Crosscheck

02.136DH Lyric Poetry - Digital Humanities Project

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Introduction

During the 02.136DH Lyric Poetry course, one of the things explored was the role of poetry in modern society. While doing so, the question emerged - how might modern technology be used to explore and uncover poetry? Surrounding the work of Mary Wroth, Ilona Bell in her essay *The Autograph Manuscript of Mary Wroth's Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*[1] claimed that Wroth's original manuscript version of Pamphilia to Amphilanthus, was more personal and uncensored, compared to the printed version. The printed version was not just refined and polished, but it was edited strategically and to make it more acceptable to the public - "Wroth's intimate manuscript poems challenge current scholarly paradigms of English Renaissance women, bringing them into consonance with their continental contemporaries." (Bell, pg 172). La Trobe University has an electronic edition[2] of Wroth's poetry edited by Paul Salzman that provides a stanza-by-stanza comparison, analysis, and an interpretation of the differences for all the different versions of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus.* This makes it easier to see the changes and its implications. However, a digital tool that harnesses the power of computation can aid this process and look across much larger corpora of texts. It can assist in effective and efficient "distant reading"[3].

The Tool

Fig. 1 - Home page - enter two texts and compare

The core idea of the tool is to provide an easy interface to compare two versions of the same text side by side and highlight any text that has been added, deleted or changed. The tool was built using Python's inbuilt module `Difflib` that allows users to compare sets of data. A simple interface containing two text boxes to upload the two versions of the text and a compare button as shown in Fig.1 was created using HTML and CSS. The compare button will lead you to a new page, with a line-by-line comparison of the two texts with the differences highlighted. Deleted items are highlighted in red, added items in green and edited items in yellow, as shown in Fig. 2. Finally, the web application was hosted locally on a Django server.

24	Then kind thought my fancies guide	24	Then kind thought my fancies guide
25	Let me never hopeless* slide;	25	Let me never hapless slide;
26	Still maintain thy force in me,	26	Still maintain thy force in me,
27	Let my* thinking, still bee free:	27	Let me thinking,* still bee free:
28	Nor leave thy might until my death	28	Nor leave thy might until my death
29	But let me, thinking, yield up breath.	29	But let me, thinking, yield up breath.

Fig. 2 - Differences highlighted line by line

Fig. 3 - Report page - overall comparison report with legend

How to use

1. Ensure that you have [Python3](#) installed.
2. Download the code repository from [this link](#) as a .zip file and uncompress it in your computer.
3. Open the terminal and change the directory to the folder using the `cd` command. For example: `cd /Users/varsha/Downloads/Crosscheck`
4. Install requirements (Django) using `pip install requirements.txt`
5. Run the app using `python manage.py runserver`
6. The web app can be accessed from the address `127.0.0.1:8000` on your internet browser

Examples

1. Deletion - in Fig 3 it is highlighted that a sonnet in the one version has been deleted from the other.
2. Editing/adding - in Fig. 4 it is highlighted that the words 'you' and 'your' have been changed to 'thou' and 'thy'. Salzman speculates that it could be the "reconceptualizing the relationship between Pamphilia and Cupid and making it more casual", as "you" was used to address someone more superior or of higher rank and 'thy' was a more familiar/casual term.

17	Will not your servant leave? Think but on this:	17	Will not your servant leave? Think but on this:
18	Who wears love's crown must not do so amiss,	18	Who wears love's crown must not do so amiss,
19	But seek their god who on thy force rely.*	19	But seek their god who on thy force do lie.*
20			
21	F4mod		
22	4.		
23			
24	Venus* unto the Gods a suit did move,		
25	That since she was of love the goddess styled,		
26	She only might the power have of love,		
27	And not as now a partner with her child,		

Fig. 4 - Example of deletion

8	Behold I yield: let forces be dismissed;	8	Behold I yield: let forces be dismissed;
9	I am your* subject conquered, bound do* stand,	9	I am thy subject conquered, bound to stand,
10	Never your* foe, but did your* claim assist	10	Never thy foe, but did thy claim assist
11	Seeking your* due of those who did withstand;	11	Seeking thy due of those who did withstand;

Fig. 5 - Example of insertion and edit

Conclusion

After comparing the two versions of Wroth's writing, Bell writes that Wroth is seen in a different light, one more multi-dimensional and complex, bold and original than the initial impression that critics and scholars held. Hopefully in the future this tool's features and accessibility can be expanded to explore more texts and larger texts easily.

Citations

1. Bell, Ilona. "The Autograph Manuscript of Mary Wroth's Pamphilia to Amphilanthus." *Re-Reading Mary Wroth*, by Katherine Rebecca Larson et al., Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2015, pp. 172–182.
2. Salzman, Paul, and Gayle Allan. "Mary Wroth - English - School of Communication, Arts and Critical Enquiry - Humanities and Social Sciences, La Trobe University." *Mary Wroth's Poetry: An Electronic Edition - La Trobe University*, La Trobe University, 25 Jan. 2008, wroth.latrobe.edu.au/index.html.
3. *Distant Reading*. 5 June 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distant_reading.
4. *Difflib - Helpers for Computing Deltas¶*. docs.python.org/3/library/difflib.html.
5. *Django Documentation*. docs.djangoproject.com/en/3.1/.