Material Paratext Studies: Redefining the Concept of Text in Light of Manuscript Evidence

Aino Liira and Sirkku Ruokkeinen

1 Introduction

> A book is not necessarily the same thing as a text. 'Texts' are the material out of which human beings make 'literature.' For us, texts only come in books, and so the distinction between the two is blurred and even lost. But, in a memorial culture, a 'book' is only one way among several to remember a 'text'. (Carruthers 2008, 9–10)

Mary Carruthers' words above capture one of the central problems with our everyday understanding of 'texts' and 'books'. Texts may come in books, but texts may have many other forms as well; they can be transmitted orally or cited from memory. Additionally, books often contain more than 'the' text, and two copies of the 'same' book are rarely identical. Often used synonymously with *work* or *book*, everyday notions of text commonly assume that text appears in writing and has a relatively stable form, but for many academic purposes, including the study of historical texts and manuscripts in particular, such definitions prove problematic. Depending on the purpose of the writer, text may be defined through its content and/or material features, for example as a 'coherent whole', as a 'written work', or simply as 'letters on a page'. *Text* is hence not simply synonymous with *work*, nor are 'a coherent production' or 'ink marks on a page' sufficient definitions for the complex concept of text.

This essay reconsiders the problematic notion of *text*, especially as it is used in connection to *paratextuality*; the latter refers to the representation and framing of text through titles, prologues, blurbs, and other textual and material elements. The concept, invented by Gerard Genette (1987; trans. 1997b), drew into focus these previously marginalized elements of the book and directed attention to their impact on the interpretation of the text. In a few decades, Genette's invention has resulted in the emergence of a whole range of paratext studies in fields as diverse as literature, narratology, translation, book history,

media studies and manuscript studies (the list is not exhaustive).[1] It should be noted, however, that Genette himself only studied printed materials, omitting, by his own admission, diachronic change, translated texts, and images from his analysis.

It is nevertheless clear that the form which paratextual matter takes is dependent on the historical and cultural context of the book. Indeed, Genette himself notes that "[t]he ways and means of the paratext change continually, depending on period, culture, genre, author, work, and edition" (1997b, 3). Yet, while references to certain diachronic developments are made in his typology, these mostly concern individual paratextual elements with their individual histories. More research is still needed to find out how paratextuality, as a phenomenon, operates in different contexts and media. Furthermore, thus far in paratext studies, the concept of text itself has not been interrogated in depth. In our view, the point Carruthers makes on the difference between books and texts is central to the study of the ways in which the ever changing paratextual representations influence text. Reconsiderations of the concepts of paratext and text are necessary for the successful application of the concepts to other periods, cultures, and genres. Some research is being made in this area (see e.g. Ruokkeinen and Liira *forthcoming*, Stanitzek 2005, Birke and Christ 2013), but the discussion is still underway.

In this essay, we explore questions of textuality and paratextuality from the perspective of manuscript materials. The topic arises from our shared interest in paratextual theory, which we both employ in our doctoral research, despite differences in our approaches and materials. Although Ruokkeinen has some issues with Genette's presupposition of authorial control (discussed briefly in section 3 of this essay), the most problematic aspects the paratext theory are not particularly relevant for her dissertation, dealing with evaluative language in the printed prefaces and dedications of English Renaissance translators (Ruokkeinen *in prep.*). The issues of paratextual typology are more readily revealed in Liira's research. She studies paratextuality in the manuscript copies and printed editions of a single work, John Trevisa's Middle English translation of Higden's *Polychronicon* (Liira *in prep.*)*.* In her study, visual and copy-specific aspects of paratextuality are central, as each manuscript is unique. The differences in the applicability of Genette's framework to our individual research topics has led us

---

[1] It should be noted here that the term *text* can be applied to products other than written texts, for example images and films, which may, consequently, have paratexts. However, our focus in this essay is on written texts.

to question some of the key aspects of the paratext theory, for instance in the case where there is material overlap of text and paratext. In this essay, we approach this problem by asking: *In the context of manuscript materials, what is paratext? What is text?* Our intention is not to give definitive answers to these questions, but to explore the interaction of the two concepts and present the complex intersections of the theories applied.

2 Text and paratext in previous studies

With the term paratext, Genette refers to all materials *surrounding* the "main text" or the "body text". This includes elements within the covers of the book, such as prologues, titles, and indices, as well as those outside it, such as author interviews and correspondence. Although the latter do not share the same physical location with the text, they nevertheless influence its reception. As we have noted above, although widely applied, the concept of paratext is not unproblematic. The main problem identified concerns the definition of *text*: what is it that the paratext actually surrounds?

Genette defines text (in a literary work) as "a more or less long sequence of verbal statements that are more or less endowed with significance" (Genette 1997b, 1). The key elements in this definition are 1) the literary work, and 2) a sequence of verbal statements. Firstly, the scope of Genette's observation needs to be noted here: Genette formulated the concept of paratext mainly on the basis of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French novels. Although both Genette and other paratext scholars draw examples from earlier materials as well, the relative uniformity of Genette's corpus results in some problems, especially regarding the material features of texts and their culture-specific conventions. Genette is, furthermore, mainly concerned with the *literary* work, a text that aims to serve an aesthetic purpose rather than simply convey information (Genette 1997b, 3–4n6; see also Genette 1997c, 4) – despite the fact that he recognizes "the need for a paratext [which] is thrust on every kind of book, with or without aesthetic ambition" (1997b, 3–4n6). Since books without aesthetic ambition are outside his scope, the range of paratextual material that is perhaps only relevant for these kinds of books remains uncharted. Secondly, his definition of text is built on verbal or linguistic material. It is thus unclear whether text is seen as something operating on an abstract level only – as a linguistic production taking form in the author's and/or readers' mind – or if the material form, e.g. ink markings on a page, are also considered *text*. The full range of paratextual expression, including visual aspects of text, such as colour, size, and layout, is not theoreticized.

Although Genette notes that the choices of material and visual aspects, such as typography, are paratextual in nature (see e.g. 1997b, 7, 16, 33–36), the exact position of these in paratextual typology is left vague.

Genette's definition of text is especially problematic in terms of point two, which relies on an abstract notion of text, whereas he has presented paratextuality as a feature of books, i.e. material(ized) text. The issue is finely illustrated in manuscript materials: each copy is unique in their visual and material characteristics. Consequently, the influence of the historical context of production in analysing paratextuality is important: even after the coming of print, books were less standardized than the printed books of later periods. Difficulties arise from the fact that texts which materialize in books (and acquire paratexts in the process) can never be identical to the stable, abstract, authorial text – if such a text even exists. And while the concept of paratext has been widely adopted and also applied to the study of pre-print texts and books (e.g. Reis 2010; 2011; Jansen ed. 2014; Ciotti and Lin eds. 2016), theoretical considerations on the applicability of the theory to media other than printed books are scarce (but see Ruokkeinen and Liira *forthcoming*, Birke and Christ 2013). Below, we explore alternative definitions for text to see whether a different definition would solve the problems of applicability presented above.

3 Defining 'text'

The multitude of possible ways to understand the concept of *text* is addressed by McKenzie (1999). Two major perspectives into the notion of text arise: "One is the text as authorially sanctioned, contained, and historically definable. The other is the text as always incomplete, and therefore open, unstable, subject to perpetual re-making by its readers, performers, or audience" (McKenzie 1999, 55). The lack of such an explicit division is one of our main issues with Genette's definition of text, and thereby with his definition of paratext as an authorial tool.[2] The limitations in the original paratextual typology arise, firstly, from Genette's background as a structuralist. He stresses the authorial intention, partially because he focuses on literary (mostly fictional) works, in which the author is a more prominent figure than in utilitarian texts. Secondly, the limitations are the result

---

[2] Genette states that the "fringe" between the text and the outside world, i.e. the paratext, is "always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author" (1997b, 2). We disagree with this view.

of a focus on books produced in an era when the print technology and conventions were stabilized. In other words, the original paratext framework leans toward McKenzie's first notion of text, while the full potential of paratextuality may be revealed when one examines text as open and unstable, according to McKenzie's second notion.

In *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* ([1989] 1992), G. Thomas Tanselle discusses the differences between *texts of works* and *texts of documents* (Tanselle [1989] 1992, 37–38). He approaches these two concepts from the perspective of scholarly editing, where the texts of documents are the unique versions that are found in individual copies, including errors and 'scribal interventions'. The texts of works are the abstract, ideal versions towards which the editors strive. However, the division into texts of documents and texts of works can be applied more generally to the discussion of abstract and material texts, and textual transmission. Readers access works through material copies, and material aspects such as the quality of the copy and its layout affect the way the reader approaches and makes use of the text. What, then, is the relationship between the individual material copies and the 'abstract' work, i.e. the relationship between texts of documents and texts of works? Which aspects of the material text can be changed without changing the work? It can be hypothesized that the aspects that can be changed are part of the work's paratext, while the text needs to remain relatively stable in order to still be considered the 'same' text. Verifying this hypothesis would, however, require extensive research on paratextuality from a diachronic perspective, for instance, on the development of individual paratextual elements and their effect on their work, but also on paratextuality across various media, as a synchronous and culturally dependent phenomenon (see Liira *in prep*; Ruokkeinen and Liira *forthcoming*).

As quoted above, Genette defines *text* (i.e. what is surrounded by *paratext*) as verbal or linguistic material, with no explicit reference to its written, material form. The impact of medium (e.g. manuscript or print), however, adds another dimension to the discussion of paratextuality. This has been noted by other scholars, too. For instance, in their study of digital books, Birke and Christ (2013) propose a threefold categorisation in which paratexts are divided into *interpretive*, *navigational* and *commercial*. This categorisation resolves some of the issues raised by the uniformity of Genette's materials. Birke and Christ point out that due to Genette's interest in literary works, he stresses the interpretive function, which guides the reader's reception and understanding (2013, 67). For example, the commercial relevance of covers, title pages and certain other material features is mentioned in Genette's work, but it is viewed mainly as enhancing the market

value of the book (Genette 1997b, 23–33, 35). And while Genette discusses elements such as tables of contents and running-titles (1997b, 316–318), their power as navigational tools is left unexplored. Birke and Christ suggest that "[t]he underlying reason why Genette bypasses the navigational function is probably that he does not perceive the book as a technology requiring user instructions" – digital media, in contrast, do represent such a technology (2013, 68). As Birke and Christ (ibid.) note, ignoring the commercial and navigational functions of paratexts leaves Genette's model of paratextual significance incomplete, as both the "economic context and the medium of a text" must be seen as contributors to the interpretation of the text.[3]

We have utilized Birke and Christ's categorization elsewhere in analysing the overlapping of text and paratext in manuscript and early print materials (Ruokkeinen and Liira *forthcoming*) and do so below when discussing manuscript examples to further problematize the intersection. In our view, when recontextualizing paratextual typology to the manuscript tradition, special attention ought to be given to the various means of visual highlighting which may be used to mark paratextual elements in material texts. Such means of highlighting include, for example, changes in the colour, size, or script (letterforms). These three features are treated as an entry to the examination of the interconnectedness of paratextuality and textuality; we posit that they may signpost both paratextuality and textuality in a section of text. The three features are examined in the following section, where we discuss manuscript examples in order to reflect upon the paratextual functions of the highlighted elements on the material level (texts of documents).

4 Overlaps of paratext and text: illustrative examples

The material discussed in this essay has been chosen from the *British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*, which offers copyright-free images for online use.[4] We selected items illustrative of the gaps in the paratext theory, avoiding items such as sheet music and other manuscripts with less typical layouts, as well as examples of other formats than the bound book, i.e., the *codex*.

---

[3] In addition to medium, Birke and Christ's categorisation may partly answer to the problem of variation between genres, as different types of paratexts may be more relevant to certain genres than others.

[4] The images in this catalogue are made available under a Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

Our explorations below concentrate on issues decidedly material: we give some examples of the visual features of text we believe to carry potential paratextual significance. The three features discussed below are colour, size, and script.

The color of the ink in a medieval manuscript is typically black or dark brown. When colored ink is used, it is most commonly red. Usually, the term *rubric* (referring to the red color) is used in reference to a heading written in red ink, although other elements marked with red may be called rubrics as well, and not all headings are in red. We believe that by focusing on the choice of what has been marked with colour it may be possible to determine whether that element ought to be, due to the markedness, classified as paratext. We have two examples in this section. Figure 1 shows MS Arundel 303, an English thirteenth-century manuscript on parchment, containing the Bible in Latin (ff. 8–442), a table of readings (ff. 1–2v), a calendar (ff. 3v–4v), Jerome's letters (ff. 5–7v), and a separate work titled *Interpretationes nominum Hebreorum* (ff. 443–483). F. 415v contains a rubric announcing the title for the Epistle to the Hebrews ("Epistola ad he | breos"), followed by three lines of decorative circles as line-fillers. The text proper begins with a seven-line decorative initial 'M', marking the beginning of Hebrews. This type of use of colour is extremely conventional in medieval manuscripts.

The rubricated element is unproblematically paratextual. It is a chapter title (i.e. an *intertitle*), which is one of the established paratext categories (see Genette 1997b, 294–318). It should be noted, however, that the red ink is not only used to mark the passage as a title but also to aid the reader in making sense of the structure of the text. In other words, red ink indicates not only the paratextual status of the element but also the break within the main text. Furthermore, the line-filler suggests that although the rubric was to be visually engaging enough to communicate its primary – the paratextual – message, the element also serves aesthetic purposes: blank space after the heading would not be as pleasing as the triangle of red.

Our second example shown in Figure 2 likewise utilises red ink. MS Additional 37790 is an anthology of theological works containing *Off mendynge of lyfe*, a mid-fifteenth century English translation of Richard Rolle's *De emendatione vitae*. The work opens with a four-line initial and a ten-line rubric containing the work's title ("This Boke is Off mendynge of lyfe"), structure ("destinct in to xij | chapiters"), an outline of chapter topics (e.g. "The ffyrst of conu[er]syon or holy | turnynge", etc.), and a closing formula ("Off this als god will g[ra]unt we sall pursw"), after which a three-line initial marks the beginning of the text proper.
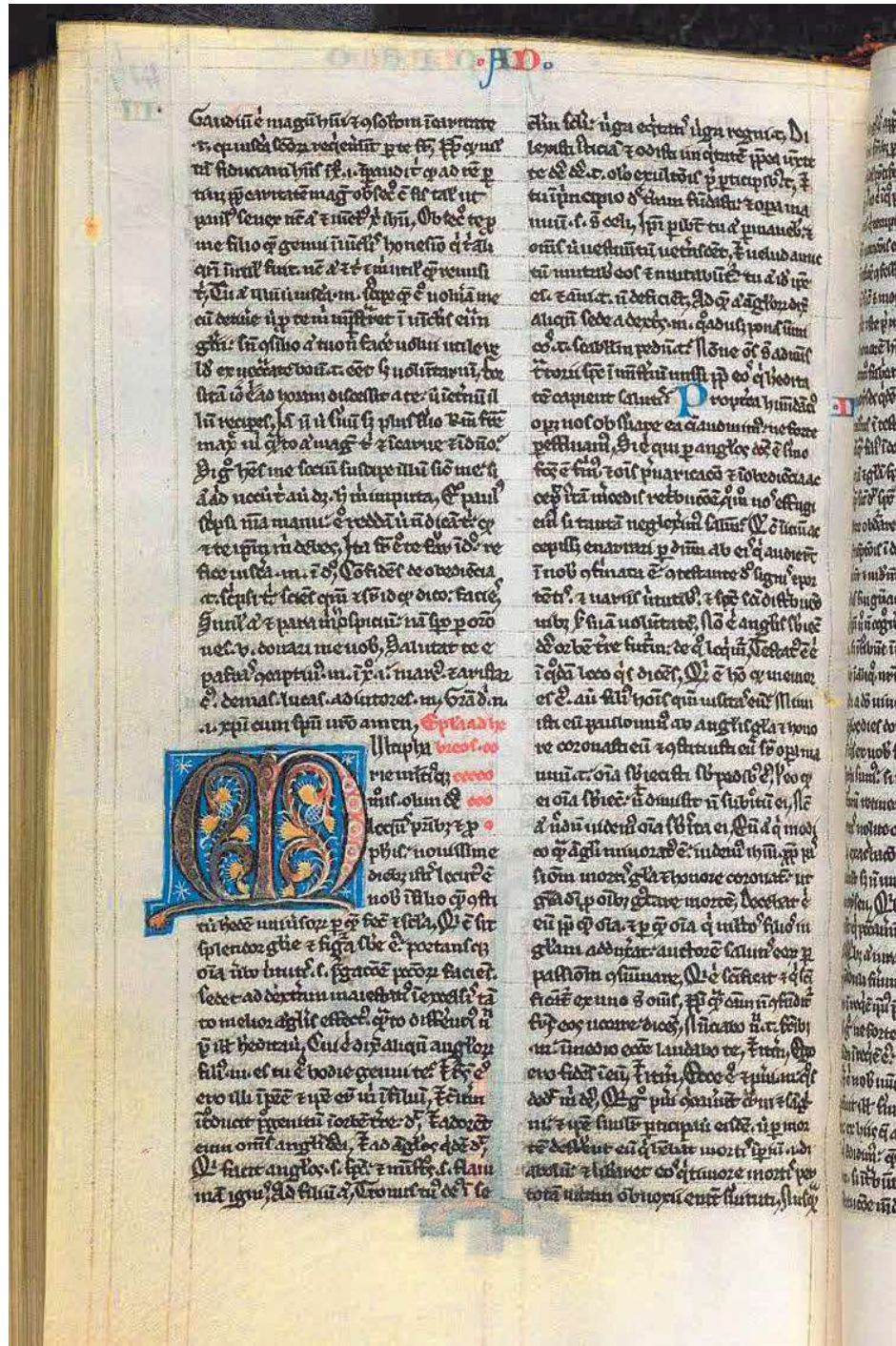
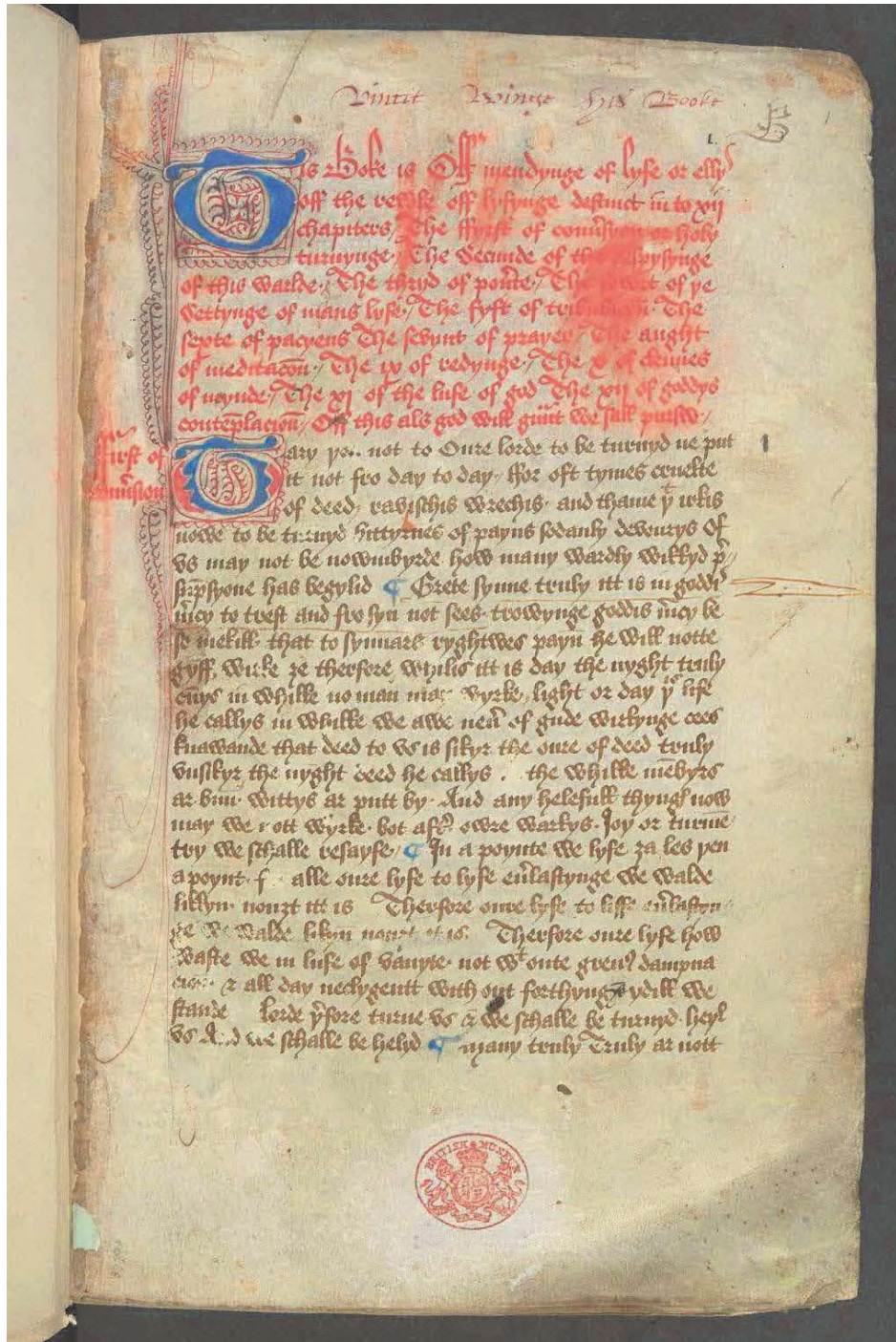*Figure 1. British Library, MS Arundel 303, f. 415v.*

Figure 2. British Library, MS Additional 37790, f. 1r.

The rubric in MS Additional 37790 offers a fruitful case for discussing the potential paratextuality of colour. We have two avenues for the exploration of this rubric. The first is to consider the content of the rubricated section: some of the content is clearly paratextual. For example, the rubric begins by giving the title of the work. Titles are part of the original paratextual apparatus (see Genette 1997b, 55–103) and unproblematic in terms of their status. The same applies to the intertitles following. The closing formula is more difficult to categorize. Genette (1997b) does not discuss these types of book production traditions and hence, the paratextual model ought perhaps be adjusted to take into account the possible paratextuality of metatextual commentary.

The second possible interpretation is to consider the rubric as a whole. It could be classified as a long incipit.[5] It is also possible to interpret the rubric as a – rather short and basic – prologue. Litzler (2011, 17) addresses the occasional difficulty of differentiating between prologues and rubrics. As noted above, a rubric generally serves as a title or heading and is commonly located at the beginning of a (medieval) text or a section of text. A prologue is a paratextual element, typically situated before the main text, dealing with the topic, authorship, or production processes of the work (see also Genette 1997b, 161–195). It is indeed tempting to classify long prefatory rubrics as incipit/prologue: the content and positioning overlap, and both rubrics and prologues are often visually distinguishable from the main text.

Changes in script size may be used in combination with changes in colour, or as a separate device for highlighting certain parts of the text. Again, we discuss two examples to see how this method of highlighting implies paratextuality. The first case, MS Egerton 2788 (Figure 3), consists of a charter and a Domesday book of the laws and usages of Ipswich. The manuscript begins with the following rubric:

Iste liber constat paulo le R<o>os | clerico ville <G>ypp[e]wyci
[This book has been compiled for Paul le Roos, the Ipswich town clerk]

Whether Egerton 2788 was produced for or by Paul le Roos is left somewhat unclear (see Bateson 1904, xxxiv, cf. Callies 2005, 161). The rubric itself is in red ink, but in addition to colour, it is also highlighted by using a slightly larger script than in the main text.

---

[5] Incipit, Latin for '(it) begins', refers to a rubric which states the beginning of a text, or sometimes, a section of a text.
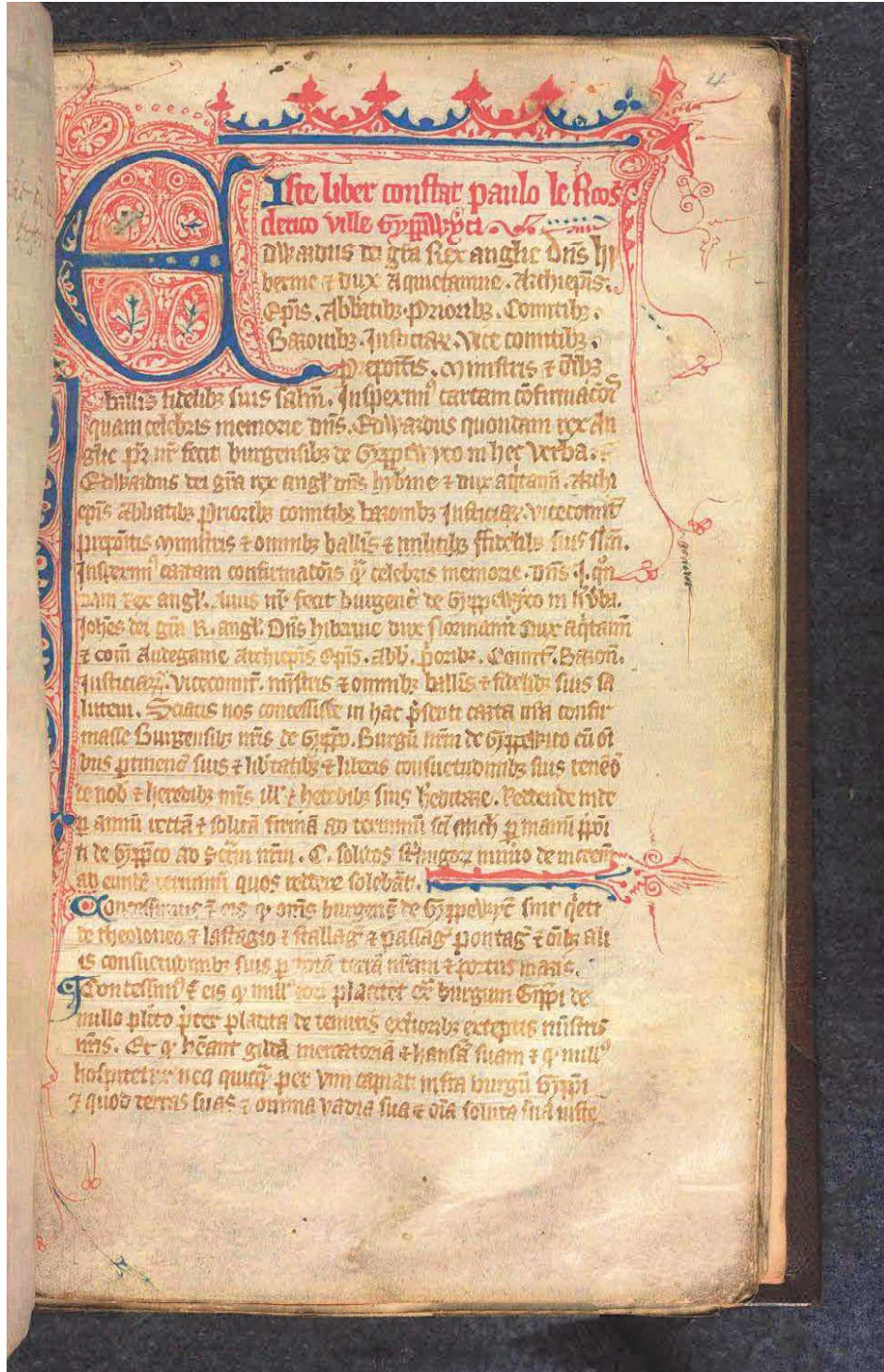
Figure 3. British Library, MS Egerton 2788, f. 4.

The rubric in MS Egerton 2788 could be called an inscription denoting either the ownership of the book or possibly an act of commission, indicating a reason why the book was produced. In either case, unlike the two examples of rubrics discussed above, this rubric does not explicitly mention the beginning of a text or a section of a text, nor does it provide a title. Rather, it refers to the processes of the manuscript's production. The paratextual function of this element may thus be interpreted in two ways: firstly, as a way to indicate the beginning of the text through visual highlighting (size and colour), which is a navigational function. Secondly, the rubric provides information on the production process. This is an interpretive function, as the rubric may influence how the reader approaches the text. As with the rubric of MS Additional 37790 discussed above, commenting on the production process would overlap with the typical content of prologues. To find out if such practices are common in medieval rubrics, substantial research outside the scope of this essay would be necessary.

The second example of alternating text size (Figure 4) is a page from MS Arundel 158, a fourteenth-century copy of Richard Rolle's Psalter. On this page, f. 83v, the psalm verses in Latin have been written in a larger script than the English comment following each verse. As the larger script requires more space, it is more expensive to use and hence, more prestigious. In legal and biblical commentaries, the text to be commented on was typically written in a larger script, while the commentary, or *gloss*, was written in a smaller script, often laid out to surround the larger text (see e.g. Parkes 1976, 116).

MS Arundel 158 is an interesting example in terms of the definition of text in a medieval context. The text in the larger script on the page is clearly more authoritative, both in terms of its visual presentation and its content: a book from the Old Testament. However, the commentary on the Psalter in English – the text copied in the smaller script – is the reason the manuscript copy has been produced. Which one of the texts is paratext, which one is text? Or should both the Latin and the English parts be classified as main text? In our view, there are two different answers to this question. One could claim that both scripts constitute *text*. They both occupy the space reserved for the text within the page. They work together to constitute a unique whole: removal of either textual element would result in a wholly different text. In this case, the script size would not indicate paratextuality, but perhaps textuality existing outside of the covers of this particular codex. However, the text in the smaller script may also be interpreted as paratext to the larger, as it comments on the *Psalms* and hence directs the reader in their interpretation. This would indicate that text size may be employed in a contrasting manner to that of coloured ink. Whereas the markedness of rubrics,

i.e., red colour in examples 1, 2 and 3 seem to indicate paratextuality, the markedness of size, i.e., larger script in example 4 would indicate textuality.
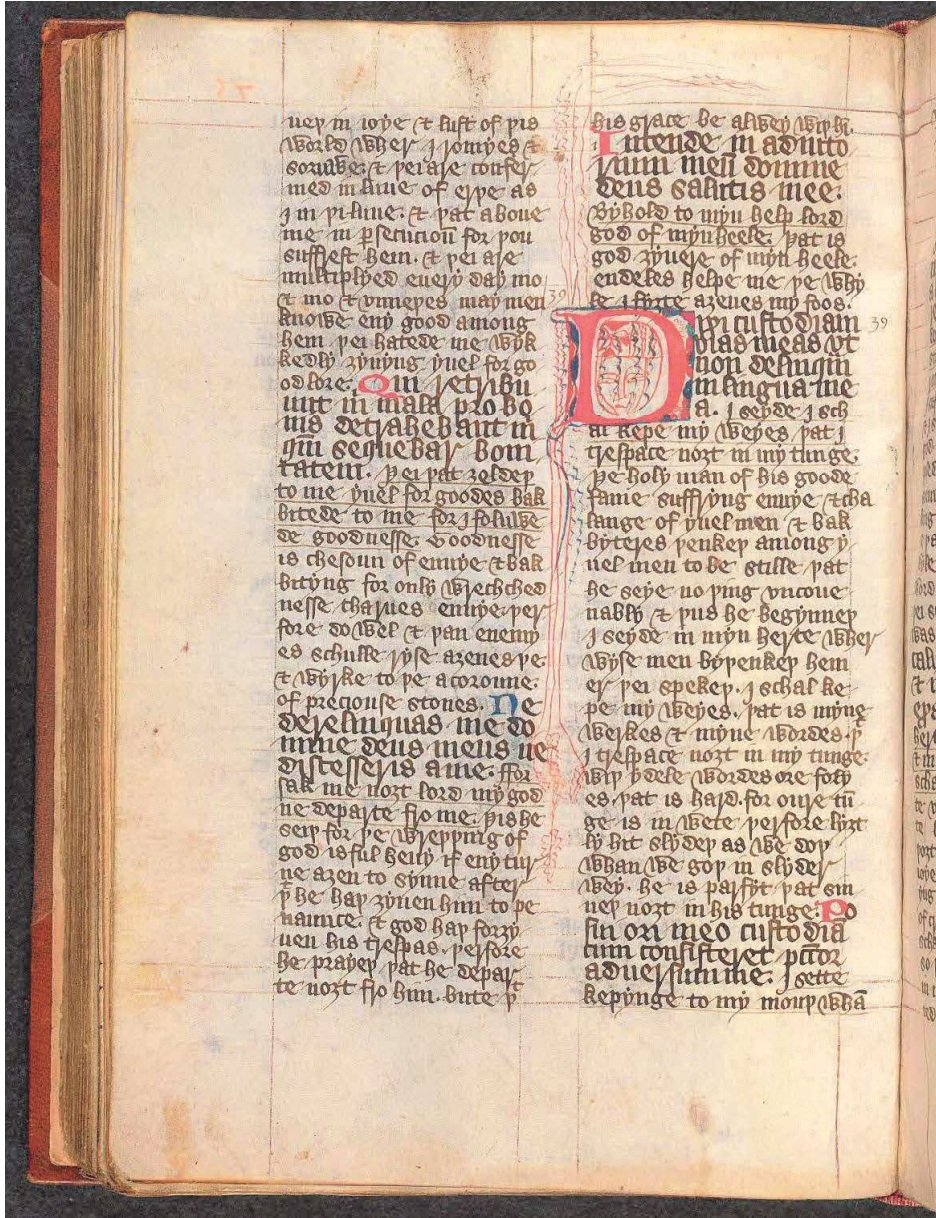

Figure 4. British Library, MS Arundel 158, f. 83v.

Our final example of textual features possibly implying paratextuality is that of script. A medieval manuscript could contain only one script, or several. A change between scripts could be made between texts if the manuscript volume contained

copies of several different works, or a change could occur within one coherent textual unit, i.e. to mark e.g. code-switching, names of authors, or paratextual elements such as rubrics. Kaislaniemi (2017) has named this latter practice *script-switching*. The switches may occur together with changes in script size, with changes of color, or with both.

Our first example of script-switching in Figure 5 is from Additional 37790, the anthology of theological works also discussed in example 2. Figure 5 shows a colophon[6] at the end of *De emendatione vitae* on f. 18. The colophon begins with the the conventional end formula ("Thus: Endis the xij Chapetyrs | Off Richarde hampole"), continues with the identification of the translator ("In to englys | t[ra]nslate be ffrere Rycharde Misyn") and the motivation for translation ("to | in fformaciou[n] Off Crystyn saulis"), and ends conventionally with the date of the completion of the work:

A[nn]o | d[omin]o Mill[esi]mo CCCCmo xxxiiij.
[The year of our Lord 1434.]

The colophon is written in a Gothic script larger and more formal – and thus more prestigious – than the main text, which shows less angular letterforms and a higher number of loops enabling faster execution.

The colophon seems to be paratextual: not only is it visually marked, but its content is not part of the main narrative. Rather, it deals with the production of the text proper. In terms of the paratextual theory, the colophon itself is thus unproblematic: the shift from the main narrative to metatextual content makes it clearly a paratext. A more interesting and problematic question is, however, whether the script-switch itself is paratextual, or whether the script simply functions as an indicator of the paratextuality of another element. The visual effect could have been achieved by merely changing the script size or color, although the angular letterforms are more formal and hence enhance the formulaic and paratextual nature of the colophon. Indeed it might be the contrast or markedness itself that functions as a navigational paratext, implying that "this is not of text". This practice is similar to the convention of highlighting titles by the use of a different script, found in manuscript and printed books alike.

---

[6] A record of the production of a manuscript or early printed book, usually situated at the end of the codex (*BLG, s.v.* "colophon").
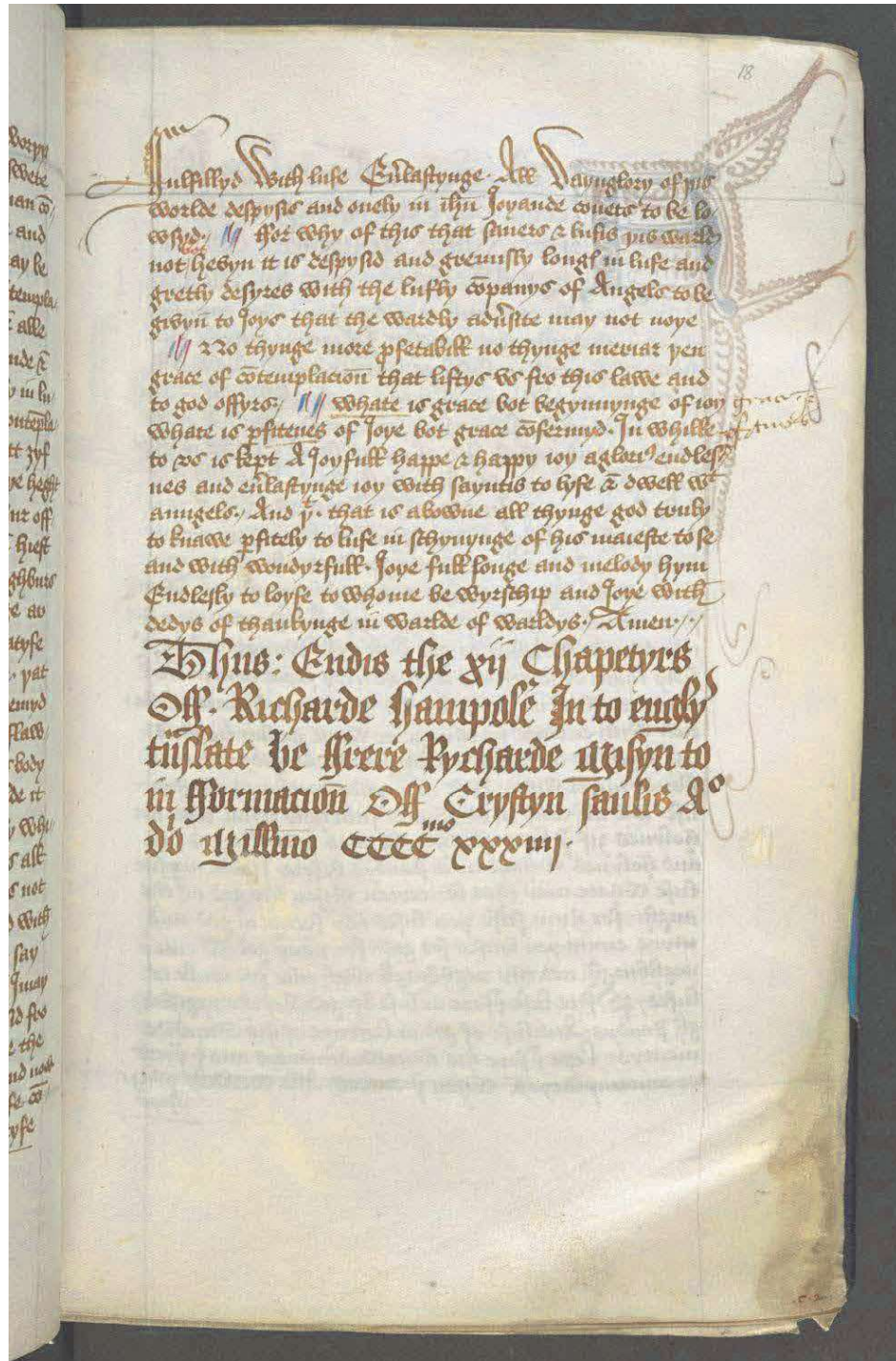
Figure 5. British Library, MS Additional 37790, f. 18.

Figure 6. British Library, MS Arundel 285, ff. 5v–6r.

Another manuscript with distinctive script-switches is MS Arundel 285. This manuscript, a Scottish poetry book from the early sixteenth century, is written in a secretary script but employs a large display script, consisting of stylized majuscule letters, in the first lines that begin with red initials. This practice of writing the initial word or initial line in a display script is an established convention in manuscripts (see e.g. *BLG*, s.v. "display script"); the most famous examples are perhaps the Book of Kells and the Lindisfarne Gospels. Ff. 5v–6 of Arundel 285 (Figure 6) contain the beginning of the *Passion of Christ* by Walter Kennedy, as indicated in the rubric on f. 5v. The initial line on f. 6r, "(H)AIL CR", is cut mid-word and the first words of the prologue continue on the following line as "Istin kny[gh]t".

In Arundel 285, the display script is not used to mark a title or some other established paratextual element as in the examples above, but the first words of the poem, while the title of the poem is mentioned in the rubric on the previous page. This is common in medieval manuscripts: the most prominent visual element, e.g. a large initial or border decoration, often occurs at the beginning of the main text. While the prominence of the title is achieved with rubrication, which implies it is paratext, much like in the examples above, the script-switch acts in a navigational function, indicating the beginning of the text proper. In contrast to the examples discussed in connection to Figures 2 and 5 above, however, here there seems to be only one layer of paratextuality, the navigational function of the script-switch, as the words that have been highlighted are not paratext but text.

Our final example in Figure 7 contains all the features discussed so far: color-, size- and script-switches, interacting to convey textual hierarchies and other paratextual and aesthetic messages. MS Harley 11 is a commentary on psalms by Peter Lombard, produced in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. A larger Gothic script (Textualis) is used to copy the psalms while the commentary is in the same script, only smaller. The practice is similar to the one used in Rolle's Psalter, MS Arundel 158, illustrated in Figure 4 above: a larger script is reserved to the authoritative sections of text. The liberal use of space communicates the prestige of the text: saving parchment was not a priority for the producers of this copy. Red ink is used in a rubric (f. 44r, column b) and to highlight the initial word "(D)ominus" ('Lord'), written in a majuscule display script at the beginning of Psalm 26. Further script-switches can be found in the marginal notes and in the guide for the rubricator, written vertically near the edge of the page as it was probably intended to be trimmed off after rubrication when the manuscript was bound.

The page of MS Harley 11 contains two types of paratextual messages. The unambiguously paratextual elements, which are spatially separate from the main text, include the marginalia and the rubric. The size, color and script are features which we may observe attached both to the main text and the paratext. However, *changes* in these features, which also carry paratextual significance, are more interesting in the main text: for example, the changes in script size within the main text and the script-switching of "Dominus". As discussed, these indicate a shift between the bible text and the commentary, that is to say, it aids in the navigation and interpretation of the text. In our view, this makes the script-switches paratextual.

MS Harley 11 is interesting as it suggests a potential hierarchy of highlighting devices. While one could claim that switches of color, size and script all mark textual hierarchies and structures in different ways, it is the combination of all three which is used to mark "(D)ominus" at the beginning of Psalm 26. The red ink used to highlight the beginning of a more prestigious section of text is also used in the rubric above. The rubric indicates the end of the previous section, and has a purely navigational function. The use of a larger script in the Psalm text again represents the prestige of the content, but it is only the first word (referring to God) which merits the use of all three: the majuscule display script is not used elsewhere on the page, and hence, in the hierarchy of visual prominence, it reaches the highest level. To fully analyse the hierarchy of prominence on this page, one should consider the use of all the devices discussed in light of the textual message they aim to convey, as well as the visual and textual co-text. A

comprehensive analysis of such a hierarchy is, unfortunately, not possible within the scope of the present discussion.
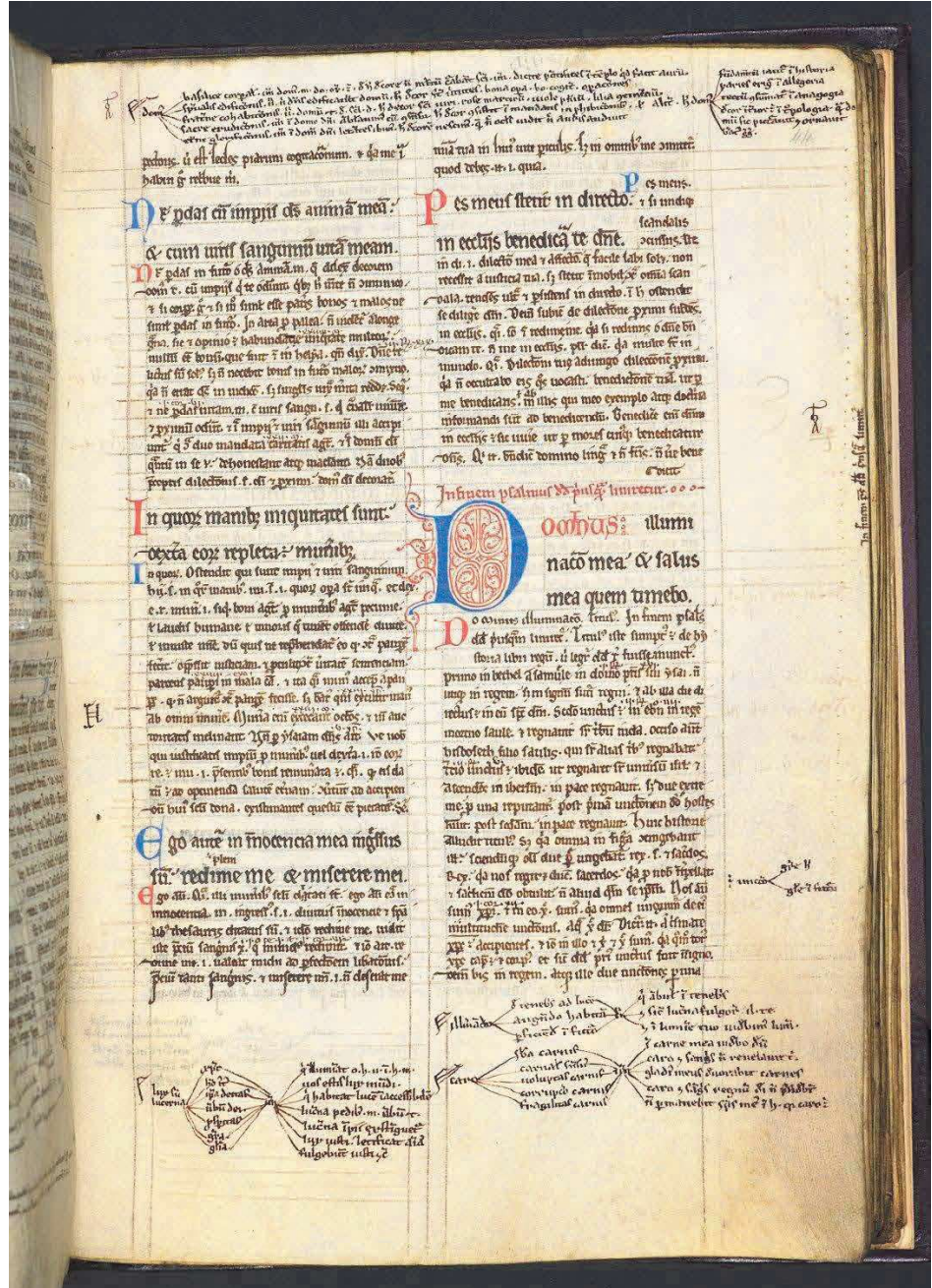

Figure 7. British Library, MS Harley 11, f. 44.

5 Paratextuality and textuality on the manuscript page: discussion

Our discussion of the color, size and script in English medieval and early modern manuscripts suggests that all of these features indeed have paratextual significance. In the case of color, red ink indicates the paratextual status of an element, but it does not necessarily help us interpret the paratextual element's position in the paratextual model. A rubricated element may have several functions: to serve as a heading, to mark metatextual comments, and to indicate a break or shift within the main text, among others. Example 1 shows that red ink also carries aesthetic functions. Examples 1 and 2 lead us to believe that in analysing medieval rubrics within the paratextual model, the first thing to consider is whether the rubricated element ought to be interpreted as a whole, on account of the uniformity achieved by the choice of color, or if we should allow for the possibility that the visual unity may mask the fact that red ink is used to mark several paratextual elements.

Based on our observation concerning script size in examples 3 and 4, we believe that the size of the script functions somewhat similarly to color: it indicates breaks within the main text.[7] However, while the change of color is used to highlight headings or other paratextual elements in between or at the beginning of a text, changes in size may also be used to alternate between text and metatext, or between voices in the text. In example 3, the rubricated element is metatext, in which the voice of the scribe informs the reader of the circumstances of the text's production. These kinds of comments may be seen as marking authority or authorship within the text. Examples 4 and 7 show that script size may be used to mark authoritativeness as well: the larger is employed for the more authoritative text, such as Bible quotations. If we consider the central function of paratext, which is to serve the text and to aid in its interpretation, the commentary could indeed be considered paratext of the Bible text in Figures 4 and 7. However, as the smaller script is used to copy the text for which the codex was produced, we view this interpretation as untenable. Rather, both the smaller and the larger script ought to be considered as manifestations of the (main) *text*, or the text of the work. To support this we might consider the (in)stability of the more established paratextual elements found in material texts (documents): titles, indices, prologues, advertisements, even pagination, may be removed without altering or

---

[7] Whichever method of highlighting is adopted depends on, for instance, cultural conventions. Considering these are outside the scope of the present essay.

'damaging' the text of the work.[8] The same cannot be said of the passages written in either the small or the large script in examples 4 and 7. Rather, the two work together to constitute a unique whole: removal of either element would result in a wholly different text. In this case, the script size would not indicate paratextuality, but rather different voices in the text, one of which also exists outside of the covers of this particular codex.[9]

Script-switches, as illustrated in example 5, may be used as devices to highlight paratextual elements similarly to changes in color or script size. However, we also discovered the possibility that the script-switch might be paratextual in itself. In example 7, the script switch might be interpreted as reference to an external authority, i.e., God. Evidence for this interpretation may also be found in example 6, where the highlighted element is the first line of the poem. That is to say, the first line is part of the text, not paratext. The switch to a prominent display script functions navigationally, informing the reader of the beginning of a new poem. Comparing the two differing uses of script-switches lead us to suggest that there are more than one layer of paratext: elements such as rubric/headings or colophons may have paratextual functions, for example interpretive ones, regardless of whether they have been visually highlighted. Using any (or several) of the three highlighting devices – color, larger/smaller size, or script-switch – adds another layer, that of navigational paratextuality.

6 Conclusion

In this essay, we set out to study the possibility of color, script-switches and script size carrying paratextual significance, to find ways to interrogate the concept of text within paratextual theory. We used a selection of manuscript pages from the *British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*. It seems that all three visual features may be used to mark elements on the page that are paratextual, such as headings (rubrics), prologues, or colophons. However, parts of the text, rather than paratext, may be highlighted using the same visual devices, which

---

[8] See Ruokkeinen and Liira (*forthcoming*) for the suggestion of such optionality as a defining feature of paratextuality.

[9] Quotation marks in present-day texts, or indeed our use of smaller font size in the Carruthers quote at the beginning of this essay, act in a similar manner to script size. Both serve to indicate the text section's existence outside the text at hand. Quotation marks imply intertextuality, rather than paratextuality. (For Genette's views on intertextual relationships see esp. Genette 1997a, 1–2).

means that the navigational function of the contrast between highlighted and nonhighlighted parts could be interpreted as another layer of paratextuality.

The question of telling apart text and paratext on manuscript pages is far from clear-cut. However, what we have aimed to show is that material characteristics of texts may reveal the intersections of text and paratext and thus help us redefine the term *text* in the context of paratextual theory. The subject of paratextual meaning in the context of historical materials is a very complex and multifaceted question, requiring understanding of genres, production techniques, and material realities. Even when all this relevant information has been provided, the number of variables means that an analysis of paratextuality in one copy might not be applicable to others. More comprehensive studies are still required to find out how changes of colour, script and size influence the representation of text, and we hope to explore this avenue in our future studies.

Bibliography

Primary sources

British Library, MS Additional 37790. Available online: http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/
    illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=3907.
British Library, MS Arundel 158. Available online: http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/
    illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=4335.
British Library, MS Arundel 285. Available online: http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/
    illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=7544.
British Library, MS Arundel 303. Available online: http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/
    illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=481313.
British Library, MS Egerton 2788. Available online: http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/
    illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=12807.
British Library, MS Harley 11. Available online: http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/
    illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=37461.

Secondary sources

Bateson, Mary, ed. 1904. *Borough Customs*. Vol 1. Edited for the Selden Society.
    London: Professional Books Ltd.
Birke, Dorothee, and Birte Christ. 2013. "Paratext and Digitized Narrative: Mapping the
    Field". *NARRATIVE* 21, no. 1: 65–87.
BLG = British Library. 2018. "Glossary for the Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts."
    Accessed 16 February 2018. http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanus
    cripts/glossary.asp.
Ciotti, Giovanni, and Hang Lin, eds. 2016. *Tracing Manuscripts in Time and Space
    through Paratexts*. Studies in Manuscript Cultures 7. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.
Callies, David. 2005. "How custom becomes law in England". In *The Role of Customary
    Law in Sustainable Development*, Peter Ørebech, Fred Bosselman, Jes Bjarup,
    David Callies, Martin Chanock, and Hanne Peterse, 158–223. Cambridge:
    Cambridge University Press.
Carruthers, Mary. 2008. *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*.
    2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Genette, Gérard. 1997a. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Translated by
    Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln: University of Nebraska.
Genette, Gérard. 1997b. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Translated by Jane E.
    Lewin. Literature, Culture, Theory 20. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge
    University Press.
Genette, Gérard. 1997c. *The Work of Art: Immanence and Transcendence*. Translated by
    G. M. Goshgarian. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Jansen, Laura, ed. 2014. *The Roman Paratext: Frame, Texts, Readers*. Cambridge:
    Cambridge University Press.
Kaislaniemi, Samuli. 2017. "Code-Switching, Script-Switching and Typeface-Switching
    in Early Modern English Manuscript Letters and Printed Tracts." In *Reading the
    Page: Verbal and Visual Communication in Early English Texts*, edited by Matti
    Peikola, Aleksi Mäkilähde, Hanna Salmi, Mari-Liisa Varila, and Janne Skaffari,
    165–200. Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 37. Turnhout: Brepols.

Liira, Aino. *In prep*. "Paratextual Communication in the Manuscripts and Early Printed Editions of the Middle English *Polychronicon*." PhD Dissertation, University of Turku.

Litzler, Mary Frances. 2011. "A Corpus of Middle English Medical Prologues in the Sloane Collection of the British Library: An Introduction to the Genre in Prose." PhD Dissertation, University of Las Palmas.

McKenzie, D. F. 1999. *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Parkes, Malcolm Beckwith. 1976. "The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book." In *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, edited by J.J.G. Alexander and M.T. Gibson, 115–141. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Reis, Levilson C. 2010. "From Aural Reception to Visual Paratext: The Reader in the Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes's Romances." *Neophilologus* 94, no. 3: 377–389.

———. 2011. "The Paratext to Chrétien de Troyes's *Cliges*: A Reappraisal of the Question of Authorship and Readership in the Prologue." *French Studies* 65, no. 1: 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/knq178.

Ruokkeinen, Sirkku. *In prep*. "Historical Appraisal Analysis: Evaluative Discourse of the Printed Book in 16th Century England." PhD Dissertation, University of Turku.

Ruokkeinen, Sirkku, and Aino Liira. *Forthcoming*. "Material approaches to exploring the borders of paratext". *Textual Cultures*.

Stanitzek, Georg. 2005. "Texts and Paratexts in Media." Translated by Ellen Klein. *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 1: 27–42.

Tanselle, G. Thomas. [1989] 1992. *A Rationale of Textual Criticism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Accessed 5 April 2018. ProQuest Ebrary.