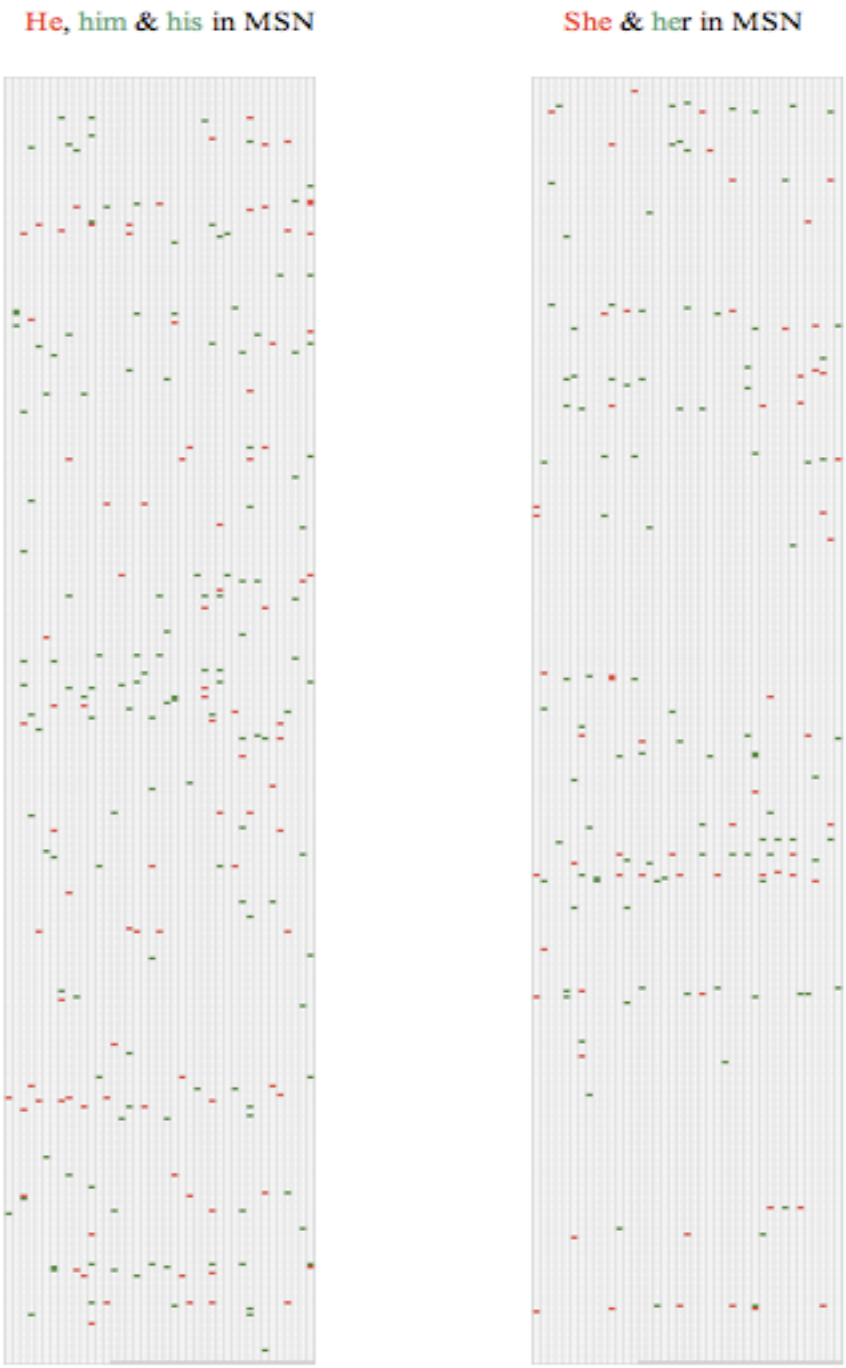
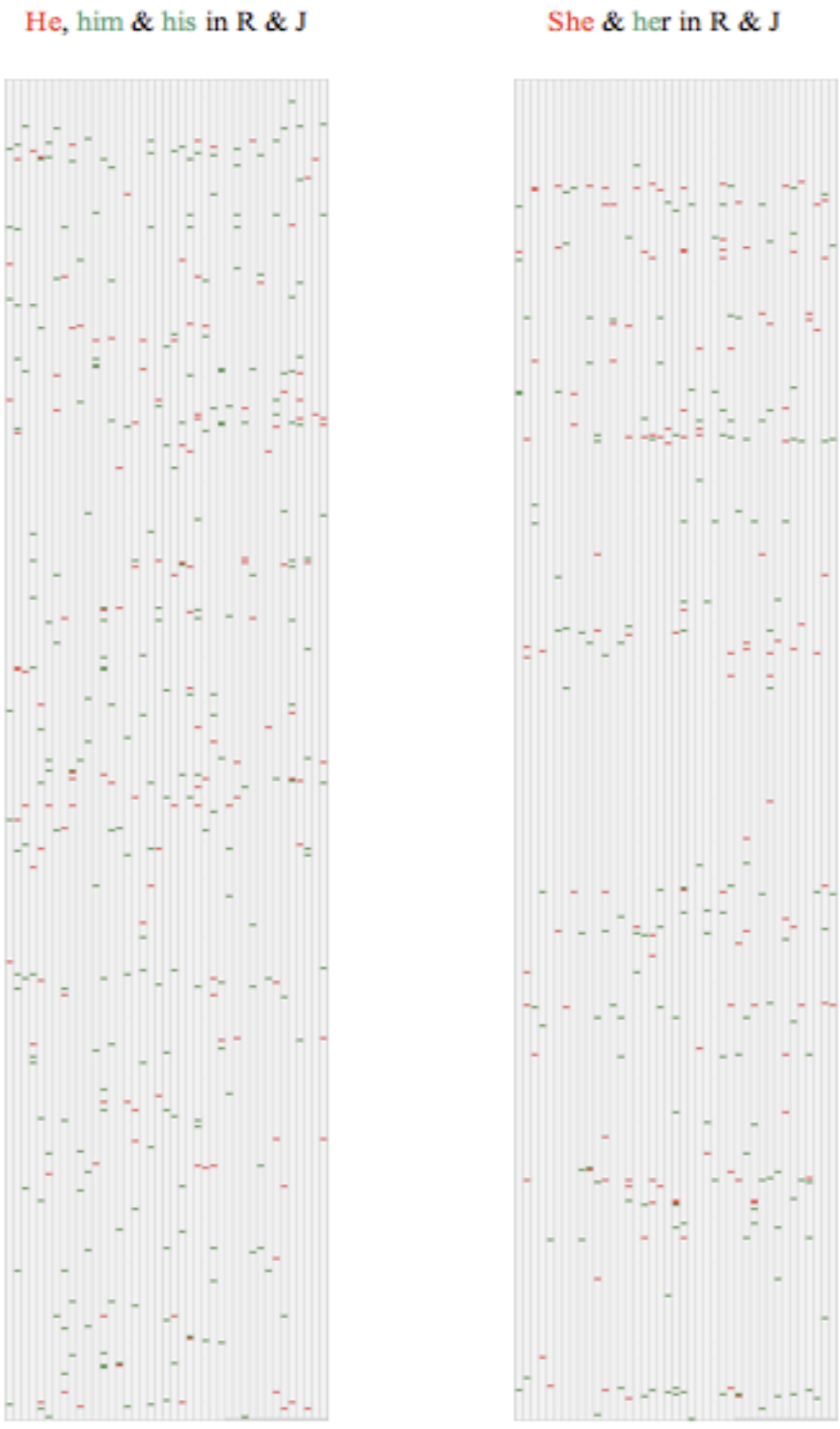
Shakespeare, gender and James Brown
Gordon Rugg, May 8, 2012

To what extent do Shakespeare's plays depict a "man's world"? One way to see is by displaying the location of gendered words within the texts. The figure below shows the location of the words *he, him, his, she* and *her* in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The nominative forms are in red, to show whether one gender appears more often in an active role.



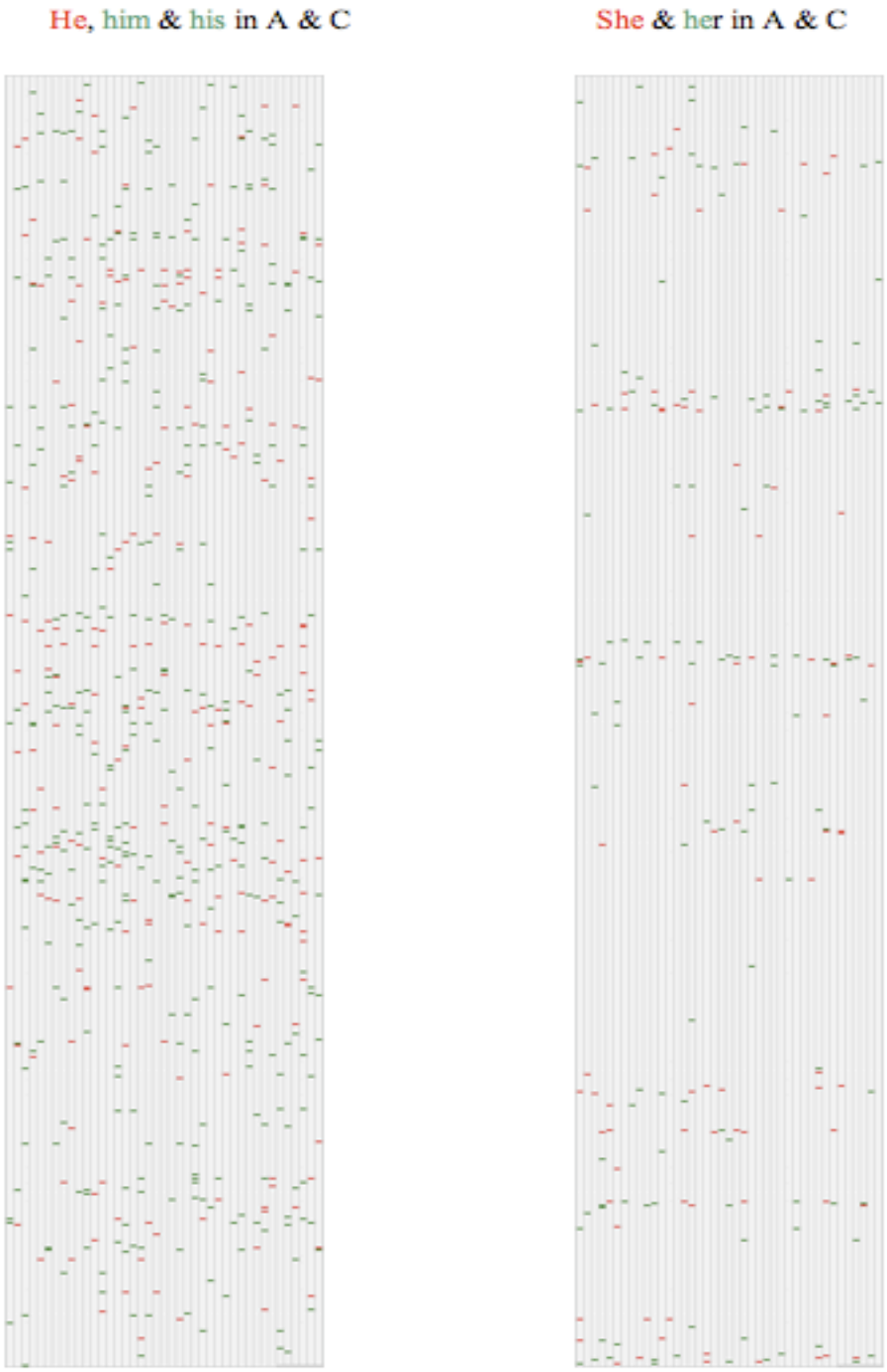
There are more male pronouns, but not a huge difference.

Here, for comparison, is the corresponding figure for *Romeo and Juliet*.



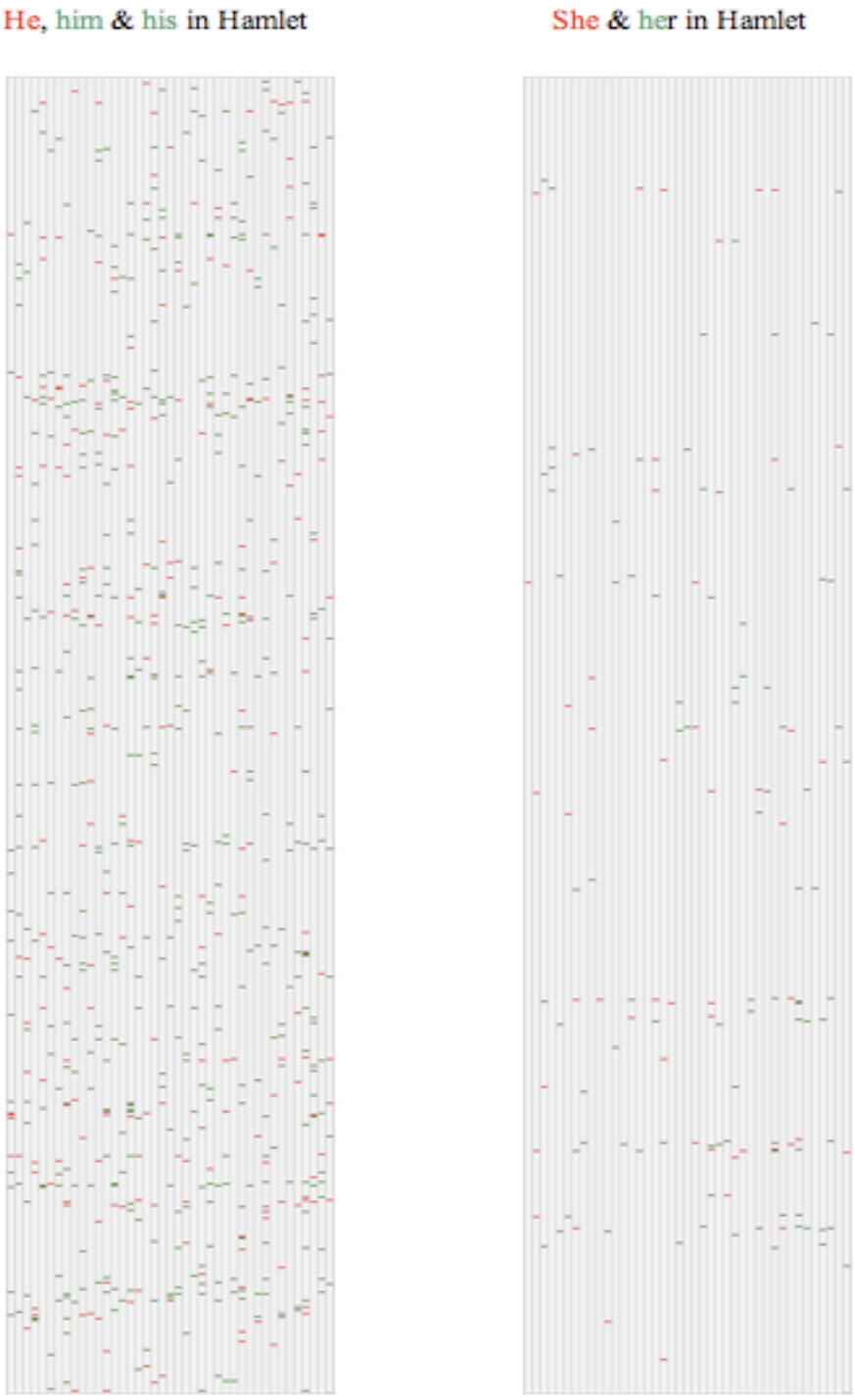
Again, there are more male pronouns, and there's one section of the play which contains no female pronouns. This isn't a simple artefact of the plot device of Juliet's death. A comparison with another Shakespeare love story makes the point clearly.

This figure shows male and female pronouns in *Antony and Cleopatra*.



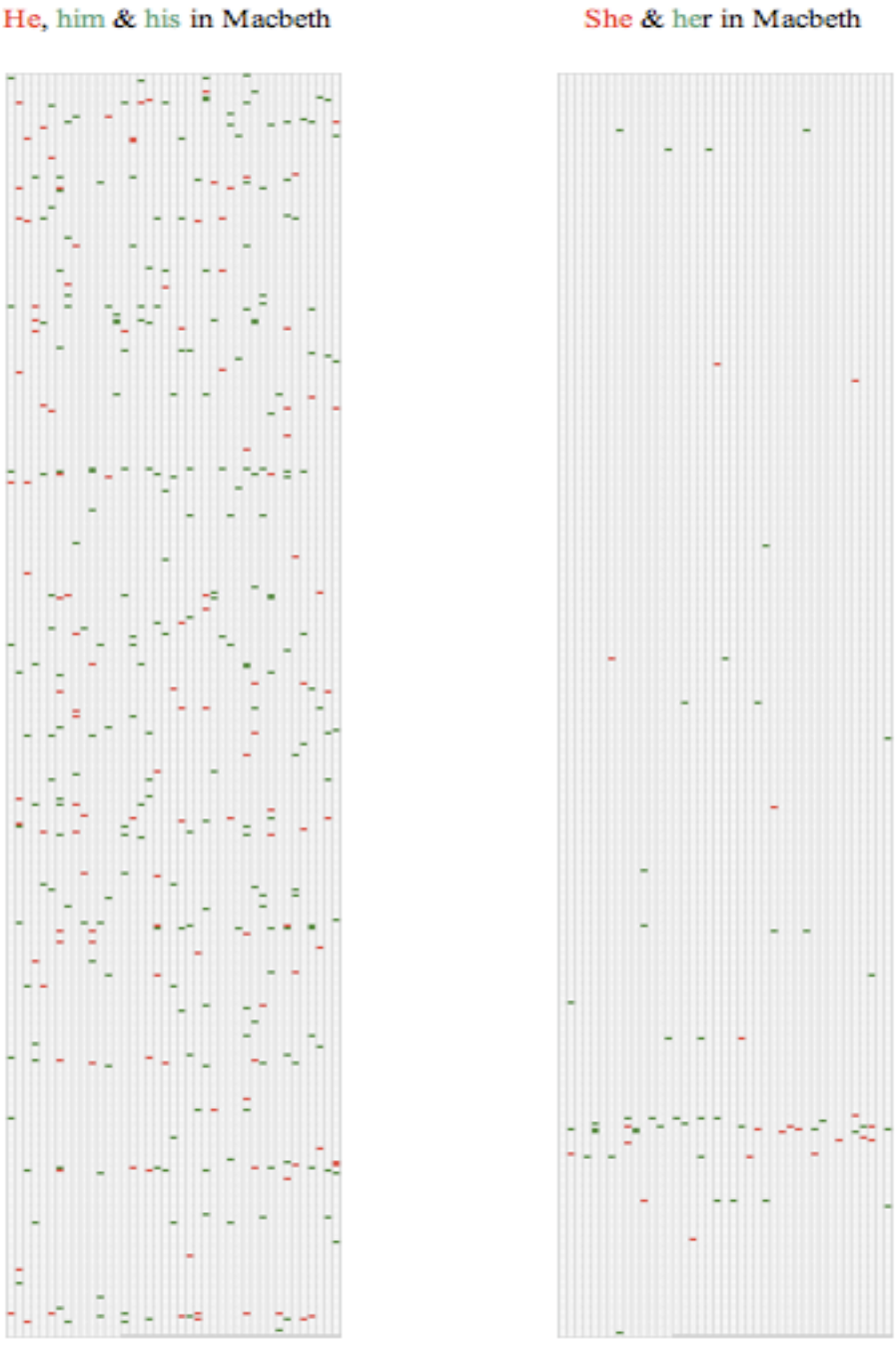
In *Antony and Cleopatra*, there are many more male pronouns than female, and there are several stretches of the play which contain no female pronouns. *Antony and Cleopatra* is about power politics, as well as a love story. The next two figures show results from two Shakespeare tragedies about power politics, both with strong female characters.

This figure shows the results from *Hamlet*.



This play shows the same trend as *Antony and Cleopatra*, but taken further. The next play goes further still.

This figure shows results from *Macbeth*.



Although Lady Macbeth is one of the most famous female characters in drama, the play contains hardly any female pronouns, and most of those are clustered toward the end.

Conclusion

Displaying where key terms occur within a text can give swift and powerful new insights into a text and into a body of texts.

Technical notes

The images above were produced using the Search Visualizer. This software is available for free at:
www.searchvisualizer.com

The "classic texts" section of the site contains the five Shakespeare plays above, plus other texts and articles about using the Search Visualizer.

There's more information about this software on the Search Visualizer blog:
www.searchvisualizer.wordpress.com

The searches above all used the "whole word" option, as opposed to the "partial match" option, to avoid false positives from words such as "the" which contain "he".