

## Roses and Lilies: Digital Adventures in Intertextuality



Presented by Neil Coffee, Associate Professor of Classics and Chair of the Classics Department at the University of Buffalo. Thursday, December 5, 2013 2:00 PM SML International Room Allusion is form of meaning making that kindles the pleasure of recognition and conjures up a chain of associations. Already in antiquity, literary authors employed allusion to enrich their works. In response, scholars of ancient Alexandria undertook to investigate the nature and effects of allusion, initiating a line of inquiry that continues to this day. Changing technologies have aided these investigations, from the creation of the Alexandrian library itself, where texts could be gathered and compared, to the digital searching of the modern era. As new techniques have extended our grasp of allusions, the concept has itself expanded, into the broader notion of intertextuality, and onward to the notion of “text reuse” favored in current digital work, which at its furthest limits encompasses nearly every mark and utterance. We have now reached a further stage in our understanding. Long a passive responder to queries, the computer is becoming an active partner that can bring potential allusions to the reader for analysis. This presentation demonstrates one such effort to put the computer to work, the free Tesseract web tool (<http://tesseract.caset.buffalo.edu/> [1]). We will begin by exploring how to use the various search features available on the site. We will then consider how the Tesseract search algorithm constitutes an attempt to model the reader's process of recognizing an allusion. The final section of the presentation demonstrates how the Tesseract site can be used to trace intertexts over time across multiple authors. In the Aeneid, composed in the first century BCE, Vergil compared the blush of the maiden Lavinia to a bouquet of roses and lilies. In so doing, he gave life to a phrase that would have a long legacy in Latin literature, one among many that Tesseract can automatically detect. Using Tesseract results, we will follow this phrase over its life-cycle, watching it accumulate and shed associations down to its appearance in Psychomachia of Prudentius in the late 4th - early 5th century CE. The Tesseract Project (<http://tesseract.caset.buffalo.edu> [2]) aims to provide a flexible and robust web interface for exploring intertextual parallels. It is a collaborative project of the University at Buffalo's Department of Classics and Department of Linguistics, and the VAST Lab of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. This event is sponsored by SCOPA.

**External link:** [http://www.library.yale.edu/librarynews/2013/11/roses\\_and\\_lilies\\_digital\\_adven.h...](http://www.library.yale.edu/librarynews/2013/11/roses_and_lilies_digital_adven.h...) [3]

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### Links

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