familiar is a relatively recent development and one coincident with the establishment of national literatures” (334). Wright credits antiquarian Thomas Warton for pioneering an “evolutionary model” for arranging English poets in his three-volume *History of English Poetry*, published between 1774 and 1781. According to Warton, this arrangement charted “the progress of our national poetry, from a rude origin and obscure beginnings, to its perfection in a polished age” (qtd. in Wright 346); Warton’s rationale would be echoed by subsequent English anthologists like George Ellis (*Specimens of the Early English Poets* [1790]), Robert Southey (*Specimens of the Later English Poets* [1807]), Thomas Campbell (*Specimens of the British Poets* [1819]), and William Hazlitt (*Select Poets of Great Britain* [1825]). All of the comprehensive anthologies currently in use follow Warton’s “progressive” format, with some modifications which I will soon describe. One of the governing conceits of this Warton-style chronology is that literature gradually
becomes more belletristic as the timeline approaches the present moment. In comprehensive anthologies, this means that there is a default narrowing of the definition of American literature: The Colonial and Revolutionary periods offer a wide range of literary genres for review, but the post-World War II era is almost entirely dominated by fiction and poetry. These timelines thus subtly imply an evolution from “rude origins” to a more sophisticated tradition of belles-lettres. The national literary culture is thus shown to be improving itself over time, gradually extracting itself from documentary history.

Throughout this book, I argue that the timeline or chronological structure of anthologies opens them to conservative discourses on the origins and purpose of the state. More than any continuity linking comprehensive anthologies over the past 150 years, the timeline has tethered anthologies to the fate of the state. It has assured that academic literary studies did not isolate itself from nationalistic concerns. It has continued to lend American literature a progressivist glow that emanates from the culture inward to the academy, rather than the other way around. It has made literary history and national history partners in a perpetual dance. To put it more clearly, the timeline implicates our anthologies in nation building at the ideological level.

Comprehensive anthologies are never anarchistic; nor do they advance radical theories about the origins and purpose of the state. They always build on broadly popular, ideologically safe notions of American history.16 Most

16 One of the most important functions of all educational systems in the modern nation-state is to reify the state. Submission to the power of the state can only occur if the citizen is first made to believe that the state exists. Benedict
anthologies in the twentieth century, for example, periodize the colonial and revolutionary periods, thus reserving considerable space for texts that document the origins of the U.S. Period sections for the Civil War are less common, but most two-volume anthologies of American literature divide roughly in the 1860s, ending with the Transcendentalists and Civil War writers and picking up again with Realism and Naturalism in volume 2. This division has the subtle effect of marking a line between the old and new republics. In the second half of the century, many anthologies have used World War II as a period marker. These markers subtly ensure that conversations about literature do not stray too far from well-established, ideologically important periods in American history.

Periodization was streamlined though not entirely eradicated in many of the New Critical phase anthologies, with many popular anthologies doing away with it altogether. Multicultural phase anthologies, which are by contrast explicitly historical, restored the practice of using period markers, which can now be found in all the major comprehensive anthologies. By tethering the evolution of American literature so closely to key moments in the nation’s history, anthologies continue to invest themselves in constructing the history of the U.S.

Every timeline also has an origin point which can be read as an important

Anderson has described the collective sense of a shared national identity as an “imagined community” (qtd. in Baker 185). The modern-nation state is thus based on a powerful abstraction. Even under the most ideal circumstances, this abstract sense of community would never be self-evident to those who claimed to be members of it; it must forever be taught and performed in order for it to survive.
indicator of its posture towards history. In any discussion of timelines, origin points are vitally important. Michel Foucault hints at this in the first chapter of *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), where he says that ideas about evolution and development “make it possible to group a succession of dispersed events, to link them to one and the same organizing principle. . . to discover, already at work in each beginning, a principle of coherence and the outline of a future unity, to master time through a perpetually reversible relation between an origin and a term that are never given, but are always at work” (24). The chronological organization of material thus makes its beginning point a crucial site for determining the “outline of a future unity.” I use the term origin point to indicate this key position on the timeline, which means this spot can be located in the beginning of the table of contents and near the beginning of the book. Because origin points are such important indicators of an anthology’s posture towards history, changes to the origin point of a timeline are one of the most obvious indicators that an anthology has changed its basic historical posture. Origin points, like timelines, can be studied individually, across multiple editions of the same anthology, or across multiple anthologies. In this dissertation, I have focused on the third of these. Chapters 3 and 4 both focus on changes to the origin point of American literature in comprehensive anthologies. In doing so, I sometimes draw a composite portrait of timelines based on triangulating multiple anthology timelines. When I say, say for example, the “anthology timeline,” I am almost always referring to a collective portrait.
Themes and Discourses

In addition to profiling authors and texts, anthologies also highlight historical “themes.” In chapter 5 especially, I use the term slavery theme quite often, referring to an historical theme found in all of the anthologies I studied. All of the contemporary anthologies of American literature build historical themes. Sometimes these themes are explicitly laid out, like the Heath’s “Voices of Revolution and Nationalism” or the Bedford’s “Era of Reform” sections; most often, these themes are more subtle, manifesting in the selection of texts and in the biographical and historical material used to contextual them. In Chapter 5, I show how the slavery theme can be located in 1) the rather new practice of selection of slave narratives and other texts written by people who lived some part of their lives in slavery and reflected on the experience in their work; 2) the selection of texts by “canonical” writers that reflect their views on slavery; and 3) in the addition of explicit coverage of slavery in section introductions and headnotes. Taken together, these changes represent a new slavery theme in anthologies that can be isolated and studied.

Following themes in comprehensive anthologies requires an even further widening of the lens beyond their explicit literary purpose. The illusion of the anthology as a comprehensive collection of literary works is powerful, but we must nevertheless set this illusion aside if we hope to understand how anthologies really function. Roland Barthes offers perhaps the most compelling starting place for this kind of project in “From Work to Text.” Using the
language of semiology, he describes the text as “a stereographic plurality of its weave of signifiers” or a “vast stereophony” of signifiers that are woven together and connected to a wide array of the “anonymous, untraceable, and yet already said.” Unlike a “work,” the text cannot be “computed” as an object or measured in a hierarchy of value that distinguishes it as “good literature.” Furthermore, meaning is constantly deferred in the text while it is “closed” in the work. Put simply, Barthes is unwilling to mark the limits of a work at the physical boundary of the book itself. Literature exists on a plain of pure language that erases the culturally constructed notions of value that would elevate, say, Shakespeare’s Sonnet 12 from a recipe for Eggs Benedict of roughly the same length. Both the Sonnet and the recipe engage in a play of signifiers that are themselves bound by the vast field of signifiers that constitute all of language and by extension, culture itself.

Though I have never been convinced that semiology can substantially decode this vast field of signifiers, I do believe that Barthes’s basic distinction between work and text functions well as a metaphor for the relationship between the individual book and the larger scope of language and culture to which it is attached. This distinction between work and text is plainly manifested in comprehensive anthologies of American literature without further recourse to poststructuralist theory. Consider, for example, the work titled *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, a Slave, Written by Himself* in the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*. The *Norton* preserves the original prefaces, written by William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, while adding
a new Norton-approved editorial preface, written 150 years later. When studied through its various prefaces, Douglass’s words are wrapped within several rings of outside control that, when properly exposed through cross-section, reveal a history of mediation, as well as a variety of “interpretive communities” who have controlled the text for more than a century. Given the presence of these rings of mediation, is it clear where Douglass’s Narrative begins and ends? The Garrison and Phillips introductions were included in the original publication of the Narrative in 1845; indeed, without their imprimatur, it is doubtful that Douglass’s words would ever have achieved such wide circulation. Should these original prefaces be included in the delineation of this “work” of literature? Are they texts, metatexts, or paratexts? If they are included, perhaps the Norton’s introduction to the Narrative should be considered part of the text as well? Wherever one chooses to draw these lines, the boundaries of the Norton’s version of the Narrative are similarly complicated by the presence of numerous footnotes, each of which extends the meaning of words, defining and clarifying them for the modern reader. Viewed from this perspective, the Narrative is bound and penetrated by a wide variety of discourses that flow through it from the outside.

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17 I am referring here to Stanley Fish’s introduction of the concept in “Interpreting the Variorum,” wherein the author asks a compelling question: why will different readers execute the same interpretive strategy when faced with the ‘same text?’ The answer lies in the “interpretive community,” which is a group of readers who share a set of interpretive strategies. Fish is clear that these strategies encompass the group’s notion of how a text is written rather than read. In other words, an interpretive community is pre-programmed with a set of interpretations about what constitutes a text and tends to create that text as they read it. Douglass’s Narrative has been “created” (or recreated) in several interpretive communities—the Garrisonian Abolitionist community and more recently, the academic community that produces and uses the Norton.  

18 In the single-volume “Shorter version” of the Norton, the Narrative’s boundaries are further blurred by the fact that only five of the original eleven chapters are selected for inclusion.
Michel Foucault introduces a useful metaphor in *Archaeology of Knowledge* that I will modify and then apply to the anthology—his description of the book as a “node within a network” (23). Foucault lists the book as one of many discursive unities—or “the groupings that make history”—which he suggests must initially be taken at face value only so the critic can later “break them up and then to see whether they can be legitimately reformed; or whether other groupings should be made; to replace them in a more general space which, while dissipating their apparent familiarity, makes it possible to construct a theory of them” (24). I have found it useful to treat anthologies as discursive nodes through which scholars and historians can examine the various processes that “make” literature. Underlying the apparent “biblical” unity of the anthology is a potent form of heteroglossia—a convergence of discourses.

A slight modification of Foucault’s “node” metaphor might bring my subject more clearly into focus. Imagine the discourse on “American literature” as a thick cable emerging from this node that has drawn together circuits from many sources. The cable is itself a commingling and intertwining of discourses that includes critical and scholarly discourse as well as the authorial texts that constitute literature; publishing conventions and styles; non-literary academic...

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The nodal metaphor is instructive for two reasons: first, it allows one to study anthologies as more than the sum of their literary parts. By understanding that an anthology circulates discourse *through* it rather than merely collecting literary specimens in a room for examination, it is possible to look beneath the explicit rationale of editorial boards and marketing campaigns to the cultural forces for broader patterns. Suddenly, the anthology is a cacophony of competing voices and vying stratagems, full of ideological inconsistencies and cultural and historical messages perhaps not intended by the people who carefully compiled it. Second, the nodal metaphor allows one to see that while each anthology is unique, it also possesses an architecture that it shares in common with other anthologies. A node, after all, by definition is structural. So while discourse flows through it, certain features guide and direct these flows. In this model, the anthology is an inherited form that is continually refined and altered, but nevertheless preserves certain structural features—and the content embedded within them—from one generation to the next. The portals for its relays are already always in place, ready to receive the streams of discourse that must pass through the node.
discourses like history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and philosophy; corporate profit calculations and market research; and the individual tastes of various editors, academic and corporate. I could go on, of course. All of these “wires” in the bundle carry the currents that make literature visible as both a cultural construct and an object in temporal space. My copy of *Moby-Dick*, for example, is immediately recognizable as “literature” on my bookshelf beside Stephen King’s *The Stand* and J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* because it is properly illuminated by most of the currents within the bundle, but also because it was actually brought into being by other currents. Working together, these currents make literature by both drawing clear lines around the literary object *and* by actually producing the texts that are read as literature through a confluence of institutional power (namely the academy and the publishing industry). The anthology is a gathering point for these discourses, the node in the network.²⁰ Contained within it are the various relays and switches that must be engaged in order for the proper illumination of the literary object to occur.

This node does not merely define the literary object; it also shines illumination on culture and history, even identity. If an anthology gathers together multiple texts on slavery and discusses slavery in its various textual apparatuses, it has produced a discourse on slavery. Anthologies circulate

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²⁰ The complexity of this node should give any careful scholar pause. How does one map such a tangle of connections back to their antecedents within the vast cultural matrix behind it? The scope of this project is truly awesome and should inspire humility in the would-be canon scholar. Perhaps this is why conceits of authorship and textual determinacy have persisted in the discourse on anthologies: to allow for clear lessons to be drawn from these remarkably complex productions.
multi-disciplinary discourses on history and culture; this is especially true of modern comprehensive anthologies, which have added genres like the slave narrative, Indian captivity narrative, and Native American autobiography that connect to contemporary debates about slavery, racism, and the treatment of indigenous people in America. In many ways, these connections make the modern comprehensive anthology relevant and interesting to students in American literature survey classes. But these same connections also produce sometimes problematic discourses on American history and culture that are worthy of isolation and study. In this dissertation, I will focus on two of these new historical themes in anthologies, the Native American theme (Chapters 3 and 4) and the slavery theme (Chapter 5). I will show how these themes are shaped by textual selection and paratextual support from the editors who compile anthologies. I will also show how these themes might be improved by anthologies moving to a thematic rather than chronological arrangement of American literature.


CHAPTER TWO

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

CHALLENGING THE ‘HEADNOTE MAGISTER’ IN ANTHOLOGIES

Early in Peter Weir’s 1989 film Dead Poets Society, new English instructor Mr. Keating makes Neil, one of his students, read aloud from the course textbook on the first day of class—an introductory essay entitled “Understanding Poetry” by critic J. Evans Pritchard: “To fully understand poetry, we must first be fluent with its meter, rhyme and figures of speech, then ask two questions 1) How artfully has the objective of the poem been rendered and 2) How important is that objective?” While Neil reads on, describing a two-axis grid for plotting the poem’s perfection and its “importance,” Keating begins to diagram the rubric on the board and then stops suddenly. “Excrement,” he exclaims. “That’s what I think of Mr. J. Evans Pritchard. We’re not laying pipe. We’re talking about poetry.” Keating then orders his students to rip out the introductions to their poetry books, and after some initial discomfort, they begin gleefully to excise J. Evans Pritchard from their books forever.

Most thoughtful literature instructors can relate to this scene in some way. Literary textbooks and anthologies are filled with introductions, headnotes, footnotes, and other textual devices that mediate literature for students in
ways that are obviously insufficient. In the modern age, these devices have invaded literature classrooms like some species of aquatic crustacean introduced from a foreign ecosystem, attaching themselves to nearly every pedagogical literary text. As a consequence, our students will likely never read Melville’s “Bartleby the Scrivener” or Whitman’s “Song of Myself,” or Thoreau’s essay on “Civil Disobedience” or Louise Erdrich’s “Fleur” without encountering introductions, headnotes, and footnotes of some kind, and though they might not actually read these textual apparatuses, most students have already been constructed as passive learners by the culture of mediation that insists on appending them to every text in the first place.

In this chapter, I will show how one of these textual devices—the headnote—facilitates this passivity, by focusing on how the five most popular comprehensive anthologies of American literature profile Abraham Lincoln using headnotes. My purpose is simple: I hope to show that the headnote genre—so basic to the comprehensive anthology’s infrastructure—is a conservative vehicle for delivering American history. Headnotes circulate knowledge in a kind of academic cyclotron, pulling the safest, most institutionally entrenched ideas towards the center while sloughing off more radical theories and approaches. They do this by emphasizing biography—a genre that heavily narrativerizes and “streamlines” historical events—over other interpretive modes, and by adopting an encyclopedic posture and tone, which leaves little room for argument or debate. Because of these genre limitations, headnotes are inadequate to the task of offering students critical perspectives
on American history.

I have used Lincoln as my case study because he is the quintessential “literary historical object.” By this, I mean he is perhaps the best known of those anthologized writers who serve double duty as both exemplars of American literature and witnesses to, or makers of, American history. By studying the headnotes attached to Lincoln’s section in anthologies, we can easily see how a vitally important chapter in American history is presented to students taking courses in American literature.

Lincoln made his first appearances in anthologies and literary histories in the 1880s and 1890s. Charles Richardson, writing in American Literature, called the “Gettysburg Address” and “Second Inaugural” “pearls of American literature” (254) and quotes from both of them. Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Mackey Hutchinson’s eleven-volume Library of American Literature (1891) features fifteen pages of Lincoln’s writing: the Address at Cooper Institute, The “First Inaugural,” “The Emancipation Proclamation,” the “Gettysburg Address,” and “Second Inaugural.” The wave of new anthologies published in the first two decades of the twentieth century treated Lincoln as a standard American writer.\(^{21}\)

Lincoln was perfectly suited to the new generation of literary textbooks of the

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\(^{21}\) Readings from American Literature (1915), Readings in American Literature (1915), Three Centuries of American Poetry and Prose (1917), Fred Lewis Pattee’s Century Readings in American Literature (1919), and Selections from American Literature (1919) all feature oratory by Lincoln, and the “Gettysburg Address” appears in each of these collections. The trend continued into the 1920s and 1930s. The Literature of America, Volume Two begins with a chapter titled “Lincoln and the Civil War.” American Poetry and Prose (1925) features “The Gettysburg Address,” “Second Inaugural Address,” and “The Letter to Mrs. Bixby.” Henry Garland Bennett’s High School Reader American Literature (1935) presents The “Gettysburg Address” and “Second Inaugural.” The Oxford Anthology of American Literature (1938) lists Lincoln last in the first volume of its two-volume anthology.
period, which were explicitly patriotic and nationalistic, and assisted in general public education near the end of the nineteenth century in the U.S. by “building character and ensuring patriotism” (Baym 459). The “Nationalist School” of American historians like Hermann von Holst, James Schouler, and John Fiske helped turn Lincoln into a national hero.\(^\text{22}\) The cultural deification of Lincoln also began during this period—a process that would culminate in the opening of the Lincoln Memorial in 1922. Lincoln was emerging as a redeemer or Christ figure within the American civil religion—the savior of the nation and the unifier of North and South. Added to this general status of cultural icon was the fact that Lincoln’s prose was intimately associated with his status in the culture. The Gettysburg Address was already considered a masterpiece of oration by the turn of the century. John G. Nicolay and John Hay’s monumental ten-volume biography *Abraham Lincoln, A History*, published in 1890, renders the address in both facsimile and print form, introducing the latter version in this way:

> For then the president pronounced an address of dedication so pertinent, so brief yet so comprehensive, so terse yet so eloquent, linking the deeds of the present to the thoughts of the future, with simple words, in such living, original, yet exquisitely molded, maxim-like phrases that the best

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\(^{22}\) Holst glorified the new Union and unabashedly dubbed Lincoln its founding father. Hermann von Holst imagined the war a vast struggle between good and evil culminating in the Republican victory of 1860 (Joyce and Davis 170); James Schouler’s *History of the United States Under the Constitution* (1880) pitted a heroic Lincoln against the “gloomy despot” Jefferson Davis (Joyce and Davis 175); John Fiske identified Lincoln at the cutting edge of a progressive evolution from Cromwell and Chatham to “the continuation of the struggle for English Liberties on American soil” (Loewenberg 462).
critics have awarded it an unquestioned rank as one of the world’s masterpieces in rhetorical art. (202)

In 1909, William Jennings Bryan seems to echo Nicolay and Hay in the speech he delivered commemorating Lincoln’s birth date at the Springfield Arsenal:

“His Gettysburg speech is not surpassed, if equaled, in beauty, simplicity, force, and appropriateness by any speech of the same length of any language. It is the world’s model of eloquence, elegance, and condensation. He might safely rest his reputation as an orator on that speech alone” (423).

By the 1890s and 1900s, the “Gettysburg Address” had become an essential prop for representing Lincoln in the culture. By the turn of the century, Americans were accustomed to hearing and seeing the “Gettysburg Address” in conjunction with celebrations of Lincoln’s life and legacy—in statuary, eulogies, and public oratory.23 The speech is short—just 269 words—and easily reprinted in its entirety. Waldo W. Braden, writing in Building the Myth: Selected Speeches Memorializing Abraham Lincoln (1990) observes that many eulogies to Lincoln enshrined every word; the address was also recited in speeches and reprinted entirely in editorials and cartoons (20). Lincoln’s short speech eventually took on pseudo-religious properties, as it was memorialized in bronze at the National Cemetery in 1912, and then, ten years later, carved

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23 Lincoln's speech was not an instant success. Many historians have noted the ambivalent response it received in the press in the weeks and months after the event, and Lincoln historian Barry Schwartz writes in his article “The New Gettysburg Address: A Study of Illusion” that Lincoln’s contemporaries had no interest in memorializing the address. “Not one lithograph or statue of Lincoln at Gettysburg appeared during or after the Civil War,” he observes, until Bicknell’s “Lincoln at Gettysburg” painting was commissioned for the Centennial. This event, says Schwartz, was the first important commemoration of the speech (64).
into the walls of the Lincoln Memorial. Lincoln was thus easily “represented” in literary textbooks by this short speech.

By the turn of the century, the rough outlines of a Lincoln biography were emerging in literary textbooks. He was commonly depicted as a plain-talking autodidact who overcame his lack of formal education to soar to the heights of literary expression. This profile typically hails Lincoln for his concise yet elegant proletarian prose style and notes his dedicated reading of Shakespeare and the Bible as formative influences on his writing. This basic profile of Lincoln was standard by the 1920s and would echo in anthologies for the next eighty years.

This turn-of-the-century biography also presented Lincoln as an exemplar of democratic ideals in accord with his new cultural/historical status. Bliss Perry writing in The American Spirit in Literature: A Chronicle of Great Interpreters (1918) discovers in the “homely phrases of a frontier lawyer the

Interpreters (1918) discovers in the “homely phrases of a frontier lawyer the

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24 The pairing of the "Gettysburg Address" and the "Second Inaugural" is perhaps more difficult to trace. Both speeches are memorialized in the Lincoln Memorial (20), which suggests that by the early 1920s, they had already achieved iconic status. Some earlier evidence exists of the pairing. Richardson, writing in American Literature, called the "Gettysburg Address" and "Second Inaugural" “pearls of American literature” (254) and quotes from both of them.

25 This profile of Lincoln was already standard by the 1920s, and its main themes echoed in anthologies for the next eighty years. Most comprehensive anthologies published in the twentieth century, for example, have noted the homespun simplicity of Lincoln’s prose. The headnote to Lincoln in Three Centuries of American Prose (1917) observes: “Upon the English Bible and other masterpieces of English literature he formed a style of such directness, simplicity, terseness, and strength as is granted only to genius.” Masters of American Literature (1957) observes his “homely utterance” originating from his frontier upbringing (794). The American Tradition in Literature (1967) writes that he “spoke always from the heart of the people, with speech at once lofty and common” (1730-31). American Literature: The Makers and the Making (1973) claims Lincoln's style was based on “simple, bare, factual language, with imagery drawn from the world of that language” (1050). George McMichael's Anthology of American Literature (1997) calls Lincoln an “artist of the plain style . . . His inaugural addresses were both state papers and elegies that displayed the potency of simple eloquence, and in his 'Gettysburg Address' of only ten sentences and 272 words he created one of the celebrated speeches in the history of the world” (1980). More recently, The Heath praises both the “Gettysburg Address” and “Second Inaugural” for their “remarkable simplicity and clarity with which that rhetoric is fused with the self-educated lawyer's measured concern for justice in the affairs of men” (2021).
most perfect literary expression of the deeper spirit of his time” (226). Perry links Lincoln to the national spirit when he hails him as the “truest embodiment in language, as his life was the truest embodiment in action, of our national ideal” (Perry 226) and connects Lincoln’s literary artistry with his character by suggesting that his supremacy was “not so much in his skill in the manipulation of language, consummate as that was, but rather in those large elements of his nature which enabled him to perceive the true quality and ideal of American citizenship and its significance to the world”—his melancholy nature, his mysticism, and his “sense of religion” (Perry 231). Vernon Parrington’s 1927 Main Currents of American Thought hails Lincoln’s “homespun mind . . . sterling integrity of nature. . . instinctive democracy” as a product of the same “equalitarian West that bred Andrew Jackson” (152).

This tendency to link Lincoln to the national spirit echoed in anthologies throughout the twentieth century. The 1941 Democratic Spirit opines: “He has become the purest and noblest symbol of American democracy, almost as much because of what he said as what he did. . . To read him is to understand why Lincoln has become a hero and a god to the American people (404). The American Tradition in Literature (1967) claims Lincoln “spoke always from the heart of the people” (1730-31). Harper’s American Literature (1987) suggests: “It was Lincoln’s destiny to lead the disunited states through the fire of a civil war that established the Union as we know it. His addresses have passed beyond literature into the heritage, character, and soul of the nation” (2303). The 1989 edition of the Norton suggests a link between the destinies of Lincoln and the
nation as well: “Only by making himself independent and responsible could Lincoln be the Great Emancipator of others; only by surviving the test of civil war could the United States be the model and hope for democratic nations” (1494).

In the post-Civil Rights era, however, a new perspective on Lincoln’s legacy emerged in anthologies. Anthology headnotes continue to note Lincoln’s conciseness and brevity, and his evocation of Shakespeare and the Bible, but they seldom link Lincoln to divine destiny or call him a symbol of democracy anymore; instead, they emphasize his role as the cautious emancipator who ultimately had the nation’s best interests at heart. The Heath’s headnote, which is the longest and most detailed of the five contemporary anthologies I surveyed, acknowledges Lincoln’s missteps on the way to emancipation, but never doubts that his actions were driven by a radical egalitarian vision: “In his efforts to preserve the Union, he was willing to appease, and reluctant to offend, the powerful adherents of slavery—a posture which dictated a number of half-measures and dubious compromises. But the Union he envisioned was one in which slavery—and all artificial perpetuation of inequality among men—should have no lasting place” (2007-8). The Norton serves up a cautious emancipator who proceeds gradually in the right direction:

Lincoln committed himself to the elimination of slavery throughout the country by degrees. Initially, he wished only to contain it; then he saw that ‘a house divided against itself cannot stand,’ and he proceeded cautiously, with the Emancipation Proclamation issued in 1863; finally
he took the leading role in the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, which outlawed slavery everywhere and forever in the United States.

(758)
The *Bedford* fits Lincoln into an evolutionary model of an ever-expanding definition of “all men are created equal” from the Declaration of Independence. The introduction to its “American Contexts” section on the Civil War concedes that Lincoln went to war “not to end slavery but to preserve the union” but then, echoing popular historian Garry Wills,26 promises that “in his Gettysburg Address, Lincoln affirms that the war was being fought to bring about ‘a new birth of freedom,’ a fulfillment of the promise of the Declaration of Independence” (1353). This Lincoln modifies the profile of a prescient president of destiny who saves the union, but only slightly. Lincoln is still the Savior of the nation, but now his mission is propped by his role as the cautious emancipator rather than “Unifier.” Lincoln emerges as a cautious emancipator who compromises and delays, but always with the democratic end goal in sight.

This cautious emancipator profile is generally consistent with a post-Civil Rights interpretation of Lincoln’s legacy that imagines Lincoln as an ally of modern progressive democratic thought, racial tolerance, and the Civil Rights movement. In his recent historiography of the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln

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26 Wills, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning 1992 book *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*, suggests that the “Gettysburg Address” helped make the Declaration of Independence—which Lincoln echoes in the opening line of his speech—the founding document of the U.S., supplanting the Constitution while simultaneously dictating that the Constitution be read as a document promoting freedom and equality.
historian Barry Schwartz explains that in the 1960s, the speech began to be read as a document that legitimizes the fight for racial equality and makes the Declaration of Independence rather than the Constitution the primary founding document of the United States (“The New Gettysburg Address” 170-73). Garry Wills essentially sanctions this progressive democratic reading of Lincoln’s most famous speech in his Pulitzer Prize- and National Book Award-winning 1992 book *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*. In it, Wills suggests that the “Gettysburg Address” helped make the Declaration of Independence—which Lincoln echoes in the opening line of his speech—the founding document of the U.S., supplanting the Constitution while simultaneously dictating that the Constitution be read as a document promoting freedom and equality. In this view, Lincoln’s speech is instrumental in a progressive evolution of American democracy, which has steadily widened the definition of “men” in “all men are created equal.” By emphasizing Lincoln’s emancipatory activities in the headnotes, anthologists are essentially sanctioning an emancipatory reading of these speeches, one in which Lincoln is seen as instrumental in an expanding rights narrative of American history.

But this cautious emancipator profile is curiously silent on some basic facts about Lincoln that would potentially complicate it, most notably his actual views about race, exemplified by his unwavering support for “Negro Colonization.” The omission of this fact creates a sanitized version of Lincoln that is perfectly attenuated for the modern college classroom—the bourgeois Lincoln-as-icon, safe for consumption by a middle-class student, Black, White,
or Brown. He is neither too much the abolitionist, nor too little. From the perspective of many modern people, Lincoln cannot function as Emancipator if he is also a racist. In the world of the comprehensive anthology of American literature, the Lincoln who imagines freedom and equality for all simply cannot coexist with the Lincoln who believed that Blacks and Whites were fundamentally not equal or deserving of the same place in the social order.

**The “Ideology” of Headnotes**

If modern comprehensive anthologies sanitize Lincoln for its readers, the headnote genre is largely to blame. Headnotes possess an institutional ideological bent towards oversimplification that transcends the specific theoretical, ideological, or political bias of the people who write them. This “ideology of the headnote” is worthy of investigation because it permeates nearly every comprehensive anthology published in the 20th century, and it profoundly shapes the way literature is taught in college-level literature classrooms.

The most cogent descriptions of how headnotes perform an “ideological” function comes from Vincent Leitch’s short article in the 2000 edition of *symploke*. Leitch, the general editor of the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, describes the headnote genre:

A neighbor of the character sketch and the case study as well as the short essay, the headnote aims to set up for the uninformed student-reader a reading experience to come. In seeking to direct the reader, it
typically links the text(s)-to-come with the author (a biography), her or his other work (an oeuvre), and a tradition or set of texts and topics defining a field of inquiry (a canon). The headnote tends to foreground what is “common knowledge” to the specialist, using a normative prose marked by accessibility, relative simplicity, impartiality, that is, a certain kind of invisible ventriloquized style. It is part of a project of enlightenment, clarification, and demystification. (178)

This “character sketch” is similar to the “allographic preface” French theorist Gerard Genette describes in his 1985 book *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Genette suggests that the definition of text must be extended to include the various publishing features, flourishes, and addenda that often accompany the actual written words of an author. This category of “paratexts” includes the author’s name, the format of a book, titles, dedications, inscriptions, epigraphs, prefaces and introductions, intertitles, and notes. Genette defines the paratext as “an ‘undefined zone’ between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world’s discourse about the text) Indeed, this fringe [is] always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author . . . .” (2)

One of the paratexts Genette describes is the allographic preface, which is, very simply, a preface not written by the author of the text. He finds that the allographic preface manifests two principle functions: 1) informational,
focusing on the history and evolution of the text, biography, and the author’s overall oeuvre, and 2) “recommending” the text to readers (263-67).

The author of the headnote, like the author of the allographic preface, stands at a distance from the text, points to it as worthy of attention by the reader, and then provides the textual history, biographical data, and relevant information about genre and historical context. He essentially frames the text for the reader. This framing brings certain aspects of the text into clear view for the reader, but it also limits what can be said about the text; such is the dichotomous function of any frame.

In the case of the headnote, this framing tends to domesticate its subject. Continuing in the same passage from symploke, Leitch observes:

As everyone knows, students sometimes settle for the headnote, never arriving at the selection. Among the salient ideological elements of headnotes, therefore, are: they are rooted in personifications/authors’ lives; they are substitutes/“supplements” for reading; they rely on constraining historical and textual contexts/frameworks. These generic features risk shutting down rather than opening up texts. Moreover, in projecting a retrospective tone and a sense of mastery, headnotes risk taming the struggle and conflict characteristic of cultural productions in their time. Perennializing problems has a way of dehistoricizing and tranquilizing them. By design, textbook and anthology headnotes quickly package and contain information, valuing control, speed, organization, clarity--values especially preeminent in today’s market-oriented societies.
So while the headnote is a humble genre fulfilling a minor service function, it does cooperate with and further some larger ideological goals current in contemporary times. (179)

Headnotes can close off or “shut down” texts in a variety of ways, but the most obvious is through the process of “personification” Leitch alludes to. Biography narrativizes events through the life of an individual. It essentially creates a compelling narrative that closes around one life. All historical discourse, as Roland Barthes suggests in his essay “The Discourse on History,” is “a form of ideological elaboration, or to put it more precisely, an imaginary elaboration” (16). The historian is always aiming to “fill out” history, observes Barthes, to interpret the broader significance of facts and events—the “meaning” of history. “The historian is not so much a collector of facts as a collector and relater of signifiers; that is to say, he organizes them with the purpose of establishing positive meaning and filling the vacuum of pure, meaningless series” (16). This general imperative of historical discourse is especially relevant to biographical discourse, which performs the same search for meaning in the life of an individual. Biographies always reach for meaning, for a sensible interpretation of the events that constitute the subject’s life. In order to achieve this meaning, however, they tend to streamline the subject’s life, sanding off the rough edges and clipping off the various branches that would complicate the predominant “interpretation” of events.

This basic principle of biographical discourse can be observed in all of the Lincoln headnotes in the various comprehensive anthologies I surveyed for this
project. The cautious emancipator profile I mentioned earlier is only possible if certain facts about Lincoln’s life are excluded. The most glaring and perhaps unforgivable of these exclusions is Lincoln’s actual attitude about race. The anthologized Lincoln is always depicted as the primary instrument of emancipation, but he is neither a racist nor a racially enlightened man in these portraits. All of the headnotes in the five major anthologies I surveyed mention the Emancipation Proclamation, for example, but none of them cover his conviction that the races should live separately or his active support for Black emigration to Liberia, Haiti, and Panama. This exclusion makes possible the positive statement of Lincoln’s triumphant emancipatory role in American history without any of the moral complexity that makes Lincoln such an interesting historical figure.

Lincoln clearly believed that Blacks were inferior. He was an unwavering supporter of Negro Colonization and is on record as early as 1852 praising The American Colonization Society’s plans to repatriate blacks back to Africa. In the debates with Steven Douglas, Lincoln said: “If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do as to the existing institution [of slavery]. My first impulse would be to free all the slaves and send them to Liberia—to their own native land” (qtd. in Wesley 9). Lincoln then speculates that this plan may be unworkable and asks: “What then? Free them all and keep them among us.

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27 The American Colonization Society was founded in 1816 in part as a response to the increasing number of manumitted slaves living in the North and South, and many Americans supported its efforts, including prominent politicians like James Madison and Henry Clay, who both served as presidents of the Society.Blacks were generally unenthusiastic about the prospect of traveling across the ocean to start from scratch in a foreign country, and by 1830, only 1,162 free Blacks had emigrated to Liberia (418). This tepid response to the Liberia project did not stop White politicians from supporting emigration, and new plans were proposed right up to the end of the Civil War.
as underlings? Is it quite certain that this betters their condition? . . . What next? Free them and make politically and socially our equals? My own feelings will not admit of this, and if mine would, we will know that those of the great mass of Whites will not”28 (9). Lincoln clearly found the idea of a multiracial society personally distasteful and politically untenable.

Lincoln did not evolve out of these beliefs over the next decade. He actively supported several failed emigration plans during his administration. In his first annual message, he “strongly urged” the Congress to draft a plan for Negro colonization, and during his Presidency, considering Haiti29 and the “American Isthmus” (Panama) as possible sites for this project; he also apparently considered creating a Negro colony in Texas and “a settlement zone for Blacks” in Florida (419).

Indeed, when Lincoln stood on the podium at Gettysburg in November of 1863, the most ambitious of these emigration schemes was slowly unraveling in Panama. During the Buchanan Administration, the Chiriqui Improvement Company had obtained land around Chiriqui Bay in present-day Panama hoping to contract with the U.S. Government to build a naval base in the region (Scheips 418 - 20). Lincoln learned of this contract in early 1861 and over the next year, several plans were floated for exploiting the land. One of

28 Lincoln's support for Negro colonization was hardly remarkable; indeed, historian Paul Scheips describes Lincoln's position as “middle-of-the-road and not uncommon” for the time (418).
29 The Haiti plan went forward in April of 1863, with between 411-435 contrabands at Fortress Monroe in shipped to A'Vache, an island off the coast of Haiti. Twenty to thirty died en route of an infectious disease, and when they arrived, the promised houses and hospitals had not been built (19). Hearing rumors of the terrible conditions on the island, Lincoln ordered the secretary of War to send a ship to fetch the colonists who wished to return. Despite these false starts and failures, Lincoln continued to express support for colonization through 1865 (20).
these, proposed by the company’s main shareholder, Ambrose Thompson, proposed that coal be mined in the region and sold to the U.S. Navy (420). In the course of these deliberations, Congress passed a bill supporting the voluntary colonization of free Blacks living in Washington D.C. as well as slaves freed by the military under the provisions of the Confiscation Act. Plans were drawn up to settle 500 free Blacks on up to 100,000 acres in Panama, then a part of Columbia (Scheips 433). If the plan went forward, Thompson would have received $100,000--$1 per acre for the first 100,000 acres parceled out to the new émigrés, plus a $50,000 advance to develop coal mining in the region (Scheips 433).

The project quickly faltered, however, in negotiations with Central American governments, who were suspicious of U.S. intentions. As it turns out, their reservations were well founded. In letters written to the President advocating the Chiriqui colonization project, Secretary of the Interior Caleb Smith argued that pursuing the contract with Thompson would “secure a supply of good coal at a cheap rate” while simultaneously expanding American influence in the region. Smith observed that “the settlement of a colony of colored Americans, whose sympathies would naturally be with this country, would ultimately establish there such an influence as would most probably secure to us the absolute control of the country” (qtd. in Scheips 426). Negro colonization of Panama was, from the outset, implicated in profiteering and expansionist foreign policy as much as it was a “solution” to the presence of so many free Blacks in Washington D.C.
This story of racism, profiteering, and imperialism, even briefly mentioned in a headnote, would entirely destabilize the cautious emancipator portrait of Lincoln. Without knowing what Lincoln actually thought about race, it is possible to still imagine him as that grand figure in the evolutionary “expanding rights” interpretation of American history in which the meaning of “all men are created equal” is gradually broadened to include people originally excluded in this vision of equality—women, blacks, other ethnic minorities, gays, etc. *This* Lincoln advances the expansion of those rights; he is an important figure in a teleological reading of American history that looks back from the perspective of the post-Civil Rights world and sees Lincoln as the grandfather of the relatively more free society we inhabit.

Once we add Lincoln’s support for Negro colonization to this picture, however, this democratic progressive portrait falls apart. The evidence of Lincoln’s racist attitudes makes another teleology possible, one in which the nation resists granting its black citizens basic human rights for a century after the close of the Civil War because, like Lincoln, many white Americans clung to racist beliefs about the basic inferiority of people of African descent long after the Civil War ended slavery. Lincoln was the “Great Emancipator” in practical terms, but he also embodies the cultural attitudes that fueled a century of Apartheid in the U.S. after the war—the inability of a racist society to grant equal rights under both law and custom to freed slaves and their descendents. Indeed, Lincoln’s support for Negro colonization prompted an visceral response by some nineteenth-century African American critics like Frederick Douglass,
who observes that Lincoln

was not, in the fullest sense of the word, either our man or our model. In
his interests, in his associations, in his habits of thought, and in his
prejudices, he was a White man. He was predominantly the White man’s
President, entirely devoted to the welfare of White men. He was ready and
willing at any time during the first years of his administration to deny,
postpone, and sacrifice the rights of humanity in the colored people to
promote the welfare of the White people of this country. (Douglass,
Speech 180)

Lincoln also denied and postponed basic Constitutional protections from
search, seizure, and imprisonment, another unsavory fact omitted by the all
the anthologies I surveyed. Lincoln’s suspension of habeas corpus—a legal
principle that requires a person who is arrested be brought before a court to
determine whether the detention is legal\(^{30}\)—was, during the war, one of his
most controversial acts. In the period before the Civil War, the weight of legal
opinion held that only the Congress had the power to suspend *habeas corpus*
(S.G.F. 458). The U.S. Congress did in fact suspend the writ on March 3, 1863
by granting the President discretionary power to disregard it for the duration of
the rebellion (12 U.S. Statutes at Large, 755), but for two years before this vote,
Lincoln had been systematically ignoring the writ anyway by sending soldiers

\(^{30}\) Habeas corpus is one of the pillars of the American legal system. In practice, a writ of *habeas corpus* can be issued by a
judge freeing an imprisoned person because if the judge determines that the prisoner has been unlawfully detained. The
First Article of the U.S. Constitution, which covers Legislative power, offers a single line on the matter of *habeas corpus*:
“The privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in cases of rebellion or invasion the
public safety may require it” (S. G. F. 35).
to arrest people who were suspected of supporting the rebellion and by disregarding legal challenges to these actions.31 Fears that Maryland would secede fueled many of the initial arrests (Fisher 457). The Mayor of Baltimore, members of the Maryland legislature, and newspaper editors were imprisoned in Fort McHenry and Fort Warren (Fisher 457). On August 8, 1862, Lincoln expanded the geographic scope of these arrests by empowering federal marshals and police chiefs to detain anyone who spoke out against volunteer enlistments or who gave “aid and comfort” to the enemy (Fisher 457). By the end of the war, at least 14,401 civilians had been arrested by Lincoln’s administration (Neely 8).

Anthology headnotes never mention this fascinating feature of Lincoln’s presidency either, because they were written to introduce two texts that are virtually synonymous with a progressivist democratic vision of American society. Consequently, the selection of these texts may determine, to a large extent, the range of acceptable biography that anthologists choose to attach to them. As I have already noted, there is little variation between anthologies regarding the essential details compiled to create these biographical profiles, which seems to suggest a level of agreement among literary professionals about how to treat Lincoln’s life and legacy. What is said about Lincoln in these

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31 The often-cited case of John Merryman, a Maryland resident who was accused of leading a group of secessionists in destroying railroads and bridges in order to prevent troops from reaching Washington was the first to be reviewed by a judge. Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney issued a habeas corpus in the case, but General George Cadwallader, commander of Fort McHenry where Merryman was being held, refused to honor it, arguing that he was acting under Presidential orders. Taney filed an opinion that denied the President possessed such powers and reaffirmed that the Congress alone could suspend the writ (S.G.F. 457). Lincoln ignored the opinion and continued to use the military to make arrests.
headnotes is presented in an authoritative tone that resists any equivocation or debate; what is not said about Lincoln allows for an uncontested and rather bland portrait of him. If the habeas corpus facts are missing, this is probably because the undemocratic Lincoln must be either hidden from view or excused for his dictatorial practices on grounds that they were necessary to preserve the union and abolish slavery. The Lincoln who imagines freedom and equality for all even though he is prevented from achieving this dream by the pragmatic concerns of politics and ultimately, assassination, cannot flourish in an environment of skepticism about his basic commitment to these principles.

The headnote genre ensures that Lincoln will be presented with a kind of narrative coherence, packaged to “fill out” his very large space in history. There is no room in this space for Lincoln to be both the cautious emancipator and “the White man’s President, entirely devoted to the welfare of the White men.” There is no room either for Lincoln to be both the suspender of Habeas Corpus and the exemplar of American democracy. It is perhaps not surprising that anthology editors find the emancipatory-democratic Lincoln more appealing.

**The Tone of Headnotes**

The “ventriloquized tone” Leitch described earlier is the second ideological function of the headnote genre that shuts down critical discourse. In both style and tone, the headnote resembles an entry in an encyclopedia, reaching for a normative (in scholarly terms) portrait of the author in question. This reaching for the norm means that headnotes are usually receptacles for well-established
ideas rather than spaces for critical analysis. Readers of anthology headnotes do not expect them to engage in critical interpretations of history, or for that matter, of the text itself. Rather, readers expect them to contextualize the text through the life of an author, with a degree of authority that removes from the reader the responsibility of doing this work himself.32

Evidence of this authoritative tone is easily found in all the Lincoln headnotes I examined. Consider, for example, the final paragraph of the Heath’s headnote for Lincoln, written by Elaine Sargent Athorp of San Jose State University:

The Address at the Dedication of the Gettysburg National Cemetery and the Second Inaugural Address are remarkable, however, not for their employment of Biblical cadence and reference but for the simplicity and clarity with which that rhetoric is fused with the self-educated lawyer’s measured concern for justice in the affairs of men. Two addresses were given on November 19, 1863, at the dedication of the national cemetery at Gettysburg—site, only three months before, of the bloodiest battle of the War—and both appealed to the Christian sentiments of the fifteen thousand Americans who gathered for the ceremonies: but it was Edward Everett’s two-hour paean to the forces of armed righteousness which met the public standard for eloquence and piety. Lincoln’s two-minute speech, over almost before the crowd could gather that the president was

32 I have always believed that students should be encouraged to contextualized texts themselves.
speaking, seemed a failure—for it was concise and simple, barren of the florid language which would demonstrate the speaker’s passionate response to the occasion. The piece, however, like Lincoln himself, gained after a time the regard of a people who (as Lincoln once jested) could be fooled some of the time but not forever; and his little speech has gradually come to seem more eloquent than any less restrained or more complex statement could have been. The author seems to speak from a place above narrow rational self interest yet below blind adherence to an extrarational authority, so that these pleas for unity and support become reassertions of faith in the rational humanist principles on which his precious, precarious Republic had been founded. (2007-8)

Apthorp writes in the classic headnote style here. She uses declarative sentences, mostly avoiding the language of equivocation. She works towards conclusive statements about the author’s life and legacy. She offers a final, authoritative interpretation without entertaining alternative readings.

But her tone of authority belies far more than mere institutional or professional tradition. James Sosnoski has written that the “Magister,” or ideal professor, is often an implied figure in textbooks. “An introduction to a literature textbook, for instance, is a set of instructions about how to read literature. In prescribing a set of cognitive activities it describes the ideal reader, thus inscribing the ideal professor in a student’s inner world” (74). The Magister lurking in anthology headnotes is a rather conservative figure who teaches two main lessons: First, he strongly suggests that “knowing the
author” is the primary tool for interpreting a text. In this respect, the headnote
is a kind of pre-1940s artifact of critical methodology that is apparently
immune to anti-historical tendencies of both the New Criticism or
Poststructuralism. Neither of these revolutions was able to dislodge the
headnote, which doggedly upholds authorial intention as the most important
interpretive criteria. Second, the headnote Magister teaches students that
history is a matter of settled facts rather than vigorous debate. History is, to
quote Lietch again, “tamed” by the headnote, which delivers it already neatly
packaged, with its rough edges sanded off and its contradictions resolved. The
anthology headnote is seldom a venue for balancing conflicting perspectives on
an author’s legacy, or to suggest multiple readings of a text; instead, the
headnote usually offers a decisive interpretation of the author’s legacy as a
prelude to the act of reading the text.

**More Student Agency in Contextualizing American Literature?**

The headnote genre promotes an ethic of passive acquiescence to the
authority of the professional class who produces them. Consider, for example,
the question of transparency: Anthology headnotes are seldom accompanied by
citations or even a list of sources consulted—a basic requirement that I would
demand of any of my students who wrote such a piece for my class. If a college
student uses his memory and an assortment of secondary sources to write
biography of Herman Melville and then posts his work on a personal website
without citations or a bibliography, his bio is likely to be dismissed as inferior,
suspect, and probably full of errors by the very people who would assign their students to read the Norton’s headnote to Melville without questioning its veracity. Both the student’s and the Norton’s Melville bios are plagued by a lack of transparency that prevents readers from verifying their claims, but the Norton headnote will be accorded an automatic patina of respectability and authority in the classroom while the student’s bio will be dismissed as immature or unsophisticated. The headnote writer is absolved from “following the rules” of citation, while the student must carefully render citations in MLA format in order for his work to be taken seriously.

Why is the headnote writer given a pass from the rules of citation? Perhaps to answer that question, we should begin to see the headnote as more than a neutral summary of a writer’s life, but also as an emblem of institutional authority—a visible sign that an anthologized text has been officially legitimized, stamped with the approval of a publishing company and the Ph.D.s who work for them. Standing behind each headnote is an assumed, unspoken authority to mediate the text for an audience. They are emblems of an institutional culture that values the Magister implicates—the implied ideal professor whose mantle of authority sanctions the right to summarize, simplify, translate, and interpret. They are agents of a university system that universalizes, individualizes, and in the process excludes conflict as far as possible. Or rather, it deligitimizes conflict, in the name of pluralism. Pluralism allows for a multiplicity of coexisting, even competing interpretations, opinions or approaches; what it does not allow is for the
space in which these interpretations are held to take place to be itself considered conflictual. (Weber 44)

In this environment, the textbook and its various textual apparatuses float in a layer just above conflict, debate, and disagreement.

“Textbooks are the apparatuses of orthodoxy,” writes James Sosnoski. “And orthodox textbooks are the principle means by which institutions control their subjects” (Sosnoski 75). If Sosnoski is right—and I believe he is—than we must ask, what are the main goals of teaching history through literature? The headnote ultimately delivers history in a package that is generally consistent with what Jean-François Lyotard describes as a new regime wherein knowledge is increasingly commodified. In this regime, history itself becomes a product, and perhaps not a very valuable one, considering the overall place of the humanities in most universities today. Perhaps the history offered up by the new historical literary textbooks will only be palatable to its audience if it is delivered in an uncontested and factual manner, part and parcel of a larger package of humanities knowledge that is considered to be the “core” of a liberal arts education.

I return again to my opening analogy from *Dead Poets Society*: Textbooks are “apparatuses of orthodoxy”—as such, they will always be tethered to institutional authority and therefore subject to its power. Mr. Keating’s sophomoric act of vandalism certainly exposes the raw dimensions of this relationship between institutional power and textbook pedagogy, but more productive acts of rebellion are possible. In a 1993 article in *American
Literature, Kenneth Warren suggests another approach when he makes the following partially “tongue-and-cheek” proposal:

Imagine that instead of sending our students off to purchase two-volume sets on American literature we gave them large ring binders into which could be inserted, modular fashion, the excerpts, introductions, and other textual apparatus that currently constitute anthologies. Many of use photocopied course readers, which we often view as anthologies-in-the-making, or as what we wish some enterprising publisher had already done for us. What I’m suggesting is slightly different—something along the line of the course reader as commonly held commonplace book. In this case, students would not merely read these collections, but during and at the conclusion of the course would be encouraged to remove, reshuffle, or add texts (including their own creative work” to the binder, with the proviso that they also insert commentary explaining their reasoning for any changes they may have made. The binders would stay with the course, being randomly passed on to individuals in succeeding classes who would have the same right of revision. We (and our students) would in essence be teaching and confronting the history of our courses and our students and by drawing some rough equation between canonical authors and student authors we might go a little way towards dimming literature’s aura. (343)

Warren proposes his ad-hoc anthology project in order to “wrest tradition from the well trained (but now more diverse) hands” of the literary professional in
order to establish “a truly democratic culture.” His build-your-own-anthology approach to gathering texts for the American literature classroom could potentially give students more agency in the anthology making process. In Warren’s “binder” solution, for example, students might create their own “textual apparatus” for these anthologies—headnotes, for example, or footnotes, or section introductions. The “binder” might be replaced by a website, where students, working in groups, create the apparatus for an online anthology; writing headnotes for this online anthology could be one of the requirements of this final project. Students might write their own textual apparatuses, synthesizing information about biography, criticism, and textual history into concise, coherent, encyclopedic articles.

By engaging students in the act of contextualizing literary texts, instructors of American literature can disrupt the nexus of institutional power underpinning the headnote *Magister*, shifting power to the classroom itself. In this new regime, the textbook itself becomes a problem text, and the aura of objectivism that surrounds it begins to fade. Students can begin to understand the extent to which history is constructed by history writers, and headnote writers.
CHAPTER THREE

NATIVE AMERICAN ORIGIN STORIES
MAKING TEXTUAL HISTORY THE CENTERPIECE

For a long time, American literary history began with an English explorer named John Smith and an Indian girl named Pocahontas. A founding member of the Jamestown colony, Smith had written and published several books recounting his experiences in Virginia by his death in 1631; by the founding of the Republic 150 years later, he was already acknowledged as one of the nation’s earliest historians and authors, and a genuine American “folk hero” (Craven 482). Smith is featured prominently in the first comprehensive histories of American literature published in the mid-nineteenth century, and beginning in the 1890s, he is often listed first in chronologies of American literature.33 In 1919, literary historian and anthologist Fred Lewis Pattee wrote: “It is customary to place Captain John Smith at the head of the list of American authors when the time element alone is considered” (3). Smith would hold his vaunted position in the tables of contents of most anthologies of

33 Smith was discussed as an early American writer as early as 1829, when Samuel Knapp featured him prominently in the second chapter of his seminal Lectures on American Literature (1829). He was included in the first comprehensive anthologies of American literature. The Duyckinck brothers’ Cyclopaedia of American Literature (1855) lists him as the fifth writer in its table of contents after George Sandys, William Vaugan, William Morell, and William Wood; the Cyclopaedia anthologized the passage on Pocahontas’s rescue of Smith from Generall History of Virginia. Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Mackey Hutchinson’s eleven-volume Library of American Literature (1891) features Smith first its table of contents, selecting four passages from the author’s Generall History of Virginia, including “The Romance of Pocahontas.” For the next century, most anthologies of American literature would begin in this way.
American literature until the 1980s, when textbook publishers like Norton, Heath, Macmillan, and Harper altered their chronologies, pushing out the bottom of the 1607 Jamestown birth date for American literature to add earlier texts by Spanish and French explorers as well as Native American oral literature.

Smith owes his popularity in literary history to a short passage from Book III, chapter 2 of *Generall History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (1624)—his account of being captured by a band Algonquin Indians and then rescued from death by Pocahontas, the daughter of the chief, Powhatan.

Sometime in the final weeks of 1607, Smith claims he and nine men headed upstream on a barge on the Chickahominy River to explore the territory. As the river narrowed and became too shallow to proceed, Smith left seven men behind on the barge and forged ahead with two companions from Jamestown, Jehu Robinson and Thomas Emery, and two Indian guides. Traveling by canoe, the five men soon reached an unnavigable section of river, and Smith set out alone with the two Indian guides. He was quickly “beset with 200 Salvages” and captured (Smith 46-51). Taken to Werowocomoco, the capital of Powhatan’s Algonquin federation, Smith describes how, after a long “consultation,” the powerful chief decided to execute him:

> The conclusion was, two great stones were brought before Powhatan:
> then as many as could layd hands on him[^35] dragged him to them, and thereon laid his head, and being ready with their clubs, to beate oute out

[^35]: Smith refers to himself in the third person throughout his narrative.
his braines . . . [Intervening] Pocahontas, the Kings dearest daughter, when no intreaty could prevail, got his head in her armes, and laid her owne upon his to save him from death. (49)

Two centuries of retelling embellished this story, and historians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries read a “romance” between the lines, fashioning a love triangle between Smith, Pocahontas, and John Rolfe, the Virginian tobacco planter who married Pocahontas in 1614. By the nineteenth century, Pocahontas was emerging as a durable and flexible national symbol (Mossiker 321). She played a key role in the Jamestown origin story for the new nation, rescuing Smith, saving Jamestown from starvation by delivering food to the starving settlers, renouncing her native life for Christianity, marrying English tobacco planter John Rolfe, and bearing children who would be the ancestors of the elite Old Dominion families of antebellum Virginia (Abrams 3). The Pocahontas story, like the stories of Squanto in the Plymouth origin myth and Sacajawea in the Lewis and Clark saga, signaled the cooperative Noble Savage who selflessly renders aid to Anglo-American explorers and settlers and thus quietly affirms the mandates of colonial expansion and Manifest Destiny. By placing Smith and Pocahontas at the

36 Mossiker describes Pocahontas’s reputation at the turn of the nineteenth century: “There she stood, in the shadow of the forest primeval, a figure of romance, symbol of redemption, princess, paragon, a naiad-dryad of the Western World, native nymph of grove and stream, Daughter of Manitout, aboriginal Hertha/Ceres/Demeter, great Earth Mother of the Americas, who opened up her heart and heartland to the newcomer.”

37 The Jamestown and Plymouth stories emerged as national origin myths in the nineteenth century, but the latter would gain by far the greater foothold in American culture.

38 Pocahontas’s legend grew in several directions. In one, she is “Lady Rebecca,” the Indian princess turned English noblewoman; in another, she was Pocahontas, forest nymph and lover to John Smith. It is this thread that finds expression in the 1996 Disney film Pocahontas, which depicts a romance between Smith and the Indian “princess.” In another thread, best expressed in John Gadsby Chapman’s painting “Baptism of Pocahontas” (1840), the baptism and marriage of Pocahontas to John Rolfe takes center stage.
beginning of anthologies of American literature, anthologists thus made a romanticized encounter between Europeans and Indians the starting place for American literary history.

Today, most anthologies of American literature begin with a very different kind of Indian origin story. The latest editions of the Heath, Norton, Bedford/St. Martin, and McGraw-Hill anthologies of American literature each begins with a section of oral Native American literature containing texts that were originally published in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries but appear in the Early American literature section of these collections. The Norton and Heath anthologies, which dominate the college market, each begins with a story of Native American communal origins. Consequently, American literary history now appears to start in pre-Columbian America, with Native Americans finally articulating their own stories rather than being stereotyped through the powerfully distorting lens of the “white man’s Indian.” The romanticized encounter between Anglo-Europeans and Indians appears to have dissolved

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39 The Heath’s “Talk Concerning the First Beginning” was taken from anthropologist Ruth Bunzel’s article “Zuni Origin Myths,” published in the Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1930. The Norton’s “Iroquois Creation Story” was culled from the first chapter of a book titled Sketches of the Ancient History of the Six Nations written by David Cusick, first published as a pamphlet in 1826 or 1827 and later as a book in 1828. The Bedford anthology begins with a selection titled “Origin of Folk Stories,” which explains how stories originated, was taken from Seneca Myths and Folk Tales, published in 1923. McGraw-Hill’s . . . The Seventh and Eighth editions of The Prentice Hall Anthology of American Literature included ethnic-specific sections titled “Native American Voices,” the first of which appeared in the “Literature of Colonial America” section, sandwiched between John Smith (1580-1631) and William Bradford (1590-1657). This section contained a Cherokee origin myth “collected” in 1900, a Zuni Prayer published in the Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1932, and a Winnebago Trickster myth from P. Radin’s 1956 book The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology. The most recent Ninth Edition, however, has removed these ethnic-specific sections; texts by Native American writers such as Red Jacket and Black Hawk now appear alongside the other anthologized writers and are arranged on the timeline according to their publication dates. Volume II of the Ninth Edition now features “The Navajo Creation Story” (Diné Bahane’) in the “Reading the Cultural Contexts” section for the chapter on “The Literature of the Twentieth Century (1945 to Present). Prentice Hall is the only currently anthologized creation story that is properly placed on the timeline according to its publication date.

from anthologies, replaced by a more sophisticated, pluralistic approach that seeks to represent the cultural expression of indigenous people in their own words.

As I examine these anthologies closely, however, I still see evidence of the white man’s romance for the Indian at the top of the table of contents. Today’s chronologically arranged anthologies almost always place their Native American origin stories in a pre-Columbian position in the collection, despite the fact that they were all recorded or published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by people who were engaged in some form of inter-cultural exchange between Anglo-Americans and Native Americans. By branding these texts as pre-Columbian, anthology editors and literary historians have essentially dehistoricized them. Instead of contextualizing the published versions of these origin stories within the contact zones that produced them, anthology editors relegate them to that fuzzy, inchoate realm of mythological time, where stories by primitives are always preserved in amber—archetypal and therefore timeless. Most anthologies of American literature thus temporarily suspend the rules of Western textual scholarship that apply to the vast majority of other texts in its pages in order to present Native American origin stories in a “neo-primitive” envelope for an audience that expects to encounter Indians in “pure” rather than hybrid forms.
Dating the Origin Story

Native American oral literature presents significant challenges to literary historians, anthologists, and literature instructors. The vast majority of what is traditionally classified as American literature—texts like Thoreau’s *Walden* or Whitman’s “Song of Myself” for example—manifests itself to the reader through a “writerly” process that can be historicized according to a familiar archaeological procedure: The author’s life and the history of the text are reconstructed with a particular emphasis on the date of first publication of the text. Sometimes, an attempt is made to also reconstruct the historical and cultural milieu of the author as well. In this approach, all roads lead to an authentic act of authorial creation—an originating act of composition that is suffused with expectations of individual creativity and self-expression through the written word.

Oral literature reverses these expectations of composition entirely. Theresa Melendez explains this reversal:

For the process of composition, transmission, selection, and performance that makes up oral literature, the re-creative act is itself the basic form of composition, which includes interpretation and the production of meaning. Only in oral literature is the perceiver of a work a potential author of that work, at least in cultures that have no professional singer or teller of tales. Thus the communication of oral literature is an open system at the level not only of interpretation (which may be true for written texts) but also of generation within the social group it was
reproduced. (81)

This “open system” presents unique challenges for the literary historian. Dennis Tedlock’s article “The Witches Were Saved: A Zuni Origin Story” provides an excellent window into these challenges. While Tedlock was visiting a family in a farming village Northeast of the New Mexico town of Zuni in March of 1965, his host, Andrew Peynetsa, began to tell his version of the Zuni origin story, *chimiky’ana’kowa*, or “When Newness Was Made” (312-15). Peynetsa had already told the first two parts in earlier sessions; these clearly took place before the Europeans arrived, or, to use a Zuni expression, “when the earth was still soft,” but the witch story, which Peynetsa considered to be part of the origin story, makes reference to two military incursions into Zuni territory by the U.S. Military—the first in 1891, and the second in the period between 1897-98 when the army set up an encampment at Zuni. The story blames this military intrusion on sorcery⁴¹, accusing a man named Tumahka of the offense. Tumahka briefly served as head of the secular Zuni government after the events in question and was also a valuable informant to anthropologists working at Zuni in the 1920s and 1930s⁴² during a period when Zuni internal politics were preoccupied with how much access should be granted outsiders to

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⁴¹ Witchcraft was a serious charge at Zuni that was usually leveled at people implicated in anti-social or criminal behavior. Unpleasant events like crop failure, landslide, flood, epidemic or defeat in battle could be blamed on witches. Witches were sometimes hanged by their arms until they confessed.

⁴² Tumahka gave privileged information to Elsie Clews Parsons, Alfred Kroeber, Ruth Bunzel, and Ruth Benedict, who all regarded him as a great Zuni “intellectual.” The *Heath’s* version of the “Talk” was told to Bunzel by Tumahka. He was the most famous witch at Zuni during this period. The reasons for this label of witchcraft vary. One story tells that he intended to send a centipede into a woman who denied him food and boasted while he was drunk that he was witch (62-4). Elsie Clews Parsons writes: “Nick may have achieved his intellectual independence through the persecution he suffered, or, as the story of his witch trial indicates, he may have been persecuted because of his independence” (Parsons 64).
the ritual life of the community.43

Peynetsa’s modern version of the Zuni origin story, with its historical glosses, raises an interesting challenge for literary historians: How does one date this story? Clearly, the core of the story Peynetsa told to Tedlock is older than the 1890s, but how old? One is tempted initially to call these stories “ancient,” but no evidence exists to substantiate such a claim. There is plentiful evidence, however, to suggest the mutability of the Zuni origin story. The origin stories gathered by anthropologists Elsie Clews Parsons and Frank Cushing at Zuni in the late nineteenth century, for example, also include references to the Spanish arrival in their territory in the fifteenth century, and anthropologist Ruth Bunzel’s version, currently anthologized in the Heath, refers to the Mexicans. The Zuni origin story is therefore quite flexible, changeable, and capable of absorbing modern material. If the earliest written versions of this story date to the end of turn of the twentieth century, how can we know what it looked like two centuries ago? Three centuries? Five?

Tedlock’s published version of the Zuni origin story is merely a snapshot of an object in motion; the story itself is dynamic, but the snapshot is inexorably rooted in a time and place, “date stamped” if you will by its publication date. Is it ethical to change this date stamp to suit a higher purpose? This is essentially what most modern anthologies of American literature have done by positioning

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43 The charge of witchcraft against Tumakha may have been motivated in part by these internal politics; ethnologist Ruth Bunzel observed that during the 1920s and 1930s, a change in leadership at Zuni severely restricted the access granted to the previous generation of anthropologists that had included Frank Cushing, Matilda Stevenson, and others. Charging Tumakha with witchcraft may have been meant as a warning to informers. Tumakha was also the most famous witch in Zuni during this period, which meant that he was the object of many charges of sorcery.
their versions of origin stories published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the pre-Columbian period. By engaging in this strategy, the Norton, Heath, and Bedford collections strongly suggest that the anthologized versions of these stories preserve their integrity over the course of centuries.

The trouble with this strategy is that no one really can say what the Zuni or Iroquois or Pima origin stories were like in 1492, before Christian influences and other Westernisms permeated these cultures. Indigenous people in North America undoubtedly had stories of origin before the arrival of Columbus, but these stories are not timeless artifacts preserved unchangeably within “oral tradition.” They are organic and flexible. They change and evolve over time. They exist in multiple versions. And some versions of these stories, as we have already seen, incorporate historical events from the post-contact period, folding them seamlessly into the narrative as if they had always been part of the story.

Why do anthologies feel compelled to make these stories pre-Columbian? Heath Native American literature editor Andrew Wiget explains that the pre-Columbian placement of Bunzel’s 1930 version of the Zuni origin story as well as other artifacts from the Native American oral tradition “was meant to highlight the depth of oral traditions, for some of these stories and songs were certainly told for centuries and reflect pre-contact cultural realities. We wish to underscore the fact that humanity’s experience on this continent was articulated in complex forms long before the Europeans came. Columbus did not enter a silent world” (Wiget, “Native American Oral Literatures” 13). Wiget apparently understands that pre-dating these stories and songs is potentially
problematic—why else would he call attention to the problem?—but in this case, he is willing to trade textual history for a valuable lesson in *multicultural* history. The editors of the *Heath* have thus made a deliberate exception to the traditional rules of textual history and chronology that structure the rest of the anthology in order to highlight the fact that a complex Native American cultural reality before the arrival of Europeans.

But Wiget fails to acknowledge what is sacrificed by this strategy. Most of the artifacts of the Native American oral tradition found in modern anthologies emerged from inter-cultural contact zones where Indian and Anglo cultures mingled and overlapped. These versions became “textual” in an environment where cultural cross-pollination and hybridity were a fact of life. These versions are, by virtue of this basic fact of composition, hybrid documents. By dislocated these texts from their specific historical and cultural contexts, the editors of the Norton, Heath, Bedford, and McGraw-Hill anthologies have sacrificed the most interesting and relevant layer of meaning that might be gathered from these texts by a non-Indian audience—the lessons that can be drawn from their cultural hybridity.

The impulse to reframe these texts as purely Indian is quite powerful in academia. Susan Hegeman explains why in an article she contributed to *Social Text*:

One important epistemological problem pertaining to our acceptance of Native American sources is the frequent academic emphasis on presenting “authentic” cultural voices. While no cultures can be found
which are hermetically sealed from time and interactions with other cultures, there is a strong desire for “pure” representations and artifacts of Indian culture, which reflects a desire to understand Indians as living outside of time, and as incapable of participating in the kind of cultural production and exchange which occurs elsewhere. (145)

This emphasis on authentic cultural voices may arise from a recent shift in the cultural perception of Indians. Dagmar Wernitznig, writing in Going Native or Going Naïve: White Shamanism and the Neo-Noble Savage (2003) describes a “new era of primitivism” in American culture since the 1960s which transforms the old noble savage into “a keeper of spiritual secrets and truisms”—an antidote to the problems of a technologically advanced society. This neo-primitivism “popularizes Indians as pre-Columbian and ancient by having them resemble pure common sense, devoid of any sophisticated rationality” (xxxiii). Indians are often represented as a mytho-spiritual race that lives in the margins of a corrupted America, serving as moral teachers and spirit guides—a species of environmentally conscious national shaman. They are pushed into the cultural border territory occupied by animal guides, vision quests, and sweat lodges. The new white man’s Indian is accompanied by flute music as he steps out onto the American stage; he is expected to hold down the critique of American consumerism; to have visions of the other world; to live with one foot in the spirit world—the feather-adorned shaman race. Comprehensive anthologies are produced largely by non-Indians for a largely non-Indian audience; one wonders, then, how much the new emphasis on Native American
literature in these literary textbooks is inspired by this desire among non-
Indians to encounter the primitive in American history and culture? However
uncomfortable, this question should be boldly asked, and honestly answered,
by those of us who teach, research, and write about this literature.

**Purifying the Origin Story: In the *Norton and Heath***

Anthologized versions of Native American origin stories are mostly purified
of evidence of non-Indian influence and mediation through a subtle process of
textual framing. Because anthologies like the *Norton, Heath, and Bedford* have
chosen to position their origin stories as pre-Columbian, these stories must be
framed, to the extent possible, as purely Indian by the textual apparatus
attached to them. Moving these stories to the head of the table of contents
necessitates that anthologies also de-emphasize evidence of mediation or
influence of non-Indians so as to support this pre-Columbian placement of the
text. The text cannot be both pre-Columbian *and* reflective of a nineteenth- or
twentieth-century cultural/historical milieu. A tradeoff is required in order for
these texts to appear pre-Columbian.

This tradeoff can be clearly seen in the latest editions of the *Norton* and the
*Heath* anthologies of American literature. The origin stories that begin each of
these anthologies are presented with almost no reference to their textual
histories in headnotes or section introductions. In the *Norton*, the trouble
begins with the decision to predate a published version of the Iroquois creation
story by more than three centuries rather than place it on the chronology
according to its 1825 publication date. The origin story is culled from the first chapter of David Cusick’s *Sketches of the Ancient History of the Six Nations*.

Cusick, a Tuscarora⁴⁴ Indian who fought in the War of 1812, was likely born on the Oneida reservation in New York state around 1780. His history of the Iroquois confederacy was one of the first attempts by a North American Indian to write a tribal history in English for the popular marketplace. The book blends Iroquois mythological elements with Western historicism, beginning with the account of creation and ending with Columbus’s arrival in America. As this three-part work proceeds towards the present, it gradually becomes more “historical” with direct pointers to the Judeao-Christian timeline such as: “Perhaps about two thousand two hundred years before the Columbus discovered the America” and, “Perhaps about 1250 years before Columbus discovered the America” (15, 20). These historical pointers are indicative of what Arnold Krupat calls “hybrid documents”—texts written by Indians that tried to fuse two “languages” for history writing (132).

The *Norton*’s “Iroquois Creation Story” is taken from the first four pages of Cusick’s book—the entire first chapter of a three-chapter work. In the *Norton*’s selection, Cusick begins his history of the confederacy with his own version of the Iroquois “earth-diver”⁴⁵ account of creation. The account opens: “Among

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⁴⁴ Susan Kalter, “Finding a Place for David Cusick in Native American Literary History,” *MELUS* 27 (Autumn 2002): 12-13. The Tuscarora were a tribe from the North Carolina inner coastal plain who were forced out of their lands by English colonial expansion and invited to join the Iroquois Confederacy in 1722-23. The Tuscarora shared cultural and linguistic affinities with the Iroquois tribes. Many Tuscarora moved to New York to live on the Oneida reservation, despite the state's explicit refusal of this immigration.

⁴⁵ In Earth-Diver accounts of creation, a flood covers the earth, and an original race of beings send an animal to the bottom of the ocean to bring up enough mud to begin creation.
the ancients there were two worlds in existence. The lower world was in great
darkness;—the possession of the great monsters; but the upper world was
inhabited by mankind’ and there was a woman conceived and would have the
twin born (1). As the twin’s time of birth grows near, the woman falls asleep
and begins to descend into the lower world. The monsters that inhabit this
world gather to decide what they should do about this woman, and one of
them, a turtle, volunteers to help. A "small quantity of earth was varnished on
the back of the turtle" which served as a bed for the woman (2).

On this island of earth, which continually grows in size until it becomes a
"Great Island," the woman gives birth to ENIGORIO, the good mind, and
ENIGONHAHETGEA, the bad mind. ENIGORIO, the good mind, continues the
creative process by making day and night and creating various species of
animals. As a final act of this creation, he creates EA-GWE-HOWE, the real
people, and gives "the Great Island all the animals of game for their
maintenance" (3). ENIGORNHAHETGEA, the bad mind, always jealous of his
brother, tries to mimic this act of creation by making steep mountains,
waterfalls, and reptiles that are dangerous to humans; his brother repairs this
damage done to the island. The bad mind also tries to make humans, by
fashioning two clay images, but these become apes. The two brothers
eventually fight a duel wherein the bad mind is defeated and banished into the
Earth, where he becomes the Evil Spirit (2-7).

Rather than treat this selection from Sketches as a product of its historical
moment, the Norton editors have essentially de-historicized Cusick’s version of
the origin story by making it appear pre-Columbian. This process is assisted by several explicit choices made by the publishers: First, the *Norton* frames the text as one of its “Stories of the Beginning of the World” rather than as a selection from a book written by a flesh-and-blood author. William Bradford, John Wintrop, John Smith, Mary Rowlandson, and other authors in the *Norton*’s “Literature to 1700” section are accompanied by biographical headnotes that bear their names; the headnote attached to Cusick’s text is titled “The Iroquois Origin Story” and devotes just two of six paragraphs to the facts of Cusick’s life. Remarkably, this same headnote never mentions the actual title of his book; one must read the footnote at the bottom of the first page to learn the title. In this way, Cusick is demoted from the status of author to mere transmitter of a communal origin story. The editors of the *Norton* have thus severed this selection from the complete work of *Sketches*\(^46\) by reframing it as an oral story whose authorial and textual history is insignificant.

This same headnote makes no reference to Cusick’s motivations for writing *Sketches*, a problematic omission, because the book is a skillfully rhetorical work, and very much a product of the period in which it was written and published. Writing in the 1820s, when Southeastern tribes were being “removed” West of the Mississippi, Cusick argued against this treatment by

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\(^46\) Beginning his book with the creation story in Part I, Cusick establishes a foundation in antiquity for the Iroquois nation, which he then builds on in Parts II and III. Part II ends with an apocalyptic event that evokes Revelations: a “great horned serpent” appears on Lake Ontario, spreading disease and killing many people. A blazing star falls on a fort on the St. Lawrence killing many more people. A subsequent war among the northern nations wiped out the population and “the Island” again become in possession of the fierce animals. In the beginning of Book III, a surviving remnant from the previous period of war, famine, and disease creates the Six Nation alliance from a resolution signed by six families.
claiming that the Iroquois were a viable nation and that their oral traditions were comparable to the phonetic alphabet used by Euro-Americans (Kalter, 17-22, 25-31). Susan Kalter has shown how Cusick uses the book to demonstrate the longevity and long-term tenancy of Indian peoples in North America while also emphasizing that the Iroquois were already civilized when the Europeans arrived (32). By severing the first chapter from Sketches and framing it as a communal origin story, this rhetorical dimension is entirely lost to readers.

Christianity was an important dimension of Cusick’s historical argument in Sketches, and obvious biblical parallels can be seen throughout the book (Kalter 29-30, 33-4). In one memorable passage, the sixth family, the Tuscarora, try to cross the Mississippi on a grape vine that stretches across the river, but the vine breaks, separating the people. Cusick’s footnote to this passage observes: “By some this may seem an incredible story. Why more so than that the Israelites should cross the Red Sea on dry land” (13). Kalter points out another passage wherein the Tuscaroras are visited sometime between 1092 and 1142 A.D. by a mysterious old man who “appeared among the people for a while; he taught them many things; how to respect their deceased friends, and to love their relations, etc” (33). This teacher also explains that the whites across the ocean have killed their god, but that he has risen from the dead. He showed the people how to use roots to cure diseases. Then Cusick explains that the “aged man died among them, and they buried him; but soon after some person went to the grave and found he had risen, and never heard of him since” (31).
The Norton’s reframing of the first chapter of Sketches as a communal origin story essentially turns down the volume on its contemporary nineteenth century resonances. Only one of the thirteen footnotes attached to the text by the publisher makes reference to the Christian parallels.47 One of the most striking of these parallels can be seen in the Norton’s selection from Sketches. The overall content of the creation story, from its order of creation to its granting humans seeming stewardship over the animals of Great Island, resembles the biblical account of Creation, and Cusick’s rendering of this final act of creation mimics the language of the King James Bible (I have added italics to emphasize parallels between the two texts):

When he [ENIGORIO] made the universe he was in doubt respecting some beings to possess the Great Island; and he formed two images of the dust of the ground in his own likeness, male and female, and by his breathing into their nostrils he gave them the living souls, and named them EA-GWE-HOWE, i.e. A real people. (Cusick 3)

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Genesis 1:26-27). . . And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7)
Clearly, these explicit biblical parallels are designed to resonate with the book’s nineteenth-century audience. Numerous critics have tried to explain these parallels in *Sketches*. Barbara Mann asserts that Cusick inserted missionary interpretations of the creation story into his work (427). Susan Kalter claims that Cusick was actually trying “to refute Old Testament paradigms of Indians origins” such as the popular nineteenth-century belief that the Indians had descended from one of the ten tribes of Israel. Kalter believes that Cusick engaged in a sophisticated argument for a common tradition behind the parallelism between biblical accounts and Iroquois stories that ultimately supports the primacy of the Bible. Whether these references can be attributed to missionary influence on Cusick or his skillful rhetorical use of Christian symbolism to refute commonly held beliefs about Indians, it seems obvious that they flow from a culture that had already thoroughly digested Christian beliefs; indeed, by the early nineteenth century, the majority of Tuscarora were practicing Christians. This fact alone suggests that readers should study the origin story in *Sketches* with a skillful eye trained to its Christian resonances as well as its indigenous features.

The *Heath*’s framing of the Zuni “Talk Concerning the First Beginnings” also robs the text of its cultural hybridity and contextual complexity, but through a slightly different process. Like the selection from *Sketches* in the *Norton*, the “Talk” is placed more than three centuries ahead of its actual publication date on the *Heath*’s general chronology of American literary history (Lauter v). Also like the *Norton*, the *Heath* denies the “Talk” a textual history that would locate
its version of the Zuni origin story in its specific historical moment. In some ways, however, the Heath's treatment of the Zuni origin story is even more disingenuous than the Norton's; the editors at Norton at least acknowledge that their selected origin story is but one of twenty-five published “versions” of the Iroquois creation story. The Heath, through a sin of omission, fails to note that its Zuni “emergence” story, which is culled from the extensive ethnographic record on Zuni Pueblo, is itself only one of many versions of the Zuni origin story—one of several recorded by anthropologists at Zuni in the first half of the twentieth century and a small piece in a rather complicated and variegated ritual expression of the community’s entire origin story.

The Heath's “Talk” is taken from the large portion of an article published by Ruth Bunzel in The Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1929-1930, which included two origin stories gathered at Zuni reservation in Western New Mexico in the late 1920s (Bunzel 545-609). Bunzel was one of the Boasian anthropologists who worked at Zuni in the 1920s and 1930s. She had graduated from Barnard College in 1918 with a degree in general studies and history, and after a few years of indecision about her future, she took a job working as secretary for the renowned anthropologist Franz Boas at Columbia University (Parezo xi). After receiving some encouragement from Boas to pursue her own anthropological research, she accompanied anthropologist Ruth Benedict to Zuni reservation in New Mexico, where she researched and published The Pueblo Potter (1929), which for many years was the definitive book on the subject (Parezo xv). Bunzel developed a
“single family” approach to her ethnographic work, living with a Zuni family for five summer seasons and was eventually asked to join the Badger clan, one of thirteen matrilineal societies in the community (Parezo xxiii, xi).

Bunzel gathered the origin story currently anthologized in the *Heath* from Tumahka, the informant and notorious witch mentioned earlier, because the version she was offered freely by a priest lacked the ritual specificity she was looking for. Zuni origin myths exist in esoteric and exoteric forms—the former deployed by the community’s various religious societies to explain the origins of specific rituals and practices, and the latter in a popular or “secular” version whose “main outlines . . . are known to all” (Parsons 548). The exoteric version was told “informally and more or less prescriptively at solstice or other ceremonial season” (215). The esoteric versions were recited behind closed doors within the various medicine societies, often during the “retreats” that preceded major events on the Zuni ceremonial calendar. The “Talk” is an esoteric origin story that she describes in her introduction as belonging “to the priests—‘any priesthood.’ It is recited for purposes of instruction during the winter retreat (Bunzel, *Zuni Ceremonialism*, 548).

The Zuni story of creation does not, therefore, exist in a complete or definitive form; rather, it is distributed throughout this highly ritualized society, where it is often deployed to explain the origins of particular ritual practices. Elsie Clewes Parsons explains the relationship between the origin story and ritual in her book *Pueblo Indian Religion* (1939). The core story of creation is simple, according to Parsons, but its cultural expression is more
complex:

“We came up, we moved southward (or eastward) and built houses, something happened, a quarrel or choosing a fateful egg or being stung by mosquitoes. We moved on again, we kept on seeking the middle place until we found it here, where we are to live forever.” Into this legendary frame a considerable number of narratives are embroidered and a few songs, for ritual recitation or for edification. Versions vary, for there will be stressed or introduced myth bearing upon the ceremony or organization the particular narrator is connected with. As yet only a few ritual recitals or chants have been recorded, mostly Zuni. These ritual versions are known only to those in charge of them. (Parsons 215)

Bunzel’s account includes all the elements of Parson’s “legendary frame” —the ascension through three wombs in the earth to the top-most fourth womb and the migration to the middle place—but as I will soon show, it has been tailored to a priestly rather than a general audience.

Before we examine the particulars of Bunzel’s account, let us focus on how it has been framed in the anthology. First, the Heath’s presentation of the “Talk” almost entirely omits the textual history of Bunzel’s version and therefore fails to acknowledge its proper place in the extremely fragmentary anthropological record of Zuni. The only mention of its ethnographic pedigree comes in the following note at the end of the section introduction that lists “Primary Works” for all the stories in this section in a single paragraph: “Ruth Bunzel, ‘Zuni Origin Myths,’ Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of
American Ethnology, 1930” (“Talk” 13). The introduction to this chapter—which also includes Winnebego, Pima, and Navajo creation stories—devotes six paragraphs to classifying the various elements of “Origin and Emergence Stories.” The introduction to “Native American Oral Literatures” which immediately precedes this section fails to discuss the origins of any of the stories collected in the section. Andrew Wiget notes Bunzel’s work briefly:

Careful transcription and translation has secured texts, such as Ruth Bunzel’s Zuni texts in this volume, that closely approximate both the individual voice and cultural aesthetics. In this way, these texts make available a singular stance of a story or song that has been circulating orally for perhaps hundreds of years.” (Wiget, “Native American Oral Literatures” 12-13)

Beyond these two rather peripheral references to Bunzel, the Heath says nothing more about the textual history of the “Talk” or its role in Zuni culture. Consequently, the Heath’s “Talk” drifts in a dehistoricized haze located somewhere in the pre-Columbian American Southwest, where it appears to open a direct line to a story that is “perhaps hundreds of years” old.

By failing to present even the rudiments of the “Talk”’s textual history or ethnographic pedigree, the Heath suggests, by omission, that its origin story is authoritative rather than a small piece of an extremely fragmentary record from a culture that has actively resisted efforts to catalog and record the full extent of its cultural and religious life. Only a handful of origin stories have been
recorded by outsiders at Zuni.\textsuperscript{48} Taken together, these origin stories represent only fragments of the whole origin story. The modern reader encountering Bunzel’s talk is like the modern reader who tries to glean the full epic of Gilgamesh from the available fragments or speculates about what the entire text of the Qumran version of \textit{Leviticus} says from the pieces found in a cave by Bedouin tribesmen in 1956 near the Dead Sea. The entire Zuni origin story is similarly obscured from view, not because textual fragments have yet to be unearthed from the ground by archaeologists but rather because the Zuni have actively resisted efforts by anthropologists to record the full picture of their ritual life.

This awareness of a fragmentary Zuni origin story is vital to reading the “Talk,” which was a story with a specific ritual purpose when it was gathered by Bunzel in the late 1920s. The “Talk” demonstrates how the various Zuni priesthhoods “came up” or ascended through the three underground chambers into the fourth chamber. This is quite different from the “exoteric” origin story at Zuni, which was, according to anthropologist Elsie Clews Parsons, non-proprietary (which means not belonging exclusively to any of the medicine societies at Zuni), secular, and known to all. Parsons published a version of the exoteric story in the \textit{Journal of American Folklore} in 1923, told to her by Lippelanna (Big Weaver, who was medicine head of the Little Firebrand

\textsuperscript{48} Frank Cushing’s “Outlines of Zuñi Creation Myths,” published in the \textit{Thirteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology} in 1891, is widely regarded as a highly stylized version. Bunzel complains that his version “contains endless poetic and metaphysical glossing of the basic elements, most of which explanatory matter probably originated in Cushing’s own mind” (547). Other versions include Matilda Stevenson’s monograph version and Elsie Clews Parson’s version, published in the \textit{Journal of American Folk-Lore} in 1923 (vol. 36: 135-162).
When all the people were living in the fourth bottom of the world, the two apilashiwanni of Sun went down into the bottom of the world. And someone in the dark was out hunting. They they saw him, “What are you doing?” they said to him. “I am out hunting,” said he. The two apilashiwanni went up to him and he spat on them. “Why do you do that to us? Do your people do that to each other? We do not not like that. Where do your people live?”-- “On the north side,” said the hunter. So he took with him the two. When they reached the town there were not houses, they just lived in burrows in the ground. And they said, “Why have you come?” -- “Our Father Sun has sent us in for you people to come out into the bright world. Our Father sun knows everything, but none give him telikyanawe (prayer sticks). We will be here again in four days.” So they went out. (Parsons, “Origin Myth” 136)

From the beginning, this version is quite different from the opening of Bunzel’s version:

Yes, indeed. In this world there was no one at all. Always the sun came up; always he went in. No one in the morning gave him sacred meal; no one gave him prayer sticks; was was very lonely. He said to his two children: You will go into the fourth womb. Your fathers, your mothers, ka-eto’we, tcu-eto’we, mu-eto’we, le-eto’we, all the society priests, society pekwins, society bow priests, you will bring out yonder into the light of your sun father” (24). Thus he said to them. They said, “But how shall we go in?” “That will be all right.” Laying their lightning arrow across their rainbow bow, they drew it. Drawing it and shooting down, they entered. (Bunzel, “Zuni Origin Myths” 584)

The passages in italics reveal different audiences for each of these origin
stories. In Parson’s exoteric account, the “people”\(^{49}\) are called out by the Sun God into the Fourth Chamber; in Bunzel’s, it is the various priesthoods that comprise this highly ritualized society that will be brought out by Sun God’s children.

The differences between these versions are substantial and worthy of careful consideration by anthologists and professors of American literature who may be tempted to teach Bunzel’s text in the *Heath*. First, they reveal that the “definitive” Zuni origin story is not easily located. The broad outlines of the story can perhaps be triangulated by comparing various versions, but this Ur-story, if it exists at all, will probably never be rendered entirely in textual form. Given this fact, the study of this origin story, and others, should begin with an available published text or texts and work outwards rather than treat any particular published version as definitive. The Zuni experience teaches that the “purest” versions of these stories exist in a form that is inseparable from ritual. Since the anthology cannot reconstruct these ritual moments, the anthology reader is left with fragmentary textual versions that have passed through multiple filters of translation, transliteration, and editorial control. These fragments should be treated as such, rather than as direct vehicles to experiencing or understanding the cultures they “represent” in multicultural anthologies. Without their textual history clearly on display, these fragments risk being read as myths in a “comparative mythology” sense of the word, rather than texts that can be compared, with some degree of integrity, to other

\(^{49}\) The Zuni refer to themselves as Ashiwi, which means simply “People.”
similar fragments.

This basic respect for the textual dimension of the origin story will lead to a different kind of framing for origin stories than one currently finds in most anthologies. The Heath’s current framing of the “Talk,” for example, seems to support the “comparative” approach I mentioned earlier. The Heath uses an emergence-as-literary-trope approach to characterize its origin stories, focusing attention on binary universal themes such as the ascendance from darkness to light, or the progression from chaos to order, or the “dynamic of evolution” (Wiget, “Native American Oral Narrative” 14-15); it searches the text for portable metaphors that can be used in comparative analysis with other origin stories. By contrast, a different approach that emphasized emergence-as-culturally-specific-story would point the reader to links between the text and the specific cultures that produced it. Emergence in Bunzel’s version of the “Talk,” for instance, is more akin to metonym than a metaphor, because its influence can be read across the broad scope of Zuni social, cultural, and religious life. Emergence is the central motif for Zuni ritual life (indeed, the emergence story holds a similarly important place among all the Pueblo peoples). Elsie Clews Parsons has observed that “Anything that is authentically Pueblo, including the vast majority of ritual is believed by Pueblo to have ‘came up with us’” (Parsons, Pueblo Indian Religion, 210). As I have already suggested, the story is distributed throughout Zuni’s highly ritualized religious life, with multiple versions told by every medicine society and clan in the society.

The migration that followed the emergence is similarly distributed. Parsons
reports that “Particular social organizations have each its own migration story, which is recited at group meetings as society ritual or, among the Hopi, as an expression of clan solidarity” (17). Zuni ethos are dominated by this sacred geography. Infants are born from the Corn Mother’s underground house and the dead “go underground, back to the world before the Emergence” (173). Emergence can even be seen in the architecture of many Pueblo villages. The most visible sign of the ubiquity of this motif is the Kiva, or ceremonial chamber, which contains a trap door through which katchina impersonators can arise, mimicking the act of emergence.

When read through the lens of this culturally specific metonymic rather than comparative mythology metaphorical structure for understanding emergence, Bunzel’s “Talk” seems to serve a specific role within the ritual life of Zuni rather than as a definitive story of emergence that is itself easily comparable to other such stories. Zuni is one of the most ritualized societies on earth, with at least six major religious societies whose activities span the year (Carmody and Carmody 95-98). In the 1930s, Elsie Clewes Parsons observed that in Zuni, poor people are defined as those “without ceremonial property or connection, belonging in no rain or curing society—people who are not ‘valuable’ (Parsons, Pueblo Indian Religion, 119). “No household in Zuni, it is safe to say, is without some society affiliation; quite commonly several societies are represented” (114). Ritual activities are distributed with some redundancy throughout the various religious societies in the community. In the Zuni winter solstice ceremony Shalako, for example, six nine-foot-tall kachinas roam the
town in this all-night, community-wide dance, each one visiting the eight households that were pre-selected to host the dancers. Each impersonator represents one of the six kivas at Zuni, which in turn are run by the six kachina societies that oversee the community’s religious life. At the winter retreat, which precedes Shalako, the priests of the six medicine societies will choose an impersonator to represent them at Shalako. The large Shalako masks are kept by members of each society until they are needed; these masks have been prepared with ritual precision and are believed to have “come up” with all other aspects of Zuni ritual life. Parsons describes the “Long Horn” mask from the Dogwood clan house in *Pueblo Indian Religion*:

> Long Horn’s torquois-colored mask has the one long horn “because he brings long life to all his people.” right eye small, “for the witch people, so that they may not live long,” left eye long “for the people of one heart, so that they may have long life.” black goat’s hair hangs from the horn and over forehead. Fawnskin quiver over right shoulder; bow and arrow in left hand, deer-scapula rattle in right. Many bead necklaces and bracelets “because he is very valuable.” (748)

I relate the broad outlines of this ritual only to suggest where Bunzel’s “Talk” fits into the larger tableau of Zuni ritual life. The medicine societies and priests of Zuni maintain the various fetishes, masks, and sacred objects that constitute the ritual life of Zuni. Bunzel’s version of the origin story, which is supposed to be recited during the eight-day winter retreat which ends four days before the masks for Shalako will be retrieved for the winter solstice.
ceremony, essentially sanctions the priesthood’s role in these important events. As the priests with their fetishes and sacred objects—prayer sticks, katchina masks, etc.—ascend from one chamber to the next, they carefully arrange “their sacred things in a row” before they prepare to move on to the next level. Emergence is not, then, an act to be imagined by reading or reciting a text, it is performed more or less at every level of Zuni society, but especially in the medicine societies.

**Creation Stories and the Neo-Noble Savage**

Would anything be lost by framing Native American origin stories as textual artifacts with a specific textual history rather than oral stories that exist in mythological time? Consider the *Norton’s* exceptional headnote to its selections from the text of *Black Elk Speaks*, perhaps the most well-known of Native American autobiographies (*Norton* 1823-24). Black Elk was an Oglala Sioux shaman who had witnessed Custer’s defeat at Little Big Horn in 1876 and performed in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. In 1931, a poet named John Neihardt recorded his autobiography with the help of his daughters Enid and Hilda, and Black Elk’s son, who acted as translator in the sessions with Black Elk, who was by then an old man. Neihardt published the results of these interviews, *Black Elk Speaks*, first in 1932, but its reissue in 1961 made the book an often-quoted classic in the 1960s and 1970s. The *Norton* selects just the section from Chapter III, which details Black Elk’s vision quest, but the headnote offers a fascinating critical analysis of the book’s textual history. The reader learns, for example, that Black Elk spoke through an interpreter, his
son, in a dialect called “Red English” or “Indian English” and that Black Elk, who had converted to Catholicism in 1904 and ceased his work as a shaman, said almost nothing about his Christian beliefs in his conversations with Neirhardt. The reader also learns that anthropologist William Powers complained that Neirhardt’s mystical Christian beliefs distorted Black Elk’s presentation of Sioux beliefs.

This headnote manages to convey, in just a few paragraphs, not only the textual history of *Black Elk Speaks*, but also the complexities of its translation into English and the inter-cultural dimension underlying Black Elk’s vision quest. From this excellent starting point, students can engage in a sophisticated conversation about this text because the editors of the *Norton* have shown it to be a product of inter-cultural contact rather than trying to pass it off as an entirely “authentic” expression of Sioux religious experience.

This headnote can serve as a model for how anthologies should treat origin stories as well. Just a few years before Neirhardt conducted his interviews and only a few hundred miles away in Pueblo country, Ruth Bunzel sat down with her informant and conducted a similar interview wherein another act of inter-cultural storytelling occurred. This interview, and the text it produced, were similarly plagued by problems of translation. Bunzel’s introduction to the “Talk” in her published version makes these issues of mediation and translation quite explicit. In it, she reveals that she gathered this story from an “informant” at Zuni and that her version joins three previous “versions” of Zuni origin myths already in publication, all compiled by notable anthropologists
who studied the Zuni. Bunzel also reveals that there “is no single origin myth but a long series of separate myths. Each ceremonial group has a myth which contains, in addition to a general synopsis of early history, the mythological sanction for its own organization and rituals.” No collected version of “The Talk” exists anywhere because “no mind in Zuñi encompasses all knowledge” (Bunzel, Zuni Ceremonialism 548).

This brief textual history by Bunzel demonstrates some of the anthropological rigor that is perhaps missing from comprehensive anthologies as they reach out to include texts from non-Anglo cultures. Bunzel, following her training, frames the text as A) a product of anthropological inquiry, with a textual history and a brief acknowledgement of the limitations of her process process, and B) shows how this particular story fits into the larger whole of Zuni culture and ritual life. In short, she historicizes the text of her account and properly locates it within the cultural life of Zuni. Anthologists and literature instructors should follow this good practice when framing texts taken from the Native American oral tradition for students. These texts are always the product of cross-cultural communication and translation; these processes should be transparent in the headnotes attached to these texts.

As a consequence of this general disregard for the textual history of origin stories, textbook companies also ignore the linguistic dimension of these texts. Bunzel, who had learned to speak the Zuni language, offered a transliteration of the text that was true to her Boasian training with her original publication of the “Talk.” Boas encouraged his ethnographers to make a “faithful rendering of
the native tales” by using a “crib” or “trot”—a two-tracked translation rubric that rendered both a phonetic script from the Native language with the English words underneath (Tedlock 31) The trot for her text of the “Talk” looked like this:

The trot was awkward, however, and not easy to read, so immediately
afterwards in the article, Bunzel translates the trot into a smoother, more comprehensible English version of the story; this is the version that currently appears in the *Heath*. Something important is lost, however, by omitting the trot from the *Heath*’s presentation of the “Talk”—the very real sense that this text originated in a foreign language and required an act of translation in order to be made sensible to its modern American audience.

This new approach I’m proposing would necessitate a new starting point for teaching Native American oral literature—one in which the origin story is treated as a textual artifact, and therefore subject to all the limitations in time and space of that accompany any textual artifact. This approach would perhaps make texts like the “Talk” less relatable to other origin stories, because it would demand of students that they treat “emergence” and “earth-diver” as culturally specific phenomena rather than literary tropes that can be applied to stories from numerous cultural groups. But ultimately, students would encounter a rich historical perspective—that moment of boundary contact when two cultures meet and exchange stories.
CHAPTER FOUR

WATCHING WHAT WE EAT

COLUMBUS, VACA, AND CULTURAL CANNIBALISM IN ANTHOLOGIES

By almost every reasonable measure of what constitutes an American author, Christopher Columbus should not appear in anthologies of American literature. He never lived or even set foot in what would later become known as the United States; nor did he ever write about the land or people who lived in its geographic boundaries. He was dead before Europeans began to refer to the continent using the name “America,” a word derived from the name of explorer and map-maker Amerigo Vespucci. The long-term effect of his mission was to open the continent to European colonialism, but the immediate legacy of his life’s work was to give Spain, and the Spanish language, a firm foothold in the Western Hemisphere. When Columbus died, the momentum of European Colonialism on the new continent was firmly in favor of the Spanish Main, and it would be more than another century before English was spoken with any regularity in North America.

Regardless of these rather daunting impediments to his potential status as an American writer, Columbus has finally, after centuries of neglect, planted his flag in American literature. The evidence of this can be seen most clearly in modern anthologies of American literature. He never appeared in comprehensive anthologies prior to the 1980s, but between 1985 and the late
1990s—a period that brackets the quincentennial celebration of the explorer’s historic Atlantic crossing—Norton, Macmillan, Prentice Hall, and Harper published comprehensive anthologies that listed Christopher Columbus first in their tables of contents. Excerpts from the explorer’s *Diario* and letters can now be found in all five of the major anthologies currently in use in American literature classrooms, and two of these, the *Prentice Hall* and *Longman* anthologies, currently feature Columbus first in their tables of contents.

From one perspective, Columbus has always been a contender for “American writer” status. Regardless of his country of origin, Columbus is a bona fide American cultural icon, like Lincoln, Washington, and Jefferson. Indeed, for the past two centuries, Columbus has proved both a compelling and unpredictable icon, “a malleable and durable American symbol [who] has been interpreted and reinterpreted as we have constructed and reconstructed our own national character” (Schlereth 973). Gerald Vizenor, noting the layered ironies and multiple significations surrounding Columbus, calls the explorer

> The slaver, the one who sailed in the inquisitions, and landed on a commemorative coin in a national exposition, and heard a new symphony in his name. The ‘long gaze’ of his names has reached from

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50 Delano West summarizes his role in American culture: On the eve of the American Revolution, poems, songs, sermons, and polemic essays in which Columbus was idealized as the discoverer of a new land for a new people flowed from New England. Such veneration culminated in a movement to name the national “Columbia.” In 1792, in a concerted effort to focus attention on the new nation’s glorious past and future, the first Columbian celebrations were held in Baltimore, Boston, and New York. In 1892, Columbus served as a symbol of American pride and progress for the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago” (254-5). In the early part of the twentieth century, Italian Americans turned the explorer into an ethnic hero-figure; in the latter half, liberal intellectuals made him the scapegoat for centuries of European colonialist atrocities in the Western Hemisphere.
colonial monarchies to the Santa Maria and on to the White House in Washington. (226)

If Columbus is now a “literary” figure, this is no stranger than any other signification attached to this most durable of American icons.

The arrival of Columbus coincides with major upheavals in American literature as an academic discourse. Columbus landed in anthologies in the 1980s, at about the same time the quincentennial made the explorer’s infamy a front-page story in the culture wars. The temptation to revise the Columbus myth was perhaps irresistible to textbook editors who were looking for ways to broaden the definition of American literature. By supplanting John Smith, who was traditionally the earliest explorer and colonist in comprehensive anthologies, Columbus becomes an emblem of a new, more ethnically diverse definition of American literature that no longer relies on Anglo-Saxon cultural or linguistic origins; he also represents a transnational widening of the geo-cultural boundaries of America to include Spanish colonial territories as contributors to the American story. Columbus also fits well into an emerging literary historical theme that focuses on Native American literature. Columbus stands at the beginning of the “long gaze” of European representations of los indios; he is therefore indispensable to any serious literary historical treatment of the subject.

But the newly anthologized Columbus also signifies an over-extension of the representational capacity of the new multicultural conception of American literature, wherein documents of French and Spanish colonialism and the
cultural expressions of indigenous people are brought under the expanding cover of an American literature that reaches out in the name of diversity to claim the various tributaries to the history and culture of the continent as part of the American story, while simultaneously folding them into an “English only” space for considering the history and culture of the continent. On the surface, this gesture unfolds as a liberal commitment to pluralism and diversity—a desire to correct the hegemonic old order in American literary studies, which imagined American literature and culture in restrictive Anglo-American terms. But if we scratch away this thin veneer of progressivism, the old dull surface of cultural imperialism is still palpable underneath—that ancient machinery of power that allows dominant cultures to cannibalize subordinate ones in order to create a collective sense of national identity.

**The Progressive Columbus**

If Columbus arrived late to American literature, it is because until recently, he was an odd fit for the historical narratives that defined it. Since the late nineteenth century, American literary historiography located the origins of American literature in the English colonial settlements of Plymouth and Jamestown, and before this, back to England itself. These stories of origin were indicative of the rather narrowly Anglo-centric idea of national literature that dominated literary historiography until the 1960s.\(^{51}\) These old Anglophilic

\(^{51}\) The *Norton Anthology*’s General Editor Nina Baym writes that “in the second decade of the twentieth century, academics defined a field of study called ‘American literature’ . . . by appropriating and sophisticating a narrative already
origin stories recently lost their appeal among scholars, critics, and literary historians. Writing in his 2000 analysis “Early American Literature at the New Century,” Phillip Gura describes the dissolution of the “continuities thesis,” which once sought to draw clear lines of descent from early American literature, especially Puritan and New England writers, and the writers of the American Renaissance⁵² (602).

The erosion of the continuities thesis has made room for new authors and texts in anthologies. Baym describes these changes in her introduction to the Sixth Edition of the *Norton Anthology*:

While the New England colonies have conventionally been regarded as the centerpiece of early American literature, the first North American settlements had been founded elsewhere years, even decades earlier. St. Augustine, Jamestown, Santa Fe, Albany, and New York, for instance. English was not the only language in which the early North American texts were written.” (11)

In this passage, Baym geographically maps the broadening of the old Early American Literature section, which for much of the twentieth century, opened with John Smith and focused primarily on Anglo-American Puritan writers. The Seventh Edition of the *Norton*, Shorter Version, opens with Iroquois and Pima

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⁵² This thesis has always stood on shaky ground. William Spengemann blames Samuel Knapp, author of the first book-length history of American literature in 1829, for “bequeathing” to later American literary historians this problem of explaining the principles of continuity and change that make Bradford and Irving, Wigglesworth and Bryant figures in the same historical frieze” (521).
creation stories, selections from *The Relation of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca*, and two letters from Columbus before it moves on to Puritan standbys like William Bradford, Ann Bradstreet, Mary Rowlandson, and Edward Taylor. By adding Columbus and Vaca, the *Norton* has expanded the palette of European colonialism that was found in North American in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, building a bridge to the Spanish settlements of Florida and New Mexico.

The dissolution of the continuities thesis does not entirely explain why Columbus began turning up in anthologies twenty years ago, however. Columbus, like Smith, is mainly valuable to anthologies for his testimony about Indians; indeed, the actual selections from Columbus’s letters and *Diario* in comprehensive anthologies mainly focus on his observations of indigenous people.\(^{53}\) For example, both the Seventh Edition of the *Norton* and the 2004 Longman *American Literature* begin with Columbus’s letter to Luis de Santángel about the first voyage wherein Columbus writes: “I found very many islands filled with people innumerable, and of them all I have taken possession

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\(^{53}\) *Prentice Hall’s* 2000 *American Literature* follows a similar format: immediately after its opening section titled “Traditional Native-American Literary Expression,” Columbus heads the next section called “The Literature of Exploration” with selections from the *Diario* that mainly focus attention on his observations about the Indians. On Friday, October 12, he encounters “naked people” on San Salvador and under the royal standard takes possession of the island for the King and Queen. On Saturday, October 13, “there came to the beach many of these men, all young men, as I have said, and all of good stature, very handsome people” (34). On October 14, he circumnavigates the island to find more villages, from which came more men “and many women, each with something, giving thanks to God, throwing themselves on the ground”; of these he captures seven “to learn our language and return; unless Your Highnesses should order them all to be taken to Castile or held captive in the same island, for with 50 men they could all be subjected and made to do all that one wished.” (36) Similarly, in the latest edition of the *Heath*, the first section on “Native American Oral Literatures” is followed by longer selections from the *Diario* on the First Voyage, which offers copious descriptions of the Indians and ends with Columbus’s capture of five young men, seven women, and three children from among the natives.
for their highnesses, by proclamation made and with the royal standard unfurled, and no opposition was offered to me” (Columbus, “Letter to Luis de Santangel” 26). Modern comprehensive anthologies quite explicitly emphasize Columbus role as colonizer, often contextualizing him in the infamy of Spanish colonialism. Every anthology I surveyed except for Prentice Hall makes note of Spanish brutality towards Indians in the Caribbean soon after 1492 in its section introductions and/or headnotes.54

This is not Columbus the wise, brave explorer of destiny presented by many American history textbooks; or Columbus the Great Renaissance Man; or Columbus the champion of a spherical earth from Washington Irving’s two-volume biography. This Columbus represents a precipitous break from the one that many people over the age of forty remember encountering in their grammar school history textbooks. James Loewen, analyzing the role of Columbus in the twelve most popular high school-level history textbooks of the twentieth century, concludes that they “present Columbus pretty much without precedent, and they portray him as America’s first great hero” (29). The newly anthologized Columbus, by contrast, is morally suspect, even dangerous, as he muses about how easily the Indians might be conquered. His innocence

54 The new Bedford anthology, in its introduction to “Literature to 1750,” observes that “Within a few years of Columbus's landing on Hispaniola [. . .] the enslaved Taino population had declined so precipitously that the Spaniards began to import slaves, first from other island and then from Africa” (14). In its head note to the section on Columbus, the Bedford again observes that on Hispaniola “the native Taino population was reduced from as many as a million in 1492 to roughly thirty thousand in 1510” (67). Pearson’s Columbus head note observes that by 1992 “his name was tarnished as researchers and critics called attention to the ghastly price—massacres, slavery, death by disease—paid by the native people he encountered” (35). The Longman’s Columbus section is immediately followed by a vivid excerpt from Bartolome de las Casas, wherein the friar reports that the Spanish colonists “behaved with such temerity and shamelessness that the most powerful ruler of the islands had to see his own wife raped by a Christian officer,” among other atrocities (42).
and wonderment is tinged with prophetic terror as he matter-of-factly captures and enslaves Indians in the name of the Spanish crown and justifies this act by recalling Portuguese practices in Africa. One cannot read this Columbus without recalling some echo of the fierce battles fought around his name during the quincentennial, or undertones of the New Left Historicism of popular historians like Howard Zinn and Dee Jones, who envision the origin point of American history as a genocidal encounter between European and indigenous North American cultures.

**Anthologies and Cultural Cannibalism**

For all its obvious signs of progressivism and New Left historicism, the newly anthologized Columbus also signifies a subtle but still profound gesture of power. His inclusion illustrates how far the profession of literary studies will venture to claim cultural influences for an American literature. I would like to suggest here that this desire for inclusion sometimes follows a less-than-progressive impulse.

To speak to this impulse, I reference Deborah Root’s metaphor of “cannibal culture” from her 1995 book of the same name. “Because of the high ideas associated with Western art,” she writes, “many people have been unwilling to recognize that aesthetics are dependent on very explicit sets of power relations. Within Western aesthetics other cultural traditions have been assigned the role of artistic resource, to be harvested pretty much at the pleasure of the colonizers” (19). Root suggests that “consumption” is a basic muscle instinct in
Western Civilization, and that Western societies freely consume from subjugated cultures in pursuit of art. Beginning with the Greeks, Western societies have projected savagery and bloodlust onto their enemies, but Root traces a primitive instinct at work in these “civilized” societies as well—a cannibalistic desire that is “generalized into society as a whole” because consumption has been made a virtue and a source of intense pleasure (9). Western art consumes the traces of cultural groups that are powerless to resist.

As an instrument of Western aesthetic production, anthologies are inherently cannibalistic. They consume texts from a wide variety of cultural sources and digest them in order to produce a coherent vision of aesthetic culture. Some of these texts are more clearly “harvested” from subjugated cultures than others. In the previous chapter, I showed how the Zuni origin story in the Heath was culled from a society that is generally reticent about sharing its culture with the outside world. The story was acquired by anthropologist Ruth Bunzel in 1930, who relied on an “informant” to circumvent the tribe’s explicit prohibition against non-Zuni people gaining access to the details of their ritual life (please see Chapter 3 for a fuller treatment of this subject). Bunzel’s use of an informant to gather stories that would otherwise be denied to her is a metaphor for the general inequality of power relations that characterize Anglo appropriations from indigenous people.

As I survey the first few sections of the Heath Anthology of American Literature, Concise Edition, I see other potential sites for exploring this
inequality of power relations. I encounter textual representations of Zuni, Seneca, and Iroquois origin stories, as well as oral poetry from the Aleut, Cherokee, and Crow peoples. The inclusion of such texts is regarded by many people in the field of literary studies as a progressive move—a long-overdue act of inclusion that recognizes the contribution of indigenous people to American history, culture, and literature, but it is not difficult to also imagine these newly anthologized texts as objects of cultural appropriation that have been selected, packaged, and sold to mostly non-Native consumers who are hungry for “authentic” expression of Native American culture. Root finds ample evidence of cultural cannibalism in the general Western desire for aesthetic objects from Native Americans—in a tourist shop in Victoria, British Columbia, for example, where one can purchase “authentic” Indian crafts—“Killer whale prints, silver jewelry, Tsonokwa masks, Cowichan sweaters, [and] large carvings of grizzly bears” (67). New Age religionists buy and sell from a smorgasbord of quasi-religious items but seem especially fixated on items from Native American cultures. Indian “Wannabes” fuel a thriving market for sweatlodge retreats and Zuni kachina dolls. At the core of this freewheeling appropriation of Native American “cultural” items is a fundamental Western notion that the entire world is a marketplace wherein everything, even culture, is for sale55 (97).

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55 This critique of Western “appropriation” seems to be growing in academic circles, particularly among postcolonialists. Edward Said’s Orientalism provided an early inspiration for this critique by outlining a longstanding “fascination” with the Orient that has helped shape the Occidental world’s sense of itself. At the heart of this critique is a dialectical notion of culture wherein the dominant culture’s identity is produced in a struggle with a conquered one. Another theoretical source for this critique of appropriation comes from Deleuze and Guattari, who suggest that “deteritorialization” has
The “consumption” of indigenous culture through literary appropriation is a principal concern of “separatist” Native American critics like Craig Womack, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, and Robert Allen, who have objected to the absorption of Native American literature into the whole of American literature. Womack, for instance, has written “tribal literatures are not some branch waiting to be grafted onto the main trunk. Tribal literatures are the tree, the oldest literatures in the Americas, the most American of American literatures” (6-7). The separatist reluctance to be “grafted” onto the main trunk is perhaps part of a larger resistance movement in Native America, wherein indigenous people increasingly assert their rights over cultural property. Simon Harrison notes a “growing resistance which some [tribal] communities seem to be starting to show to the unauthorized use of their cultural heritage with intellectual property law”; she mentions the Lakota campaign to prevent a beer distributor from using the name Crazy Horse as a trademark and a suit filed by the Zia Pueblo community to prevent their sun symbol from being used as the state emblem of New Mexico (11).

The separatist argument is interesting to me because it demonstrates how an act of inclusion can also be seen as an act of “consumption” or “absorption” depending on one’s perspective. Modern comprehensive anthologies like the Heath seem to regard “inclusion” as a generally beneficial and beneficent posture, but one does not have to look very far to see challenges to this conceit.
Separatists, for example, have sparred publicly with Arnold Krupat, the Norton Anthology’s Native American Literature editor, who has long campaigned to include Native American literature in the wider canon of American literature. Krupat has rather narrowly defined the proprietary rights of Indians over “Native American literature.” In his book Turn to the Native (1996) he argues that literary appropriations of Native American texts are not the same as museums holding sacred objects under glass. He argues rather effectively that texts written by Native Americans for public consumption and widely circulated outside of tribal control cannot be conceived as the property of the cultural groups the produced them. The cultural property metaphor, he says, obscures the complex issues of cultural transmission and hybridity that surround these texts (22-23).

While I agree with Krupat’s general position that one cannot “steal” an already published story in the same way one might steal a sacred object and then display it in a museum, the separatists are nevertheless justified in pushing back against cultural appropriation of these texts. Krupat himself acknowledges that non-Indians have “tended not to notice or care much about what David Sassoon has called the ‘devastation’ in indigenous America and elsewhere ‘caused by the foreign [Western] imperative to study catalog and collect’” (21). To see this “devastation,” we must move beyond a legalistic understanding of the damage that appropriation might cause a particular cultural group. Cultural appropriation can be violative even if a “theft” of physical property has not technically or legally occurred. “Colonial
domination,” writes Frantz Fanon, “because it is total and tends to oversimplify, very soon manages to disrupt in spectacular fashion the cultural life of a conquered people” (170). The oversimplification of a complex culture by a more powerful one can potentially destroy it as surely as the heavy hand of a conqueror bent on conversion at the point of sword. For example, M. F. Brown, speaking of Native American attitudes towards the New Age movement’s appropriation of Indian traditions, observes that many Indian religious leaders regard this practice as a “kind of doppelganger, and evil imitation close enough to the real thing to upset the delicate balance of spiritual power maintained by Indian ritual specialists” (qtd. in Harrison 11). Not all objections to cultural appropriation are motivated by spiritual concerns, but most are concerned with the damage these appropriations will wreak on the often delicately balanced ritual and cultural life of the community. The perception of damage, in this case, can only be understood by looking through the eyes of the injured party.

**The Double Entendre of Multicultural History**

The potential dangers of cultural appropriation and consumption are easy to see in the case of Native American literature because there are living people pushing back against these forces of consumption, resisting inclusion—or absorption—into the perceived whole of American literature. But I would argue that these same processes of expansion and cultural cannibalism are working on other texts that do not have vocal living advocates.

Multicultural history is a double entendre, signifying both a progressive
desire to include marginalized groups in the larger national whole and a gesture of domination whereby the cultural expression of these groups is made to service the needs of the dominant culture. I am reminded of Roland Barthes’ famous explication of a *Paris-Match* magazine cover in *Mythologies* (1956) wherein he deconstructs an image of a Senegalese boy in a French military uniform saluting the French flag.

On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all ther sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro serving his so-called oppressors. (116)

Barthes recognizes the illusory nature of pluralism here—the presence of imperial force hiding beneath the thin bourgeois gestures of multi-ethnic patriotism. Many great empires from the Romans to the Soviets have tolerated and even trumpeted diversity as a strength and virtue while simultaneously maintaining the dominance of its ruling group. For this reason, we should always be suspicious of such gestures, especially when they are made in the name of cultural or national identity.

With this caution in the foreground, I return to modern anthologies of American literature like the *Heath*, with their Native American texts and writing
by French and Spanish explorers on display—so much more diverse than anthologies published in the 1960s and 1970s. The chronology for American literary history that makes Spanish, French, and Native American texts the starting point for American literature suggests a principle of coherence that would graft Spanish, French, and Native American cultural expression onto a coherent formulation of American cultural identity. As I have already said in Chapter 1, a chronology is never a neutral chronicle of events as they occurred in the past. Chronologies group disparate events between an origin point and an end point, creating a principle of coherence and the outline of a future unity (Foucault 33), identifying an origin point, selecting representative events, and stringing these events together in a chronicle that purports to explain how the present was arrived at, ultimately fashioning a coherent whole that communicates a theory of history to its audience. “History in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic cultures has always been linear, always beginning with a beginning,” writes Thomas Bender. “Both this linearity and the emphasis on origins has a cost” (8). The act of aligning a beginning with an ending narrows the field, omitting a “plenitude of stories” (8).

This principle of coherence makes the beginning, or origin point, of the chronology, vitally important real estate. It is here, in the beginning, that coherence begins to form. And when one changes the origin point, this coherence changes. Until recently, for example, the historical narratives of Australia, Canada, South Africa, and the U.S. emphasized origins in Anglo-Saxon “settler colonies” rather than a more expansive view of the nation’s
origins (Gabaccia 434). Beginning in the 1950s and continuing to the present, the settler colony origin stories have been under revision in all of these nations, however, including the U.S. This revisionism produces a new, more pluralistic vision of the history of the nation, but national unity remains the prevalent concern. An increasingly pluralistic understanding of the nation’s origins has not lead to balkanization in any of these nations;\textsuperscript{56} Indeed, one could argue that multiculturalism itself is a new brand of nationalism. Donna Gabaccia observes: “[…] it seems likely that most new multicultural histories are actually scholarly efforts to re-imagine the meaning of nationalism and to describe new grounds for national unity” (442).

Gabaccia’s comments are interesting, because they suggest that the public effort to recognize ethnic and cultural groups in the margins of society is bound up in a larger effort to preserve national unity and identity. If Gabaccia is right, than the multiculturalist’s desire to change the origin point for American history is not a radical embrace of ethnic nationalism but instead a revision or updating of the old nationalism. This multiculturalism-as-new-nationalism perspective opens up new avenues for speculation about the motivation and rationale of multicultural history. Consider, for example, the possibility that an American nationalism freed from its “settler colony” origin stories is also free to imagine new, perhaps even ancient, beginnings for the American nation-state. Most of the modern European nation-states located their sense of national

\textsuperscript{56} A possible exception is Canada, where French-speaking Quebec has pushed for greater autonomy.
identity in the ancient antecedents, building often tenuous continuities that stretch back into prehistory, connecting with ancient Britons and Gals and the Germanic tribes of the Roman period. Ethnic nationalism in Europe is predicated on these continuities. The United States may be embracing a multicultural nationalism that similarly locates its origins in a prehistoric past by trying to claim indigenous people as its historical and cultural antecedents. If this is true, than recognizing the Native American contribution to the nation’s history and culture is yet another strategic appropriation in which the cultural expression of indigenous people is made to service the dominant culture’s sense of its own history. Like the Romans, who famously appropriated Greek mythology and history after conquering them, synthesizing them with their own, the American empire subsumes the history and culture of the civilizations it has supplanted and imported to the North American continent.

Multicultural and Monolingual

Literary scholars and historians have struggled to apply the theoretical imperatives of multiculturalism and transnationalism to the writing and teaching of literary history, but the effects of this ongoing project are mixed. Andrew Wiget, a scholar of Native American literature and an editor for the Heath, strikes a note of frustration when he complains: “The timidity, the futility, of the ‘new’ literary history lies precisely in this: that it has failed to address effectively the multivocality of America’s many literary traditions. Insights do not come simply from making space for alien texts. Instead we
must make sense from alien texts” (Wiget 210). Almost everyone seems to agree with the need to “make space” for previously marginalized or excluded authors and works, but “making sense” of these new additions is a far more challenging task. Adding texts by African Americans, Latino/as, and Native Americans to anthologies and course reading lists is easily accomplished, but these new texts also require from students and instructors a heightened level of cultural and linguistic awareness that must precede the act of reading them.

This preparatory work is not always done, however, and the result is often a superficial encounter with the culture represented by the text in question. Gayatri Spivak asks:

What actually happens in a typical liberal-multicultural classroom “at its best”? On a given day we are reading a text from one national origin. The group in the classroom from that particular national origin in the general polity can identify with the richness of the texture of the ‘culture’ in question, often through a haze of nostalgia. (I am not even bringing up the question of the definition of culture.) People from other national origins in the classroom (other, that is, from Anglo) relate sympathetically but superficially, in an aura of same difference. The Anglo relates benevolently to everything, “knowing about other cultures” in a relativist glow. (Spivak 183).

The work required to avoid such facile encounters with “alien” texts is substantial and should never be underestimated or dismissed by instructors who want to delve into foreign cultural territory. Again, I return to Fanon and
the dangers of “oversimplification”: An act of oversimplification can potentially occur whenever something foreign is recontextualized as easily knowable. Consider, again, the act of reading anthologized stories taken from the oral traditions of indigenous people. By translating the alien indigenous text into a sensible language [English] and then recontextualizing it in a comfortable, familiar framing [the anthology], that which is alien—its foreign script, or its unfamiliar cadences, or its strange vocalizations—is virtually erased in the act of translation. In a cultural exchange among partners of relatively equal power and autonomy, this appropriation can function as a kind of communication, because both parties are in a position to re-articulate the original conditions of the texts, to correct mistranslated words or passages, and to assert the primacy of meanings. But when the appropriator possesses vastly superior power, the less powerful culture risks being defined, and therefore, erased, through this process. The more powerful culture is free to generalize, define, and assert, and to potentially destroy the subject culture.

This process of oversimplification through translation can be seen in the *Heath* anthology’s inclusion of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, the Spanish explorer who pushed up from Mexico into what is now the American Southwest in the 1520s and 1530s, and his successor, Gaspar Perez de Villagra, the colonizer of New Mexico and author of *Historia de la Nueva Mexico*. The *Heath*’s gesture towards recognizing the Chicano contribution to American literature and culture seems obvious here, but one cannot overlook the bitter irony implied by this act of inclusion: These two Spanish writers were agents of the
Spanish colonial empire at the height of its power as it dominated the Western
equatorial empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, penetrating and
colonizing it under the banner of Spain; their presence in a 21st century
anthology of American literature, translated into English, highlights the failure
of this Spanish empire, and the fact of an American empire that rose up in its
place, which now culturally consumes the traces of Spain’s imperial presence
in the Americas, making them service a multi-ethnic sense of American
identity.

Some will no doubt find my implication of “reverse colonization”
problematic. Spain, after all, is a Western nation, an old colonial power; can we
speak of “appropriation” of Spanish literature in the same way we do cultural
appropriations from indigenous people? The unbalanced power differential that
Root identifies as an aspect of cultural cannibalism arguably does not exist in
the case of American appropriations from Spanish literature. This statement
may be true if we are contrasting two modern nation-states as partners in a
cultural exchange, but the picture changes when we focus instead on the
position of Spanish culture and language in North America. Manuel M. Martin-
Rodriguez has written “From 1598 to 1848 cultural production in Spanish
flourished in the present-day Southwest and California. The identification of
the colonial population with that language reached its symbolic peak in 1848,
when, by virtue of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Spanish officially ceased to
be the hegemonic language and culture of los americanos, but 1848 marked a
profound shift in power in the Southwest, a new colonial domination that
extended Anglo-American hegemony over the region. American expansionist power was on the rise, colonizing the continent and confronting the old colonial powers around the world. The apex of this expansionism came fifty years later when the Americans won the Spanish American War and seized the remnants of the old Spanish Main as spoils, including Cuba and Puerto Rico. American imperialism was on the rise, crushing the old colonial power, driving it back.

Given the struggle for Chicano identity in the Southwest, the Heath’s inclusion of texts by Alvar Nuñez de Vaca and Gaspar Perez de Villagra is a rather complex symbolic act. On the one hand, it suggests a genuine recognition of the longstanding Chicano cultural presence in North America. Martin-Rodriquiz has called the inclusion of Vaca in the 1994 edition of the Heath and other “prominent venues” for cultural expression in the U.S. a major accomplishment for Chicano historians, who have worked hard to establish the fact of a Chicano presence in American history (28). Ada Savin pointedly declares that “the Relaciones or Narracion de los Naufragios (1542) by Cabeza de Vaca—arguably, the ‘father’ of Mexican-American literature—preceded by almost a century John Smith’s Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles (1624)” (200). This gesture says, “the Chicanos are American too; in fact, they were here before the English planted their flag on the East Coast.”

But the Heath’s act of inclusion also quietly affirms the dominance of Anglo-American culture through language. The act of representation is not the problem in the Heath, but rather the manner of this representation—the way in
which the anthology frames the text for its readers. The following paragraphs are taken from the end of the headnote to de Vaca’s text in the *Heath*, written by Juan Bruce-Novoa at the University of California at Irvine: “Cabeza de Vaca’s is the New World, mestizo voice speaking for the first time from what is now the U.S. literary tradition. His text both narrates and incarnates the process of becoming something new we now call American” (57). Bruce-Novoa means “American,” I think, in the sense of Ada Savin’s claim that the conflictual encounter” between the two projections of European culture in North America—English and Spanish—have produced a dynamic “Pan-American literary paradigm in which the multiple cultural layers making up the New World imagination would co-exist” (201). Pan-Americanism in this context is a form of hybrid culture that results from intra-cultural contacts.

But a significant gulf separates the real-world multilingual Pan-Americanism that defines the culture of Vaca’s New Mexico even today, and the monolingual articulation of Pan-Americanism in the *Heath’s* English-only version of Vaca’s text. The real-world paradigm of Pan Americanism in a place like Santa Fe—where Anglo, Chicano, and Indian cultures mix—is profoundly multilingual. English may be the lingua franca there, but it is also true that the unique mixed cultural environment of this city is only possible because its three main cultural groups preserve the integrity of their cultures through language. The *Heath*, by contrast, establishes a strictly mono-lingual zone for Vaca’s text. Consequently, Vaca’s “mestizo voice” will only be gestured to in the *Heath* from a great distance, through its headnote, but never actually read or
even heard by students.

And herein lies the problem: The *Heath* may indeed provide an appropriate representational venue for Chicano literature to achieve a level of cultural stature through the act of inclusion, but the *Heath* fails utterly to provide students with a meaningful cultural encounter with these texts. This failure is not particular to the *Heath*, but to print anthologies of American literature in general, which are “diverse” in their representation of cultural, ethnic, and racial groups, but not linguistically diverse in any way; everything in them has been translated into English and therefore subsumed across the barrier of language into the dominant culture. Readers are not even allowed to see the original languages from which non-English texts emerged alongside English translations of these texts. As I noted in the previous chapter, the Zuni origin story is rendered in English after being translated from the Zuni language by the anthropologist Ruth Bunzel, who transcribed the text in 1930. This entire process of transcription and cultural translation is erased by the *Heath*, which barely mentions the textual history of its version of the story and then re-arranges it in its chronology so that it appears to be a pre-Columbian artifact rather than an early twentieth-century one. This inattention to the linguistic elements of the original culture is typical of the way anthologies treat texts that originated in non-Anglo cultures.

By failing to render even the faintest traces of the original language of texts translated from Spanish and other languages, anthologies of American literature quietly assert Anglo-American cultural dominance over these texts.
With one hand, they highlight representational diversity by including the texts in the collection, but with the other, they erase the most obvious traces of real cultural diversity—the original language within which the text was first written or uttered. The “oversimplification” of a dominated culture begins in the translation of that culture into a new language.

Consider, for example, the simple matter of Columbus’s description of the population of Cuba in his letter to Luis de Santangel describing his first voyage, which is currently anthologized in the Norton, Bedford/St. Martin’s and Longman anthologies of American literature. In Columbus’s original letter, we find the sentence “Andouieron tres jornadas y hallaron infinitas poblaciones pequeñas i gente sin numero mas no cosa de regimiento.” All three anthologies use Cecil Jane’s 1930 translation of this letter, which renders the line above thusly: “They traveled three days’ journey and found an infinity of small hamlets and people without number, but nothing of importance.” Samuel Eliot Morison, who complained that Jane’s translations were riddled with errors of translation, in Journals and Other Documents on the Life and Voyages of Christopher (1963), translates the last part of the sentence “an infinite number of villages and people without number” (182). To most readers in English, the difference between village and hamlet will likely seem negligible, but reading this passage in Spanish, one sees Columbus straining to find language to describe the settlements he sees. Earlier in the letter, he explicitly says he found “no great cities or towns (no errar ciudades grandes o villas) but rather poblaciones pequeñas—“small populations” of Indians. Jane’s translation of
this phrase to “hamlet” and Morison’s to “village” allow us to imagine that Columbus witnessed a form of social organization that was familiar to them, and to us, but poblaciones pequeñas carries the subtle connotation of inexpressibility.

This is but one short phrase; there are dozens of such opportunities in every text in translation that appears in the various anthologies of American literature. Anthologists seem content to choose a “good translation” and treat it as the primary text rather than emphasizing the sometimes complex textual history surrounding each of these texts. They calculate, perhaps correctly, that most students will not find the details of translation interesting, and that most instructors lack the specific linguistic abilities to work in the original language. And there is the issue of cost: Creating multilingual versions of texts and additional textual apparatus will raise the cost of producing these textbooks; this will be measured against the perceived benefit of these features.

I do not expect textbook companies to take leadership in this regard. They are driven by profit, and the “bottom line” mitigates against printing multiple multilingual versions of anthologized texts. Ultimately, the major textbooks companies will respond to the needs of instructors. I raise the issue of translation mainly as a challenge to instructors of American literature, and to the profession of literary studies generally. The linguistic neutering of Columbus, Vaca, and other translated “American” authors in anthologies highlights the outer limits of the ongoing multicultural expansion project in American literary studies. How far should the profession of literary studies go
in expanding the representational capacity of American literature? My answer to this question is both simple and challenging: If instructors and textbook companies are not willing to deal with the linguistic complexities of texts translated into English from another language, they should perhaps think twice about including them on lists of American literature to begin with.

Perhaps now that the multicultural revolution is won, historians, scholars, and instructors of American literature should embrace a new Socratic humility with regard to texts that originated in languages and cultures that are foreign to our experience—a willingness to acknowledge the limits of our cultural and linguistic knowledge. As an M.A. student in religious studies, I struggled through four years of biblical Hebrew classes so I could translate Old Testament texts from the original Hebrew. Most Biblical scholars still believe that learning the languages of the cultures that produced the various books of the Bible is a necessary first step in understanding the cultural and historical contexts of these texts. This language requirement is by no means sufficient to gaining such understanding, but it is a necessary first step. A similar standard, is, I believe, also prudent for those of us who study and teach American literature. If we want to extend the reach of our literary tradition into non-English regions of American culture and history, we should be prepared to treat the original non-English versions of these texts with appropriate respect and rigor.

I am not advocating merging the English Department with Modern Languages or pushing mandatory additional non-English language studies for
graduate students in American literature. My proposals are more rather more modest:

1) *Investigate partnerships for team-teaching opportunities with the modern languages or ancient languages departments.* In some colleges and universities, these departments are territorial, working against one another rather than working together. Pursuing interdisciplinary partnerships would break down this distrust and create new opportunities for everyone involved.

2) *Encourage instructors to bring in guests to speak to cultural and linguistic issues relevant to particular texts.* The benefits of this proposal are obvious.

3) *Partner with indigenous groups in language preservation projects.* Tribal groups all over the country face linguistic extinction, and many tribes are seeking ways to preserve and pass on indigenous languages. Because of their training and education, literary professionals are uniquely qualified to assist in these projects. Over the long term, such partnerships will yield a greater understanding of indigenous languages by literary professionals.

4) *Build courses around linguistic strengths; be aware of linguistic weaknesses.* Instructors should think twice about assigning texts that were written in a language they know nothing about. They should also consider teaching texts that were written in non-English languages they know.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE SLAVERY THEME
LOOKING FOR THE “BIG PICTURE” SLAVERY IN ANTHOLOGIES

In the late 1990s, *Time* reported a curious story about fifth graders in Aurora, Colorado, who were buying people out of slavery in North Africa. While introducing a unit on American slavery, their teacher, Barb Vogel, had read an article on modern-day slavery in the Sudan to her 27 students. “There was terror and disbelief in their little eyes,” recalls Vogel (qtd. in Bales 101). One of her students, Brad Morris, said “No one had any idea that slavery could still be going on anywhere in the world. We decided to do something so it wouldn’t go on and on” (qtd. in Bales 103). The class subsequently launched a letter-writing campaign and fund-raising drive, and over the next few years, mainly through the direct intervention of human rights organizations using money raised by the schoolchildren, thousands of slaves were freed, often purchased for between $50 and $100 apiece (Bales 103).

The students’ initial terror over learning that slavery could “still be going on” is not surprising. For most Americans, the word “slavery” evokes a very specific and familiar historical narrative that can be summed up in this tagline for the PBS series “Slavery and the Making of America”: “The first [slaves] were bought in 1619. The last were freed in 1865. In the intervening 250 years,
slaves labored to make America what it is today” (Slavery). This brief chronology for American slavery begins with the importation of the first African slaves to the Jamestown settlement and ends with the decisive abolition of chattel slavery in the continental United States; the word “slavery” in this context evokes a cast of victims, perpetrators, and heroes that is familiar to any American who has completed grammar school-level American history. This meta-slavery narrative features the middle passage; cotton plantations with black slaves toiling in the fields while white aristocratic Southerners look on from the veranda; fugitive slaves plotting escape to the North; cruel white overseers; and, in the final chapter, an apocalyptic war that consumes slavery itself, birthing a new nation, and indeed a new world, free from slavery and therefore ostensibly more free for everyone. In this newer, better, freer world, American grammar school children should not be able to buy people in an African slave market, and for a fraction of the cost of a slave in the nineteenth century. The fact that they can suggests that those of us who teach this subject should always define slavery in broader terms than the American cultural definition.

Vogel’s classroom experiment hints at some of the possibilities for teaching American slavery in a modern, globally conscious classroom, but few teachers (or scholars for that matter) have treaded as boldly as she has. In a 2000 article in American Historical Review David Brion Davis complains “[A]fter more than three decades of voluminous scholarly research and publication, the average American, upon hearing the words ‘African-American slavery,’ will
almost certainly think of the South and the Civil War” (452). Davis suggests that Americans tend to “demarcate” slavery, walling it off and localizing it both regionally and historically. He argues for a more transnational study of slavery in North America, one that pushes past the confines of the continental United States and examines American slavery’s intercontinental dimensions. Slavery, Davis says, should be studied as a composite system that implicated dozens of societies around the world: “I am convinced that the Big Picture is indispensable as a first step toward coming to terms with the nature and workings of historical evil,” he insists, “while avoiding the pitfalls of demonizing special groups or dividing history into paranoid struggles between the children of light and the children of darkness” (456).

Vogel’s bold pedagogy and Davis’s “Big Picture” inspire my analysis of the slavery theme in comprehensive anthologies of American literature. Over the past two decades, anthologies have made room for slave narratives by Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Olaudah Equiano. These texts represent an overlooked genre of American literature that deserves to be fully recovered and represented in the canon of American literature, and their inclusion in anthologies is an important step in the overall project to make the teaching of American literature more diverse and inclusive. But publishing companies have made these texts the core of a new literary historical theme in anthologies; this theme has not yet been properly analyzed and critiqued as historical discourse. When I examine this slavery theme in anthologies from a teacher’s perspective, I find their treatment of the slavery to be limited, even
disappointing. Some of this disappointment stems from my cross-disciplinary reading in the history of slavery. Contemporary slavery historians seem increasingly interested in challenging the “small picture” parochial view of slavery Davis mentioned earlier. Stanley Engerman, for example, has identified three different frames that should be in place when we examine slavery:

First, slavery has been one of the most ubiquitous of human institutions, and has existed in many places . . . . Second, slavery, when it existed, should not be examined in isolation from other institutions and happenings at that or other times . . . Third. . . the previously sharp line between slavery as the evil and other labor and social systems that are therefore seen as quite different, and thus somehow more acceptable, has now become blurred, pointing to the usefulness of more detailed comparisons of the legalities and actualities of various types of social and labor institutions. (160)

Without properly illuminating each of these frames, the American experience of slavery can appear to exist in a regionally specific box, living in isolation from other related institutions of labor and servitude and speaking to a culturally specific set of concerns.

I propose to begin this critical analysis of the slavery theme in anthologies in this chapter, by posing some basic questions: How broadly do anthologies contextualize slavery for their readers? In what historical and cultural frames do they situate slavery as an historical phenomenon? How compelling or interesting is this new slavery theme from a pedagogical perspective? My
analysis suggests that anthologies offer a disappointingly parochial “small picture” view of slavery rather than reaching for the transnational “Big Picture” view advocated by Davis, Engerman, and many other modern historians of slavery. This window might be widened considerably by simply 1) adding texts that reference Barbary captivity to anthologies of American literature, and 2) by adding references to Indian slavery to the overall coverage of slavery in these collections.

**American Slaveries**

The American cultural definition of slavery, with its 1619-to-1865 timeline, encompasses the most culturally visible and historically significant form of slavery in American history. Black African slavery has played a central and defining role in the American story. African slave labor was used to build the foundational infrastructure of European colonialism and the American nation-state; slaves cleared fields, felled trees, worked the first plantations, and helped to make the first financial empires on the continent. Slavery was legal for the first eighty-nine years of the nation’s history, and no longstanding public institution in American life is untainted by it. Slavery was written into the legal codes of many states and enshrined in the Constitution. For the first two-and-a-half centuries of American colonial and national history, white Christians defended and upheld slavery in North America, often using the Bible as justification, and while a movement inspired by Christianity eventually brought slavery down, the long-term Christian sanction of slavery is undeniably a part
of American religious history. Slavery shaped population demographics. The vast majority of African Americans—currently twelve percent of the population—are descended from slaves, and many white American family trees intersect with blacks at some point. The death of slavery gave rise to institutionalized racism in America; many African Americans alive today remember living under an American form of Apartheid in the South, and under a more subtle but no less pervasive institutionalized racism in the rest of the country. And perhaps most tragic, slavery created the all-defining social construction of race in American life, and along with it, a deep and abiding national psychosis. Studs Turkel, in the subtitle to his 1992 book Race, refers to race as the “American obsession.” If we were to trace a genealogy of this obsession, we would invariably find African American slavery at the end of nearly every branch.

But cultural obsession with race and its historical antecedents sometimes obscures the complexity of American slavery, which is all too often rendered in overly simplistic narratives that banish the practice to the distant past. Slavery, more broadly defined, can be found to exist in every era of American history, taking a wide variety of forms from pre-Columbian times to the present and implicating a surprising cast of victims and perpetrators. Depending on

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how widely one is willing to define slavery, slaves might be found all over the
timeline of American history, taking unexpected forms. American Indians
practiced indigenous forms slavery before the Europeans arrived. The Spanish
likely brought African slaves with them into what is today the American
Southwest before the first black slaves arrived in Jamestown 1619; they also
enslaved Indians in the Southwest before the first English colonists arrived in
Jamestown and Plymouth.58 During the colonial period in North America, the
Spanish, French, and British enslaved Native Americans as well as Africans.59
Several varieties of debt bondage have existed in North America since colonial
times that might fit a “labor-centered” definition of slavery; even today, people
captured up in illegal forms of debt bondage are trafficked into the United States
every year for the purposes of forced labor and sexual slavery. The Cherokee
and Creek adopted a form of plantation slavery before the Civil War60 and
owned black slaves in imitation of their white neighbors (Halliburton 3-19).
Some blacks, like North Carolina entrepreneur William Ellison, owned slaves in
the South before the Civil War (Johnson and Roark xi-xii). Slave traffickers
targeted vulnerable people of all races in the nineteenth century. On October 7
1847, the Cherokee Advocate reported that the “notorious villain Mat Guerring

58 If one includes practices of slavery among some Native American groups, then slavery was being practiced in North
America long before the Europeans arrived.
59 In 1678, the Baconian rebels declared that “all Indians taken in warr be held and accounted slaves dureing life” (qtd. in
Morgan 264).
60 When former black slave Morris Sheppard said in a 1930 interview that “The good Lord knows I’m glad slavery is
over” (Halliburton 150) or Sarah Wilson, “In slavery days we ate sweet potatoes all the time” (Halliburton 164) they
were both referring to a life of bondage with Cherokee Indian masters in Oklahoma. The Cherokee began trading in
slaves captured from British colonists as early as 1673 (Halliburton 6) and throughout the eighteenth century, the
Cherokee gradually began to see slaves as profitable commodities for both trade and forced labor. By the beginning of
the nineteenth century, the Cherokee had “large plantations worked by gangs of Negro slaves” (Halliburton 20).
and Gang . . . broke into a home of some free mulatto and mixed-Cherokee-blood people at Fort Gibson and kidnapped two girls. In the presence of the mother they tied the girls while in bed and carried them off to the States” (qtd. in Halliburton 107). The famous case of Sally Miller, the German-born woman who was discovered living in slavery in New Orleans in 1843, illustrates that even whites were occasionally caught up in slavery. White Americans traveling across the Atlantic were sometimes captured by Barbary pirates and pressed into slavery in North Africa, a form of bondage that inspired dozens of “Barbary captivity narratives” in the early nineteenth century.

The overpowering force of the American cultural definition has tended to push these other forms of slaveries into the margins, or out of view entirely. Slavery historian Stanley Engerman acknowledged this recently when he observes

the previously sharp line between slavery as the evil and other labor and social systems that are . . . seen as quite different, and thus somehow more acceptable, has now become blurred, pointing to the usefulness of more detailed comparisons of the legalities and actualities of various types of social and labor institutions. (160)

The “line” Engerman refers to here has made African American slavery into a kind of transcendental signifier for slavery in the language; slavery is “the evil”

61 After German relatives of the Miller family claimed to recognize Sally working in a seedy New Orleans cabaret, twenty-five years after she reportedly had immigrated with her family from Germany, she became the focus of a legal battle that captivated the city, and then the entire nation “[. . .] the case cut to the ridiculous question with which the slaveholding South was obsessed: What is white? If Sally was as purely Teutonic as the driven Schnee, then there was no question about it: She could not be a slave and must be declared free. . . .” (Yardley).
against which so many formulations of “the good” are measured in American
culture—North against South, Abolitionists against pro-slavery Christians,
Freedom riders against the KKK. The entire notion of a progressive American
history in which the circle of people included in “all men are created equal” is
gradually widened across time—extending basic human rights and legal
protections along with it—depends upon upholding “the evil” in American
language, history, and culture. In this system, other forms of servitude and
slavery are aligned beneath African American slavery; pushed out into the
margins; described as less severe, less significant, or not even slavery at all.
Engerman is saying, I think, that in order to make “detailed comparisons”
between slave systems—the kinds of sophisticated comparisons historians
should always be making—it is first necessary to suspend, temporarily, the
strong impulse to compare African American slavery to other forms of servitude
according to their “magnitude.”

I raise this issue because some readers will no doubt misinterpret my
broadening of the slavery window in anthologies as somehow diminishing or
detracting from African American slave literature. Such misinterpretations are
sadly endemic to an institutional culture that has so thoroughly and
uncritically embraced the “limited pie” territorialism of culture war-era identity
politics. I cannot account for such a limited vision in my own work, but I can
hopefully allay any fears or preconceptions produced by it. I can best explain
my approach by making an analogy to Holocaust history: No one can
understand the full magnitude and scope of the Holocaust by focusing
exclusively on the group most directly affected by it—European Jews; one must also consider the fate of Gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the mentally and physically handicapped at the hands of the Nazis in order to see the complete picture. To understand genocide as a twentieth-century phenomenon, one must certainly study the Holocaust, but also the genocide of Armenians by the Turks, and the Bosnian genocide of the 1990s, and the Cambodian genocide of the 1970s. Studying the complexities of the Nazi Holocaust and parallel genocidal events in the twentieth century will not detract from the horror or the magnitude of any of these events. To the contrary, making sophisticated, nuanced comparisons can only enhance our understanding of this tragic history.

My treatment of slavery and slave literature in this chapter follows a similar logic.

**The Small Picture Perspective in Anthologies**

Slavery, broadly defined, inspired two entirely distinct genres of slave literature—the African American slave narrative and the Barbary captivity narrative—and indirectly influenced a third, the Indian captivity narrative. In this chapter, I hope to illuminate some of the ways in which these other slaveries can enliven our presentation of slave literature in the American literature classroom; I will also argue for adding a few texts to anthologies that

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62 When properly situated in its cultural context, the Indian captivity narrative often describes practices that were closely associated with, or even synonymous with, indigenous forms of slavery in North America.
were inspired by or reference these slaveries.

Anthologies of American literature conceptualize slavery, and the literature of slavery, much more narrowly than the broadly defined “Big Picture” I outlined earlier. They have all, to varying degrees, constructed a new “slavery theme” around selections from the African American slave narrative genre. The term “slave narrative” typically denotes texts written by people of African descent who lived part of their lives in slavery in the Americas and either escaped from bondage or were manumitted. This genre covers a wide variety of texts written from 1703 through 1944; Marion Wilson Starling identifies some 6,006 that satisfy the definition (Gates ix). More than 200 of these were book-length productions. There is general agreement among scholars that this genre possesses unique characteristics, most notably the protagonist’s quest for freedom and humanity. There is also general agreement that the slave narrative genre borrows from other genres, most notably the oration, jeremiad sermons, spiritual autobiography, Indian captivity narratives, and the sentimental novel (Costanzo 3).

The five anthologies I surveyed all include at least two texts that clearly fit the conventional definition of a slave narrative—Douglass’s and Jacobs’s,63

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63 The *Heath*, which offers by far the most extensive coverage of the slavery theme, features a sub-chapter in its “Early Nineteenth Century” section titled “Race, Slavery, and the Invention of the ‘South,’” which includes selections from David Walker, William Lloyd Garrison, Lydia Maria Child, John Greenleaf Whittier, Angelina Grimke Weld, Sara More Grimke, Henry Highland Garnet, Wendell Phillips, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Mary Boykin Chesnut, and Abraham Lincoln; this section also includes both Douglass’s and Jacobs’s narratives. In the *Bedford*, which also offers substantial coverage of slavery, slave narratives and abolitionist writing appear in a chapter titled “The Era of Reform,” which also includes the preface to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Henry David Thoreau’s “Resistance to Civil Government.” The “Contexts” section at the beginning of this chapter features a selection from David Walker’s “Appeal” and William Lloyd Garrison’s address “To the Public.” The slavery theme is most subtle in the *Norton*, which simply lists its slavery texts along with other texts, and only explicitly covers slavery in a sub-chapter titled “National Sins;” along with the
both published in the mid-nineteenth century; four anthologies include either
the second or first two chapters of Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative*, an
autobiography written by a man who was born in Africa, lived in slavery
throughout the Atlantic Rim region, and eventually purchased his freedom to
become a British subject. All of these works are relative newcomers to
anthologies. Frederick Douglass made his first appearance in anthologies in
the 1970s, and his 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* began to
appear in full or abridged form in the 1980s. Harriet Jacobs’s now much-
anthologized *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) only began appearing in
anthologies in the early 1990s, beginning with the First Edition of the *Heath
Anthology of American Literature* (1723-1748).

Perhaps because of the selection of these three texts, the slavery theme in
anthologies focuses almost exclusively on African American slavery. All five
anthologies introduce slavery early—usually in the general introduction and
first period introductions—and they all state that slavery came to the Americas
shortly after the arrival of Columbus. After this briefest acknowledgment of

“near-genocide” of the American Indian, *Pearson* devotes a chapter to “American Literature in a Divided Nation,” which
includes writing by Lincoln, Stowe, Jacobs, Thoreau, and Douglass. *Prentice Hall* seems the least interested in thematizing
slavery, folding its anti-slavery writing, including its two slave narratives, under a long section devoted to “Romanticism”
and barely discussing the subject in its various introductions. With a few notable exceptions, most of the texts that
cover slavery in the nineteenth century fall into the following categories: testimonials from ex-slaves that were used in
the abolitionist cause and writing by white abolitionists or writers generally sympathetic to abolitionism.

64 These selections, however, focus entirely on Equiano’s boyhood, capture, and horrifying journey across the Atlantic
on a slave ship, and it seems obvious that anthologies have selected these chapters from the twelve in Equiano’s book
because they show what Douglass’s and Jacobs’s narratives cannot—the capture of slaves in Africa and the middle
passage.

65 In all but the Prentice Hall anthology, which virtually ignores the slavery theme in its paratextual apparatus, the
enslavement of Indians by the Spanish in Hispaniola is presented as a prelude to African slavery. The *Norton* explains
that a decline in the Taíno population of Haiti forced the Spanish to “introduce African slavery in Hispaniola as early as
1501” (3). The *Heath, Bedford*, and *Pearson* anthologies all tell a similar story.
Indian slavery under the Spanish, the word slavery is virtually synonymous with African American slavery in these anthologies. From these initial introductions onwards, “slavery” also mostly disappears as a subject until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, where it reappears, often presented as the main literary historical issue of the period.

Most of the actual coverage of slavery is concentrated in the first half of the nineteenth century, however, circling around a familiar cluster of slave narratives and abolitionist writings that roughly eclipses the most intense period of abolitionist ferment in the U.S. Each of the three slave narratives commonly found in these texts was published with help from abolitionists or in service of the abolitionist cause. The vast majority of anthologized texts written by former slaves and by white abolitionists about slavery were published in the first half of the nineteenth century, during the height of abolitionist foment in the U.S. This pairing of slave narratives and abolitionist writing tends to limit the scope of slavery geographically to the antebellum South, and politically to the struggle to end slavery in the U.S. during this period. Consequently, anthologies implicitly understand a slave to be a person of African descent who

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66 The Bedford, Heath and Norton offer scant coverage of the slavery theme in the colonial and revolutionary periods. The Bedford features a passage from the Journal of John Woolman, a Quaker businessman expressing his reservations about slavery. Selections written by people who experienced slavery before the nineteenth century are usually limited to a handful of texts. All five anthologies included “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” by Phillis Wheatley, who was born a slave and manumitted in 1773 and all but Prentice Hall included the first few chapters of Olaudah Equiano’s Interesting Narrative, written by another manumitted slave born in Africa but possibly in South Carolina. The Bedford features Absalom Jones’s “Petition of the People of Colour”; The Heath, which offers by far the most extensive and sophisticated coverage of the slavery theme, includes writing by eighteenth and early nineteenth century writers such as Toussaint L’Ouverture, Britton Hammon and Jupiter Hammon, who fall outside of the abolitionist orbit.

67 David Walker's Appeal and Henry Highland Garnet's “An Address to the Slaves of the United States” both anthologized in the Heath and Bedford, reveal black abolitionists who advocated violent resistance, which adds sophistication to their coverage of slavery in this period.
was either captured in Africa, like Wheatley and Equiano, or were born into slavery, like Douglas and Jacobs. Slavery as a phenomenon is understood to be an institutionalized and legalized form of bondage that would be terminated by war and Constitutional amendment in 1865.

The trouble with this timeline is that it does not begin to fully account for the larger transnational phenomenon of slavery within which American slavery existed. The European practice of slavery in the Western Hemisphere began with the Spanish occupation of Haiti at the end of the fifteenth century and was not fully outlawed until the Brazilian emancipation of 1888. It was an international economic phenomenon, and while the American Civil War emancipated the largest single population of slaves in the Hemisphere, the campaign of resistance to European slavery was a complicated international effort that ranged from the halls of Parliament in London to the bloody hillside battlefields of the Haitian slave revolt against the French.

The single fully anthologized text that addresses the international scope of slavery is Herman Melville’s “Benito Cereno,” currently found in the Norton and Heath anthologies. In it, Melville depicts an encounter between an American ship and a Spanish slave ship anchored off the Coast of Chile. The slaves aboard the San Dominick have revolted against the crew when the “innocent” American crew happens upon the scene, but the American Captain Delano, after boarding the ship, fails to immediately comprehend the situation in an extended and rather hilarious sequence of missed cues. Like so many of Melville’s ship stories, the slave ship is a floating metaphor. H. Bruce Franklin
writes “The ship’s name, San Dominick, evokes the island of San Domingo, also known as Hispaniola,” where the Spanish exterminated the Indian population and began importing large numbers of slaves from Africa (148). The ship’s name also evokes the Haitian uprising against the French from 1791-1804, led by Toussaint L’Ouverture, a link Eric Sundquist makes in his essay “Melville, Delany, and New World Slavery” (621).

**Barbary Captivity Narratives**

The presence of “Benito Cereno” and selected chapters from Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative* in multiple anthologies of American literature begins to illuminate the transnational dimension of slavery—to expose perhaps a few of the threads that connected American slavery to a much broader international phenomenon of slavery. But I would argue for a further and far more radical widening of the window into slavery. The current slavery theme in anthologies fails the address the full scope of slave literature produced by Americans in the nineteenth century. Consider, for example, the case of “Barbary captivity” and the literature it inspired. Barbary pirates and slave raiders plagued European and American cross-Atlantic and Mediterranean travelers throughout the Colonial and Early National period. Their captives were often ransomed or sold into slavery in North Africa. For colonial Americans making the cross-Atlantic trek to or from Europe, the real possibility of attack by Barbary corsairs and subsequent enslavement in Tripoli, Algiers, and Tunis meant that, however unlikely, *anyone* who traveled
to Europe or through the Mediterranean by ship could technically become a slave, even free white Europeans and Americans.

The anxiety and fascination activated by this genuine Barbary threat fueled a genre of slave narratives written by Europeans and Americans who had been captured and then freed from this form of bondage, the first appearing in the sixteenth century. This genre reached its height of popularity in the U.S. during the first half of the nineteenth century, in part because the fledgling United States fought its first overseas war against the Barbary states between 1801 and 1815 over the issue of piracy attacks on American ships and the ransoming and enslavement of American citizens captured in these raids. Hundreds of white Americans were captured and enslaved in these raids, and though this number is miniscule when compared to the millions of African slaves living in North America during this same period, the literature inspired by this captivity was disproportionate to the numbers. A hundred editions of Barbary captivity narratives were published between 1898 and 1817 in the U.S. (Baepler 24), and the genre has survived in one form or another into the twentieth century.

The Barbary captivity narrative is also clearly a “slave narrative,” in a generic, non-disciplinary sense of the term. Barbary captives were unquestionably slaves (Gordon 4) in a system of slavery that was already a thousand years old by the nineteenth century. The primary audience for the Barbary captivity narrative also understood that these stories depicted a form of slavery. Indeed, the slave status of the protagonist was one of the main
conceits of the Barbary captivity narrative, but it was the role reversal of the protagonist rather than abolitionist sympathy for the victim that formed the basis of the genre’s entertainment value. “For nineteenth-century readers in the United States, the plight of the captive in Africa appeared to transpose the traditional roles of black and white bodies,” observes Paul Baepler (27). Populated by white European slaves and African slave masters, these memoirs told the ultimate slavery reversal story. The Barbary captivity narrative made the unthinkable real for white Americans, producing an inversion of cultural norms and prompting amazement in its reader. The Barbary captivity narrative thus, in its own way, offered early nineteenth-century Americans a window into the international phenomenon of slavery—albeit, a sensationalized one.

Adding a Barbary captivity narrative to anthologies of American literature would immediately and dramatically expand the slavery theme in these collections from a parochial scope to an international, transnational one. Given the status of Indian captivity narratives in modern anthologies, anthologizing one of these Barbary narratives would be consistent with the current disciplinary interest in captivity narratives. Indeed, Barbary captivity narratives have played a significant role in American history and culture. Barbary captivity narratives were directly implicated in the first overseas war fought by the United States, and they contain some of the earliest impressions of Africans written by Americans. Captain John Riley’s narrative of Barbary Captivity sold almost a million copies and Abraham Lincoln’s biographers claim that he was moved to change his position on slavery after reading it (Baepler 91). As the
United States engages in multiple wars in Muslim countries, the Barbary Captivity Narrative genre provides an important cultural/historical perspective on American relations with Islam in the nineteenth century.

Appending Barbary captivity to the slavery theme in anthologies of American literature will both internationalize and complicate slavery in the nineteenth slavery in the American literature classroom. In much the same way Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative* calls attention to the international dimensions of abolitionism, the complexities of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and indigenous practices of slavery among Africans, the Barbary captivity narrative draws attention to what Murray Gordon, author of *Slavery in the Arab World* (1989), calls the “forgotten slave trade” in Africa—Arab Islamic North African slavery—which for more than a thousand years reached down into Africa, and into the Mediterranean and North Atlantic, for slaves. The Muslims in Africa were early players in the international slave trade, beginning to trade in African slaves across the Muslim world as early as the ninth century (4). Muslims raiding outside Africa for slaves as well, attacking ships and even raiding European coastal towns as far away as Ireland to take captives. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Christian Europeans and Muslim North Africans were raiding and traded for slaves from the interior of the continent simultaneously, and although they seldom worked together in this regard, both groups fed an international market for human beings that criss-crossed the globe.

Adding a Barbary captivity narrative to anthologies will also help situate
abolitionism as an internationalist movement. Certainly the addition of Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative* has helped to show the internationalist dimension of abolitionism, but the Barbary captivity narrative further illuminates the international scope of abolitionism. I am immediately reminded of William Lloyd Garrison’s prefatory letter attached to Douglass’s 1845 *Narrative*. In it, Garrison suggests that Africans have “endured the privations, sufferings and horrors of slavery,” better than white men could. To illustrate this point, he relates a story told by Irish abolitionist Daniel O’Connell at the March 31, 1845, Loyal National Repeal Association in Dublin:

> An American sailor, who was cast away on the shore of Africa, where he was kept in slavery for three years, was, at the expiration of that period, found to be imbruted and stultified -- he had lost all reasoning power; and having forgotten his native language, could only utter some savage gibberish between Arabic and English, which nobody could understand, and which even he himself found difficulty in pronouncing. So much for the humanizing influence of THE DOMESTIC INSTITUTION!” Admitting this to have been an extraordinary case of mental deterioration, it proves at least that the white slave can sink as low in the scale of humanity as the black one (6-7).

This offhand reference hints at a deeper awareness of Barbary Captivity on the part of American abolitionists. Though most Barbary captivity narratives were largely apolitical, and many actually contain arguments that favor the enslavement of blacks, abolitionists sometimes found the fact of Barbary
captivity useful to make a moral argument against slavery in the U.S. Benjamin Franklin, for example, writing as “Historicus,” uses North African slavery to critique American slavery by satirically posturing himself as an Algerian official who wonders what will become of the national economy without a steady influx of slaves for the market (166-171). Charles Sumner is more direct in his short history *White Slavery in the Barbary States* (1853), wherein he uses Barbary captivity to argue against slavery in the U.S. Benilde Montgomery has shown how abolitionists used the terrifying reality of North African slavery as rhetorical leverage, drawing comparisons between white and black slavery (615). She shows how the Barbary captivity narrative was retrofit for the American stage through a series of popular “Algerian” plays which ironically depicted “heathen” Muslim slave masters setting their slaves free after being converted to the ideals of the American revolution by their American captives (617).

This awareness of Muslim slavery among nineteenth-century abolitionists was more than mere fodder for political and moral arguments; abolitionists in England eventually prevailed upon the state to put military force behind their objections to slavery in North Africa. Slavery historian Murray Gordon observes: “Beginning in the nineteenth century, the European maritime nations, led by England and gradually joined by others, used their power to curtail and finally end the Muslim traffic in slaves” (8). Like the European trade in African slaves trade, the Muslim African slave trade would be shut down by an international abolitionist movement that pressured the governments of Europe to take an active role in combating slavery.
EXPANDING THE SLAVERY THEME: ADD NICHOLAS SAID’S NARRATIVE

In contemplating the options for adding Barbary captivity to anthologies, many possibilities arise. Paul Baepler, the leading scholar of the Barbary captivity narrative genre, anthologizes some of the most notable of these narratives—John Foss’s, Maria Martin’s, and John Adams’s in particular—in his book *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*. The editors at *Heath* and *Norton* should certainly consider adding one of these to their collections, but another extraordinary text offers itself as well, one that straddles both Barbary slavery and the African American experience but has yet to appear in any collection—*The Autobiography of Nicholas Said, A Native of Bournou, Eastern Soudan, Central Africa*, published in Memphis in 1873. Said was a black African writer from the Sudan who had been captured and sold into Barbary slavery as a boy, and then emigrated to the U.S. after achieving his freedom and writing his own slave autobiography. Said’s autobiography would make a worthy addition to anthologies of American literature. Taught alongside Douglass’s and Equiano’s narratives, this text can both internationalize the presentation slavery as an historical phenomenon in the nineteenth century as well as demonstrate the international influence of the slave narrative genre.

Said published his autobiography while working as a schoolteacher in Alabama and lecturing on “Africa and its resources” for money (204). His southern audiences and readers no doubt found him to be quite a curiosity.
He had been born in Kouka, the capital of the Bournou kingdom, which is located in south-central Sudan, and he was captured by the “Kindills”—enemies of his tribe and notorious slave traders—when he was twelve years old. Trafficked North across the Sahara, he was sold in Tripoli to a wealthy Arab merchant and became his household slave. From this point, his memoir, like Olaudah Equiano’s, describes a globe-trotting adventure. He makes the Hajj to Mecca and Medina and is sold to a Turkish pipe fitter, who takes him to Constantinople. There, Nicholas is sold again to the pipe fitter’s brother-in-law, who then illegally “transfers” his new slave into the service of a Russian diplomat. Soon afterwards, fleeing from the cruelty of the diplomat’s other servants, he finds employment with Prince Nicholas Vassilievitch Troubetzkoï, a Russian nobleman. Said then converts to Christianity, travels to England in the Prince’s employ, learns English, and makes his way to America via Canada.

The most interesting and unique aspect of Said’s text is how he uses the African American slave narrative genre to package Islamic slavery. Said’s presentation of slavery deliberately draws parallels that his Southern audiences will recognize, but with important differences. When he writes that he once stumbled upon some men he knew from his home village in the Sudan “on exhibition,” in the slave-market, “like so many cattle, to be sold to whoever might offer the price at which they were held” (72), he is evoking an image that would have been familiar to his southern audiences. His slaves are Africans, but his slave-masters are Arabs and Turks. Familiar motifs are recast in new ways; he describes a treacherous “crossing” of the Sahara rather than the
Atlantic Ocean, for example. In some places, his observations sound an ironic tone. He lives among recently “emancipated” slaves in the American South, but sees little freedom there. While traveling in Georgia and Florida, for example, he hears “from the black people that Alabama was a very dangerous State and filled with Ku-Klux that the freedmen there did not know what freedom was owing to the oppression of the whites under which they were situated” (205).

Said’s narrative can create an opportunity for connecting nineteenth-century slavery with twentieth-first century slavery in the American literature classroom, because slavery continues to be practiced by Muslims in North and Central Africa, and in some of the same areas ruled by the Barbary states during the nineteenth century. Since the 1980s, when civil war broke out in the modern-day country of Sudan between the Muslim-dominated government in the north and the mainly non-Muslim south, numerous reports of slavery have repeatedly surfaced within the American media. The 2004 U.S. State Department ”Report on Human Trafficking” calls Sudan “a source and destination country for trafficked persons,” estimating that 17500 people have been abducted since 1980 by government-backed militias and rebel groups “for use as sex slaves, domestic workers, agricultural laborers, and child soldiers” (78). Mauritania also registers on the modern slavery radar, though less frequently than Sudan, as another sub-Saharan nation plagued by slavery. Mauritania only officially abolished slavery as recently as July 5 1980, but the

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68 Kevin Bale’s Disposable People devotes an entire chapter to Mauritania, which only legally outlawed slavery as recently as 1980 and is still believed to quietly accept the practice of household slavery.
government concedes that slavery is still practiced there nevertheless (Gordon). Said’s narrative allows another thread on slavery to emerge in the classroom, which does not end decisively in 1865, but rather unrolls itself into the present moment.

Said’s narrative is perhaps even most useful to instructors of American literature as a vehicle for charting the international influence of the African American slave narrative genre. Scholars have pointed out the influence of the African American slave narrative on Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), William Styron’s *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967), and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), among other “high” literary works, but this genre also inspired lesser known writers in the nineteenth century, like Said, who used the genre to directly chronicle experiences of bondage that fall outside the American cultural definition of slavery. In a narrative published in 1848, for example, Choctow Indian William Chubbee describes how he was sold into slavery as a boy and raised on a plantation in Natchez, Mississippi. Chubbee, like Said, deploys the genre from outside the normal definitions of slavery in America.

Students of American literature might also read Said’s text in concert with Equiano’s and Douglass’s narratives, to demonstrate how the genre found multiple forms of expression. There are numerous interesting parallels between Said’s and Equiano’s texts. Like Equiano, Said is the son of king

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69 The enslavement of Indians was not uncommon in the South during the nineteenth century. Patrick Minges's book *Black Indian Slave Narratives* (2004) records several similar stories told by former slaves during the Works Project Association oral history project in the 1930s.
captured as a boy by African slave raiders and trafficked into slavery. Said’s international travels and eventual manumission also follow the general blueprint of Equiano’s text in ways that suggest Said may have read Equiano.

Said no doubt understood the conventions of the slave narrative and African American autobiography. His text, for example, contains a backhanded letter of introduction testifying that Said was a “native African” who was touring the country to gain financial support for this autobiography. This letter assures reader that Said “gave entire satisfaction to his audience, which was composed of a goodly number of white and black people” (207-8). This letter can be compared to those written by William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips and attached to the 1845 edition of Douglass’s Narrative, which similarly offer a “black letter in a white envelope” by testifying to the author’s authenticity and providing a “white” sanction of its contents.

**Indian Slavery and Anthologies**

Anthologies might also widen their window into slavery by highlighting the role Indian slavery played in the history of the South in the seventeenth century, both in their historical apparatus (period introductions) when they discuss the evolution of slavery in North America, and in headnotes and footnotes attached to one text in particular, Briton Hammon’s *A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings . . . .* (1760). Because anthologies historicize slavery according the American cultural definition, Indian slavery is almost entirely absent from the picture. This omission should be corrected by anthology
editors if they intend to historicize slavery in American with an historical rigor that is commensurate with current practice and methodology of historians who study slavery.

Indian slavery is sometimes mistakenly described as a mysterious pre-Columbian practice that may not even deserve the label of slavery—one of Engerman’s “quite different and thus somehow more acceptable” forms of slavery. In fact, indigenous people in North America actively practiced a wide variety of well-documented forms of slavery before and after the arrival of Europeans on the continent. Indian slavery profoundly influenced the history of the American South. In the seventeenth century, tribes in the Southeast participated in a burgeoning intercultural “Indian slave trade,” trading their own war captives to the English, Spanish, and French for goods. In the late nineteenth century, some of these same tribes, the Cherokee and Creek especially, began to emulate the Southern plantation system, building their own plantations that were manned by black slaves. These tribes brought their slaves with them when they were forcibly deported to the Oklahoma territory and constructed plantations there. Some of these plantations were still in operation when the Civil War ended. Indians were thus slaves, slave masters, and slave traders in the history of North American slavery.

Anthologies do mention Indian slavery in their various textual apparatuses, but only in the fifteenth century, and always oversimplifying the cast of victims and perpetrators. All the anthologies I examined except for Prentice Hall mention the enslavement of Indians in Haiti as a prelude to the rise of African
slavery in the early Spanish Empire. The Bedford alone discusses Indian slavery in North America, very briefly, in the introduction to its “Literature to 1750” section, describing the Pequot war 1637: “Between four hundred and seven hundred men, women, and children were killed, and most of the surviving Pequot were captured and divided as slaves or tributaries among the English and their Indian allies, the Mohegan and Narragansett” (23). This reference is typical of the treatment of Indian slavery throughout anthologies of American literature. In every case, anthologies depict Indians as the victims of slavery, but never the perpetrators.

The omission of North American Indian slavery from the slavery theme in anthologies is both perplexing and disappointing. Leaving Indian slavery out of the larger story of slavery in the South is a bit like trying to present the Holocaust without at least mentioning what happened to the Gypsies. Indians in the Southeast were among the earliest victims of the European slave trade in North America, and historian Allan Gallay has called the Indian slave trade “the most important factor affecting the South in the period 1670 to 1715” with an impact “felt from Arkansas to the Carolinas and south to the Florida Keys” (7). Because many Southern Indian groups like the Creek and Cherokee already had a tradition of taking war captives as slaves, they were easily seduced into participating in the European slave economy that grew up in the Carolina and Virginia colonies in the seventeenth century. As this trade grew, Indian tribes in the region began capturing and selling Indians into bondage (8). Powerful tribes like the Creek would raid weaker neighbors for slaves and
sell their captives to the English slave traders; many of these captives were shipped overseas to the West Indies to work on sugar plantations. The slave trade rapidly introduced Indians to an international market economy in which they could exchange their captives for much-desired European trade goods (8). In this way, indigenous practices of slavery that were associated with warfare became implicated in European systems of profit, similar to the role indigenous forms of slavery in Africa played in the Atlantic slave trade.

The British exploitation of Indian labor in its Southern American colonies was also a critical factor in the growth of the plantation system there (Gallay 7). Indian slaves were a valuable commodity that could be sold throughout the British Empire. The money earned from this trade greatly facilitated the expansion of the plantation system, which in turn brought Africans to the Southeast in slave ships. In the seventeenth century, the American Southeast was a major conduit in the international slave economy, with Indian captives pouring out of the region, shipped the West Indies and Europe, and black slaves arriving by the shipload from Africa to work the growing plantation economy.

Without learning about the connection between the Indian slave trade and the rise of African slavery in the South, the readers of anthologies like the Norton and Heath might assume, incorrectly, that the only slaves in North America were people of African descent, the first arriving in Jamestown in 1619. The 1708 census taken in North Carolina reveals that the colony was comprised of 120 white servants, 3,960 free whites, 4,100 black slaves, and
1,400 Indian slaves; this means that one in three non-free individuals in North Carolina was an Indian slave at the turn of the eighteenth century\(^70\) (Duncan 39, 41).

**THE BIG PICTURE: HIGHLIGHT INDIAN SLAVERY IN HAMMON’S NARRATIVE**

Briton Hammon’s *A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings . . .* is an excellent site for highlighting the role of Indian slavery and inter-cultural contact between Indians and blacks in American history. The text, written by the slave of a man named General Winslow from Massachusetts, recalls a series of adventures that occur after Hammon is contracted out by his master to a ship headed for Jamaica to gather “logwood” in 1747. His ship is grounded on a reef just south of present day Miami, he is briefly held “captive” among Indians, spends four years imprisoned in Havana, serves aboard an English warship, and then is miraculously reunited with his master in London. Hammon’s text is credited with being the earliest prose writing published by a black writer in North America and one of only a handful of Indian captivity stories published by African Americans before the nineteenth century.

The *Heath* and *Norton* currently anthologize the “Indian captivity” portion of Hammon’s narrative. Both headnotes recognize his debt to the captivity narrative, though also noting its deviations from this genre—the *Norton* pointing out the geographic oddity (most captivity narratives from the period

\(^70\) The census that the status of non-free individual living in the colony was rather complex: The colony was comprised 120 white servants, 3,960 free whites, 4,100 black slaves, and 1,400 Indian slaves.
come from New England) and the Heath observing that he apparently returns to captivity rather than freedom. Both the Norton and Heath also explain the role this text plays in the African American literary tradition, being one of the first examples of published prose writing by a person of African descent in North America. But the headnotes in the Heath and Norton treat the Indians as little more than a colorful set-piece in Hammon’s captivity narrative. This omission is troubling, because without the cultural/historical perspective on these Indians, we can do little more with Hammon’s text than align it within its various constitutive genres. I would like to argue here that Hammon’s text deserves much more careful historical consideration, because it is one of the few areas in anthologies where an intercultural contact zone between Indians and blacks can be examined through literature.

Hammon’s narrative provides no definitive answers to the identity or motivation of the Indians who attack him, but the text contains some fascinating fodder for speculation. Whoever these Indians were, they were clearly acclimated to the European language and culture, speaking “broken English,” possessing small arms, and possessing, perhaps through other acts of violence, a British flag. If Hammon can be trusted in his accounting of their number and compliment, they were well-armed and experienced fighters, aggressive and eager to fight. They also apparently understood the value of Hammon in the Atlantic Rim marketplace. They bound Hammon after they caught him, and according to his account, they pursued him after he escaped to Cuba. Hammon claims that while still a captive, he was allowed to board a
Spanish ship that had docked nearby to trade with the Indians. The ship set sail for Cuba with Hammon on board, but according to his account, his Indian captors followed him:

They made Application to the Governor, and demanded me again from him; in answer to which the Governor told them, that as they had put the whole Crew to Death, they should not have me again, and so paid them Ten Dollars for me, adding, that he would not have them kill any Persons on hereafter, but take as many of them as they could, of those that should be cast away, and bring them to him, for which he would pay them Ten Dollars a-head. (7)

One must be careful always with Indian captivity narratives not to read them as journalistic accounts. Indian captivity narratives are a literary genre with tropes and themes common to most. One of these most common of these tropes, the threat of cannibalism, turns up in Hammon’s text when he recalls: “After we came to the Shore, they led me to their Hutts, where I expected nothing but immediate Death, and as they spoke broken English, were often telling me, while coming from the Sloop to the Shore, that they intended to roast me alive” (7). Given the wide distribution of this theme in Indian Captivity Narratives, one wonders if Hammon did not perhaps add this detail to meet his audience’s expectations. Another feature of Hammon’s text common to many Indian captivity narratives is his explicit appeal to religious faith. The presence of these elements should invite some skepticism about the overall veracity of the tale. How much is real and how much embellished? This question must
always be asked of these narratives.

If Hammon fictionalized some or all of this account, he likely borrowed from other Florida captivity stories. Hammon might have read about Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, for example, who was shipwrecked in the Keys in 1549. Fontaneda, just thirteen at the time, came ashore with other survivors from the Spanish ship, and he was the only one spared by Indians. Fontaneda was held as a slave for seventeen years before finally being rescued. Hammon may also have read the narrative of Jonathan Dickinson, a Quaker merchant who was shipwrecked in 1696 just north of present-day Palm Springs along with his family and dozens of other travelers. Published in 1699, this narrative details the several days his party spent as captives among the Indians before they were allowed to travel North to St. Augustine, and eventually to Philadelphia.

If we assume that something happened to Hammon on the South Florida coast, there is plentiful of evidence to support several theories about the Indians he encountered. Hammon did not wash ashore in a wilderness untouched by European influence in 1747; by this time, the Florida Peninsula had been the site of nearly a century of warfare and slave raiding by the Spanish and English and their Indian allies to the North. South Florida was home to two major tribal groups when the Spanish arrived in the region, the Carlos, who dominated the Keys, and the more powerful Tekesta, who occupied the territory of present-day Miami (Goggin 13). By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the “Indian slave trade” had virtually depopulated Florida, and their numbers were reduced to near extinction levels. Gallay offers a
conservative estimate of between 15,000 and 20,000 Florida Indians taken in slave raids by the English and their allies by 1717. British slave raiders and their Indian allies preyed on the coastal areas of Florida. Thomas Nairne, an English slaver, describes how he and thirty-three Yamasee Indians went “a Slave Catching” from South Carolina halfway down Florida’s Atlantic coast, capturing Indians in groups of between six and twenty-nine before they returned home with their captives (Gallay 127). Katherine E. Holland Braund estimates that the peninsula’s Indian population was decimated by the early eighteenth century: “By the early years of the eighteenth century the Creeks had finished what European diseases had begun: the depopulation of the aboriginal tribes of the Florida peninsula” (606).

Given this regional catastrophe, it seems likely that the Indians Hammon encountered were in some way caught up in this cataclysm. There are several possible scenarios for this attack. First, it is possible that the Indians were native to South Florida, as Hammon suggests. They may have simply been raiding the ship for valuable salvage, perhaps hoping to find gold or other valuables aboard. In his book, The Wreckers, John Viele explains that Indians living in the Keys had a long history of plundering ships stranded in these perilous straits. In the sixteenth century, Keys Indians were reported to have stripped many shipwrecks, often killing and enslaving the survivors. Their reputation for fierceness had dwindled considerably by the eighteenth century, but their interest in salvage remained. Viele writes that a French priest stranded in the Keys in 1722 “concluded that the only reason the natives
stayed on the barren key he landed on was to plunder shipwrecks” (5).

In another book on the Keys, *The Florida Keys: True Stories of the Perilous Straits*, Viele theorizes that the Indians who attacked Hammon were caught up in the 1739-48 war between England and Spain, killing the crew because they were enemies of Spain (23). In this theory, the Indians who were allied with the Spanish, attacked the ship because it was English. While this theory certainly has merit, I suspect that Hammon’s attackers were Indians from Northern Florida rather than local Indians. By the 1740s, the Indian population of Southeast Florida was teetering on the verge of extinction, decimated by war, disease, and slave raiding from the North. Most of the eyewitness reports from the period paint a grim portrait of a population on the run from more powerful tribes in the North, living in small communities that were incapable of mustering the kind of force Hammon describes. Father Monaco, a missionary in the region, reported in 1743 that the Yuchi raided the area regularly; Creek sources, which are almost certainly exaggerated, reported that the Creek made war in the Cape and reduced the population of the area to thirty persons (Goggin 20). Bernard Romans, writing in *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (1775) claims that Cape Indians had been driven into the mangroves by these attacks and were living hand to mouth (Goggin 20). Two Jesuits moved north from the Keys into the Miami area in 1743 to begin mission work there, but they were forced to abandon their work because raids by Muskhegan tribes from the north were so disruptive (20). Ethnologist William Sturtevant reports that in 1763, when the Spanish turned Florida over
to the British, they evacuated just eighty Indian families from the region—the entire Indian population of South Florida (69). The dwindling, nearly extinct population described by so many eyewitness accounts from the era suggest that the local Indians from this era were more prey than predators.

Could these traumatized Indians have mounted such a large, well-armed force? A far more likely explanation is that the Indians Hammon encountered were in fact not native to the region, but instead members of that predatory class of slave raiders and brigands from the Creek territories of present-day South Georgia or Northern Florida who had been terrorizing the Florida coast for a century. The Creek are likely suspects for two reasons: First, they had already been slave raiding along the Florida coast for fifty years before Hammon was shipwrecked. In 1708, Thomas Nairne reported that Creek slave raiders were “obliged to goe down as farr on the point of Florida as the firm land will permit. They have drove the Floridian to the Islands of the Cape, have brought in and sold many Hundreds of them, and Dayly now Continue that Trade so that in some few years theyl’e Reduce these Barbarians to a farr less number” (qtd. in Braund 606). For the Creek, the Florida coast was a lucrative source of revenue, and they continued to make raids for Indian slaves into the 1760s.

But why would the Creek slave raiders looking for Indian captives attack a stranded ship from New England and take a black man prisoner? One possible explanation is that they were specifically looking for fugitive black slaves, or perhaps saw an opportunity to profit from capturing blacks and collecting a
“fugitive” bounty for them. The British Crown, hoping to prevent slaves from “marooning” South into Spanish territory, offered the Creek financial incentives to hunt down fugitive slaves, a practice that apparently worked as a deterrent (Bateman 3). In the 1740s, the Georgia colony was paying Creek hunters four blankets or two guns for every fugitive slave returned alive; the bounty was one blanket for the severed head of a runaway slave (Braund 611). In the 1740s, the Georgia colony was paying Creek hunters four blankets or two guns for every fugitive slave returned alive; the bounty was one blanket for the severed head of a runaway slave (Braund 611). Bounties increased through the 1760s, ranging between 20 and 40 pounds of deerskin for each returned runaway.

Hammon and the other black and mulatto crew members were thus potentially valuable prizes for these attackers. At least one other crew member, Moses Newmock, is described by Hammon as mulatto. Other crew members may also have been black or mulatto. The Indian attackers may have stumbled across the shipwreck and seeing blacks among its crew, sniffed an opportunity for profit.71

Slavery, narrowly conceived, will focus on Hammon’s experience of bondage—his relationship to his master, his status as a black man living in early eighteenth century New England, and his “unusual” return to bondage after being freed from bondage. For the editors at the Heath, “Hammon’s

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71 Shipwreck victims on the Atlantic coast were sometimes easy prey for Indian attacks. Carolina colonial records from 1707 indicate that Indians were known to take captives among shipwreck victims on the Carolina coast and enslave them (26).
narrative still raises intriguing questions about how a man of African descent who was in servitude gained access to the public sphere and how he made use of the conventions of one of the era’s most popular genres, the captivity narrative” (1101). The Norton finds class the more interesting question, explaining that Hammon’s narrative illuminates “life along what historians have come to call the Atlantic Rim, the transatlantic coasts along which thousands of slaves, servants, and common laborers . . . expedited the trade on which nations enlarged their treasuries and empires” (420). Conversely, the Big Picture slavery I am advocating will flesh out the Indians in this story as well as Hammon’s biography, speculating about their motivations, rather than treating them as crudely drawn foils for Hammon’s saga of captivity.

Read as a captivity narrative, Hammon’s brief sketch is little more than a curious footnote to the larger tradition of Indian captivity narratives. Read as the “first” in a long evolution of African American prose literature, Hammon’s unsophisticated text will always be compared negatively to later examples of African American literary achievement. The real value of Hammon’s text, I think, is the literary historical window it opens into a fascinating contact zone in American history. More than any other region of the United States, the Florida peninsula was a space for inter-cultural contact between blacks and Indians. This contact was sometimes violent, as in the case of Creek hunters collecting bounties on escaped slaves, but often enough it resulted in fascinating cross-cultural connections. The Seminole Indian nation of Florida, for instance, was created from the amalgamation of Indian tribes from the
Florida panhandle and escaped slaves who began fleeing South into Florida in the seventeenth century and intermarrying with Indians there. Eventually, this tribe would fill vacuum left by the virtual depopulation of tribes indigenous to Southern Florida in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

These relationships between slaves and Indians is complicated; often they defy contemporary notions of race, which demand that we see Indians and blacks as sympathetically linked by virtue of a common victimization at the hands of white Euro-Americans. The portrait of Indians enslaving other Indians or hunting down fugitive slaves for bounty seems to defy a modern new left-historicism which demands that the oppressed be allied with one another against a common enemy. The Florida cultural contact story also challenges well-established notions of race and racial identity as well. Who are the Seminole then, black or Indian, both or neither? These complexities are worth exploring, however, and Hammon’s narrative, properly presented in the headnotes attached to Hammon’s narrative, will afford a starting place for this conversation in the American literature classroom.

**Why the Big Picture Slavery Should Matter to American Literature**

The best argument for a Big Picture slavery in anthologies comes not from the seventeenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth centuries, but from the twenty-first. For most of my students, slavery is more than a chapter in their American history textbook; it is also a media story and a pop culture event as well. Many of them enter the classroom having heard stories about human trafficking and
slavery in the Sudan, or debt bondage in India and Pakistan, or sexual slavery in Thailand. This awareness of modern-day slavery is yet another consequence of globalism and global media saturation, which make the world and its problems seem immediate to anyone with a computer, cell phone, or television set. The continuation of slavery into the twentieth century was not a secret. In the 117 years since Brazilian abolition officially ended chattel slavery in the Americas, newspapers and magazines occasionally publicized other forms of slavery, especially in North Africa. But since the late 1990s, “modern-day slavery” has been in the news often, and in the popular culture, movingly referenced in television shows like “Law and Order” and “The Wire,” and in popular films like Crash, which feature plot-lines about human trafficking.

This awareness of modern-day slavery will very likely change the way we address American slavery and the slave narrative in the classroom. The global awareness of slavery invites inevitable comparisons between the past and present, and these comparisons will in turn alter the very definition of slavery in the language and culture. The reality of “modern-day slavery” forces the American cultural definition of slavery out of its safely historicized box. It necessitates “old” and “new” paradigms for discussing slavery. The old paradigm, which is the most familiar to most Americans, pairs slavery down to fit the American cultural definition. In this model, the idea of slavery itself is virtually synonymous with a cultural understanding of black African slavery in North America. Racism is the de facto causality of slavery; property is the social marker of what it means to be a slave.
For most Americans, race and property are safe, comfortable connotations for the word “slavery.” Indeed, when I ask my students to define slavery, they will almost always return some version of this response: “Slavery is when a person from one race owns a person from another race.” But the paradigm of “modern-day slavery” challenges these assumptions. In the new paradigm, slavery is an underground aspect of the global economic system. It exists beyond the sanction of law, and therefore requires an extra-legal set of explanations for its continued existence. Slavery is no longer protected by property law, for example, so slaves cannot as easily be described as property. The new slavery has nothing to do with race either; modern-day slaves are vulnerable people who are exploited and used up by criminals who operate just under the shiny surface of the global economy. In the popular culture, they wear black leather jackets and lock frightened women into shipping containers in a shipyard at night. In the new paradigm, slavery has been erased from the modern world, but slaves somehow keep surfacing all around us.

The current slavery theme entered anthologies of American literature a few decades before this new slavery paradigm became visible. Literary works written by African Americans about slavery are relatively new to anthologies, but anthologies have featured abolitionist writing in varying degrees since the late nineteenth century. Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Macky Hutchinson’s eleven-volume *Library of American Literature* (1891) contains more than a dozen texts about slavery, including writing by Wendell Phillips (“A Hero of the Black Race”), Horace Greeley (“The Appeal for Emancipation
Renewed‖), Charles Sumner (―The Effects of Slave Ownership‖), Harriet Beecher Stowe (―Eliza’s Flight‖), and George Fitzhugh (―A Frank Pro-Slavery Argument‖), among others. Political writing, history, abolitionist writing, and oratory were important features of the literature textbooks created for use in the nation’s schools in the decades after the Civil War\textsuperscript{72}, and many literary histories and collections of American literature published during this period featured abolitionist writing.\textsuperscript{73} This abolitionist theme declined in the 1920s, however, and for the next fifty years, anthologies barely mentioned slavery except in a handful of collections, which treat the subject peripherally. This early- to mid-twentieth century disappearance of the slavery theme made the appearance of slave narratives in the 1970s and 1980s seem sudden and dramatic.

This history helps explain why and how the current slavery theme evolved. From the dawn of literary history writing in America, discussions of slavery have revolved around abolitionist philosophy, largely because the New England literary “Renaissance” that so powerfully shaped notions of American literature in the early twentieth century was so obviously sympathetic to abolitionist


\textsuperscript{73}Fred Lewis Pattee's \textit{History of American Literature} (1896) features a chapter on the “Anti-Slavery Leaders”; Roy Bennet Pace's \textit{American Literature} (1915) contains a subchapter titled “The Literature of Slavery and Disunion”; \textit{The Cambridge History of American Literature} (1921) includes a chapter on “Political Writing Since 1850, which copiously covers slavery.
ideology. Black chroniclers and critics of slavery may be new to the canon, but white abolitionist rhetoric from Thoreau, Emerson, Lincoln, William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Charles Sumner has found a comfortable home in literary textbooks since the 1880s. But this abolitionist thread mostly disappeared from literary textbooks, and presumably from most college classrooms, in the period immediately preceding the arrival of the slavery theme in anthologies, which meant that the slavery theme would appear to be sudden and new.

I would like to suggest that slavery theme is not entirely new, that it builds on the ideological foundation already established by the privileging of white abolitionism in American literary history. Because of this abolitionist emphasis, the new slavery theme is constructed almost entirely around the concerns of nineteenth century abolitionism, from the limited scope of the *de facto* definition I mentioned earlier to the fact that the three main African American slave narratives now included in anthologies were all associated with, or sanctioned by, white abolitionism. The slavery theme in anthologies is thus limited geographically and historically by this long history of white abolitionism standing in the background of American literature.

The slavery theme in anthologies is also limited by its close association with the identity politics of the post-1960s era. The arrival of these slave narratives in anthologies in the 1980s coincided with a significant increase in the overall diversity and comprehensiveness of these collections since the 1960s (Csicsila 21); they signal a quantum leap forward in the representation of literary works
by African Americans in anthologies since the 1960s. Joseph Csicsila observes: “There is little question that prior to the early 1970s African American writers were categorically omitted from twentieth-century academic anthologies of American literature” (167). Csicsila attributes this neglect to a combination of ignorance of black texts by white scholars, a lack of critical and scholarly work on black writers, and a conservative tendency to use old lists of authors to compile anthologies (168-9). Today, these anthologized slave narratives are commonly taught in American literature classes (Csicsila 170) and often mentioned in discussions about recent changes to the “canon” of America literature. The slavery theme was thus conceived in large part as a response to the absence of African American literature from the American literature classroom in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. This initial correction carried the gravitas of 1980s and 1990s identity politics; adding texts by African Americans was a political move—a representational act that made African American identity, culture, and literature more visible within the general frame of American society and culture.

Another way to say it is that the slavery theme was a product of the multicultural revolution that forced open the largely white male canon of American literature. This was a necessary fight—a correction to decades of neglect of texts by minority writers, but like every revolution, this one was waged excessively, leaving behind considerable damage in its wake as well as clear evidence of progress. One of the great tragedies of this revolution, from my perspective, is that we are now left with a balkanized national literature,
which imagines identity—ethnic, racial, sexual—as central to the production and interpretation of literature. At every level of American literary studies, identity categories are becoming entrenched, institutionalized, and therefore removed from the field of skepticism and criticism. The slavery theme is defined, and hemmed in, by this institutionalization of identity. Slavery historian David Brion Davis has complained recently that many college students now believe the subject is “departmentalized in African American studies” (452). This is especially true in English departments, where the subject of slavery is closely associated with African American literary scholarship, which tends to privilege the 1619-to-1865 definition of slavery in America.

Now that the multicultural revolution has been largely won, I believe a new correction is required—one that accounts for slavery and slave literature in a larger, more global frame, both in the present and the past. In some ways, this correction will require simply acknowledging that slavery is now an important historical theme in the literature classroom and then subjecting this discourse to an appropriate level of intellectual rigor and debate. My impression is that this important critical work has not yet been done. In the rush to expand the representational window of American literature, literary scholars, historians, and anthologists very quickly—perhaps too quickly—integrated the slave narrative and re-integrated abolitionist writing into anthologies. Joseph Csicsila, in his book *Canons by Consensus*, notes that since 1990, every anthology of American literature has included some combination of chapters 1, 5, 6, 10, 14, 16, 21, and 41 of Jacobs’s Narrative; he concludes that “anthology
editors perhaps duplicated the offerings of other textbooks in a hasty attempt to include Jacobs” (176). Two decades ago, the mere presence of these texts seemed to satisfy the desire for greater representation by black writers. A generation later, the time may have come to more carefully and critically examine how these texts, and the textual apparatuses that now surround them in anthologies, treat slavery as an historical theme.

When it is finally done, this critical work will almost certainly expand the definition of slavery and slave literature in the American literature classroom. As I have noted throughout this chapter, the current wave of scholarship on American slavery emphasizes transnationalism and the “Big Picture” perspective. A slavery theme in American literary studies that only examines slavery according to the American cultural definition is a big improvement over not discussing slavery at all, but this slavery theme could be much more sophisticated and contemporary if it accounts for the variegated nature of slavery in American history and literature. Slavery historian Gordon Wood visualizes the possibilities for this kind of scholarship when he writes that U.S. historians can “no longer confine themselves to the nation’s borders; they now increasingly see the past of the United States as part of the larger history of the Atlantic world, if not of the entire globe . . . we now have to range from villages along the Gold Coast of Africa to the Cape Verde islands to Curacao, Martinique, and Barbados to New Orleans” (qtd. in Davis 454).

I would add to list “from the shores of Florida, a peninsula devastated by the Indian slave trade, to the slave markets of Tripoli, where whites and blacks were sold as slaves to wealthy Muslims.”
CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation, I have tried to show how modern anthologies of American literature treat American history by examining a few common “literary historical” sites in anthologies—Abraham Lincoln, Native American origin stories, Christopher Columbus, and the “slavery theme.” I have, until now, narrowed my critique of anthologies to “structural” concerns—headnotes, period sections, and the chronological arrangement of anthologies—believing that American history is made “real” in these collections through the framing of anthologized texts in these collections. In concluding, I would like to look to the future and perhaps hint at some of the larger contexts shaping anthologies of American literature. Comprehensive anthologies are used in a rapidly changing academic context; they will invariably change over the next decade, and these changes will profoundly alter the ways in which students encounter history through literature in these textbooks.

The Multicultural Anthology: New Left vs. Neo-Liberal Postures

What does the future hold for comprehensive anthologies of American literature? One thing is certain: teachers and students will read these textbooks differently than they did twenty years ago. As I have said repeatedly throughout this dissertation, the current crop of comprehensive anthologies is
“multicultural” in character, but in the eighteen years since the First Edition of the Heath was published, the meaning of multiculturalism in the culture has changed. Most college instructors working today have some memory of the “culture wars”—some may have even actively participated in them—but most of our students cannot remember a time when diversity was not an undisputed social value celebrated at every level of American society—in the government, in schools, in large corporations, in the media. From their perspective, there is nothing special about an anthology that is more diverse than its predecessors.

What will this disconnect between their experience of multiculturalism and ours mean for anthologies of American literature? This is one of the biggest unresolved questions looming as I examined these collections. Twenty-two years ago, Annette Kolodny wrote in her seminal essay “The Integrity of Memory: Creating a New Literary History of the United States,” that in order to “keep faith with the spirit of [the 1960ss and 1970s], a literary history created in the 1980s must remember its own historical antecedents”—Students for a Democratic Society, Martin Luther King’s march on Washington, the Berkeley “free speech” movement, the Vietnam War, the NOW Bill of Rights for Women, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, the Stonegate(sic) Tavern riot, and the incident at Wounded Knee (306-7). For her, writing in the 1980s, the 1960s necessitated a “new literary history” in the aftermath of these cultural revolutions and social upheavals that respects “diversity, pluralism, and heterogeneity” rather than responding to “fraudulent calls to ‘traditional values’ and ‘common heritage’” (306-7). Modern
comprehensive anthologies are tangible artifacts of this new more diverse
literary history; we can quibble over the extent of their commitment to
diversity, but all of them have responded to this call for a more diverse
literature. Indeed, much of what is currently included in these textbooks is
either A) a holdover from that period when traditional literature limited its
definition to literature and culture to predominantly while male writers, or B) a
response to the limitations of this old canon. The first category of texts—like
John Smith’s Pocahontas story, Jefferson’s “Declaration of Independence,”
excerpts from the Federalist, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*, Lincoln’s “Second
Inaugural,” and Emerson’s *Nature*—have been implicated in nationalistic
attempts to say “this is who we are as Americans”; the second category—texts
like William Apess’s “An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man,” Douglass’s
and Jacobs’s slave narratives, and Judith Ortiz Cofer’s “Claims” were added, at
least in part, as a retort to the old historiography, to say ‘this is also we are as
Americans.’ Consequently, the anthologies I surveyed for this project all seem
catched up in a responsive conversation with the Anglo-centrism, sexism, and
elitism of the past.

The *Norton* and *Heath* clearly market themselves on the assumption that
instructors and students know and care a great deal about this conversation.
In the introduction to the *Norton’s* Sixth Edition, for example, Nina Baym
observes that the *Norton* has tried to balance “traditional interests with
developing critical concerns” since its first edition in 1979; this has meant
supplementing “traditional” white male writers like Franklin, Emerson,
Thoreau, Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, or Faulkner with “untraditional” authors—women and minorities (xxix). For college professors who remember a time when English departments were dominated by white male professors and a mostly white male canon, this distinction between “traditional” and “untraditional” authors is immediately self-evident, but I will submit that most of our students do not understand this distinction; it must be explained to them—historicized, if you will. They live in a world where English departments are filled with women and minority teachers; they also live in a world where the idea that one would read women and minority writers is hardly “untraditional” in any way.

I raise this point only to suggest that the self-promotional rhetoric of anthologies is out of step with their actual role in the academy. Consider, another example: Paul Lauter’s claim in the preface to the Heath that his anthology has “challenged all of us to respond to earlier movements for social change that had asked of our classrooms, our curricula, and our textbooks questions like ‘Where are the minorities?’ and ‘Where are the women?’” (xxxv). These questions implicate literary history in social and political movements that have lost much of their original ardor and force. My own experience with students suggests that we [instructors] care more about issues of identity politics than they do. Scholars like Kolodny and Lauter share a conviction that the “earlier movements for social change” (i.e. the social movements of the 1960s) necessitated that literary history be rewritten to reflect a radical new commitment to diversity and “identity,” but what happens to this history when
these radical postures become normative, middle-class values? If nearly everyone accepts the idea that ethnic and racial diversity is a good thing, then Lauter’s question in the Heath’s introduction loses its rhetorical force; indeed, in some contexts, it may seem arcane, perhaps even gratuitous. The Heath’s very rationale for existing—its radical challenge to the old literary historiography and canon—may be dissolving.

Richard Pressman raises this concern in his 2001 symploke article, which bluntly asks: “Is There a Future for the Heath in the Neo-Liberal State”? Pressman is skeptical that the Heath anthology can advance any kind of emancipatory agenda for the marginalized groups it purports to highlight:

My doubts flow from the fact that the anthology is a function of the university. And a university education--despite its increasing necessity and the increasing percentage of the population pursuing it--remains a means to upward mobility. Generally, ethnic consciousness has been seen more as a function of subalternity. But in the very process of ethnic university students’ learning about their own origins, they become less subaltern, as they learn the language of the academic establishment: while the anthology teaches them about where they come from, it also teaches them who they are becoming. They are no longer subaltern because now they can speak for themselves. One reason that college anthologies, including the Heath, have never paid much attention to class is that class is more threatening to capital than is ethnicity. As a best-selling textbook, then, as a part of the literary establishment, the
Heath has less reason than ever to pose a problem to class patriarchy. Hence, as Ernesto Laclau says, “[T]he very condition of emancipation--its radical break from power--is what makes emancipation impossible because it becomes indistinguishable from power” (1996, 101).

Pressman, summing up his complaint, observes that the *Heath* anthology, much touted for its diversity, participates in a “neo-liberal pseudo-democratic agenda” that creates the “illusion of a society far more egalitarian than it really is” (270).

Pressman’s challenge raises an interesting question: Is there a disconnect between the “New Left” idealism of Kolodny’s and Lauter’s generation of scholars and the realities of neo-liberalism that can easily absorb their idealism? Does the once-radical posture of multiculturalism now service bourgeois values? Walter Benn Michaels, writing in his recent book *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned To Love Identity and Ignore Inequality* (2006) complains: “Celebrating the diversity of American life has become the American lift’s way of accepting . . . poverty, of accepting inequality” (7). The nation may officially be more diverse, he concedes, from the President’s cabinet on down, but class inequality is still rampant in the U.S., and the public face of multiculturalism tends to obscure this fact. We might easily apply Michaels’ general critique to multicultural formulations of American literature. Do multicultural anthologies of American literature, for example, advance the rights and economic profess of minority groups now represented in them, or is this representation merely part of the new public pluralism that one finds
celebrated in all corners of American life—a multicultural façade covering over deepening divisions of the class and economic disparity in the society.\textsuperscript{74}

I raise these issues to make an important point: Textbook companies now produce anthologies that are every bit as establishment and “status quo” as the white male-dominated New Critical anthologies of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. At some point, instructors of American literature must acknowledge that the multicultural anthology is no longer a symbol of social change but rather an instrument of establishment values. They are instruments of orthodoxy, and as such, we should question how much in them uncritically supports prevailing ideological currents.

\textbf{New Technology and the End of Chronology as We Know It?}

Whatever their ideological posture, multicultural phase anthologies like the \textit{Norton} and \textit{Heath} are built on the old infrastructure of American literary historiography (a point I make in Chapter 4) and this infrastructure will likely change when anthologies go online, as they almost certainly will. Early American literature, for example, was made more diverse by adding writing by Native Americans and French and Spanish explorers. The literature of the American Renaissance now includes the work of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs. The old pantheon of white abolitionist writers was supplemented by Henry Highland Garnet and David Walker. Textbook

\textsuperscript{74} Vivyan C. Adair and Sandra L. Dahlberg worry that “considerations of class are often cut, and are, as a result ‘absent’ from the classroom” (173). The multicultural approach privileges identity over class in the teaching of American literature, they argue.
companies mostly appended to the old historiography rather than radically re-imagined it.

There are signs that this bloated, “appended” literary historiography may be brought down by technological rather than cultural or ideological forces. The inevitable move from print to digital mediums for content delivery will almost certainly decompile the current formulation of a Colonial-to-present-day American literary history that has evolved throughout the twentieth century. As I have shown in Chapter 1, the current habit of chronologically arranging literature originated in the late eighteenth century with the rise of nationalism in Europe and has continued to be employed to this day. The sweeping Colonial-to-present history of American literature offered up by all the comprehensive anthologies is a close cousin to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century nationalist histories. Every comprehensive anthology rests on a literary historical infrastructure; the first half of this infrastructure—the period extending from the Colonial period through 1865, which usually spans the first volume in any two-volume anthology of American literature—is dominated by texts that document the cultural, religious, and political origins of the U.S.: John Smith’s observations of Jamestown, William Bradford’s Of Plymouth Plantation, Jonathan Edwards’s “Sinners at the Hands of an Angry God,” Thomas Jefferson’s “Declaration of Independence,” the letters of James Madison, excerpts from Thomas Paine’s Common Sense, and of course, Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address” and “Second Inaugural.” The second half, or second volume, of this infrastructure is decidedly less “historical” and more
belletristic in character than the first half, focusing on works that are more clearly “literary” in nature—novels, short stories, and poems. This literary historical infrastructure essentially links the rise of a literary culture in the second half to the emergence of a unique cultural and political American identity in the first half.

What happens to this infrastructure when it makes the move into cyberspace? In the epilogue to Canons by Consensus, Joseph Csicsila sees a new computer-technology phase of anthologies that could potentially supplant the current multicultural phase. Textbook companies like Pearson and Bedford/St. Martin’s are offering online supplements to print collections and custom-published anthologies. If these new forms take hold, anthologies of American literature will look very different indeed in ten to twenty years. Consider, for example, the new “Bedford Select” custom anthology feature: In the current crop of conservative print-based anthologies, chronology is the default organizational structure, but Bedford Select allows instructors to choose between thematic and genre-specific organizational options, as well as the standard chronological rubric, for arranging a collection of American literature. This choice of organizational structures will undoubtedly change the way American literature is taught in the college classroom. In the current era, anthologies like the Heath and the Norton define the field of literary history for many instructors and students, by structuring courses and curriculum and by privileging a list of texts that are commonly taught. This “packaging” of American literature is almost always chronological, almost always reaching for
a broad sweep of American literature from the Colonial period to the present. If instructors have the option to easily organize custom anthologies using other rubrics, I suspect that many will choose to do so. This will encourage new approaches to organizing the American literature classroom.

What happens to the old American literature historiography one finds in anthologies like the *Heath* and *Norton* when American literature begins to be delivered to students packaged by genre and wide variety of thematic approaches? If the *Heath* anthology teaches us anything, it is that the evolutionary model of American literary history is somewhat incompatible with the newer, more diverse conception of American literature. The more multicultural and multi-vocal American literature becomes, the less amenable it is to chronological arrangement. The reason for this is simple: because chronologies are inherently teleological, they always imply an evolution of some kind (please see Chapter 1 on “Timelines” for a more extensive explanation of this principle). But given the complex web of cultures and genres that now constitute American literature, it is increasingly difficult to draw all the disparate cultures and genres into any kind of evolutionary schema. At some point, therefore, the chronology becomes a highly artificial rubric that is preserved out of habit and a sense of tradition more than any practical pedagogical rationale.

More than any other anthology currently in use, the *Heath* seems to recognize this limitation; the editors have kept the overall chronological structure but embedded thematic sections into their chronological
arrangement. In this way, students can read literature gathered into sections on “Voices of Revolution and Nationalism,” “Literature and The Woman Question,” and “Race, Slavery, and the Invention of the ‘South’”. In this way, the Heath has thus struck a kind of balance between the historical arrangement and the thematic. The newest of the anthologies I surveyed, the Bedford/St. Martin, has engaged in a similar practice.

The next logical stage in this drift towards thematization will perhaps discard the chronological structure altogether and instead arrange texts into strictly thematic sections. This move would sacrifice some of the gravitas associated with a “broad sweep” of American literature—without the long chronology, it will be more difficult to tie the subject to broad themes of national culture and identity. A compensating factor, however, is that the subject will be free of most of its historical baggage, making it more nimble and adaptable. The “broad sweep” historiography was obligated to linger for long periods in the Colonial and Revolutionary periods in the interests of “coverage”; a new thematic arrangement would allow instructors more freely to tailor the subject to contemporary concerns.
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