

ParaTexBib: an ERC Project Dedicated to Paratexts in Greek Manuscripts of the Bible

Patrick Andrist and Martin Wallraff, University of Basel

At the end of the summer of 2013, the project *ParaTexBib: Paratexts of the Bible: Analysis and Edition of the Greek Textual Transmission*, an initiative called into life in 2012 by Martin Wallraff in collaboration with Patrick Andrist, received an Advanced grant from the European Research Council.¹ While the interest of its initiators is to locate, study and publish all paratexts in biblical manuscripts, the *ParaTexBib* project currently focuses on the approximately 2,300 Greek manuscript witnesses of the Gospels, up to the end of the sixteenth century. As can be imagined, our project raises many theoretical and methodological questions, some of which are briefly outlined here.

What is a biblical paratext?

First of all, what is it meant by biblical paratexts? A short preliminary definition could be ‘all contents in biblical manuscripts, except the biblical text itself, are *a priori* paratexts’. Within the scope of the ParaTexBib project, this encompasses all the material accompanying the biblical texts in Byzantine Gospels.

‘All contents’ is a loaded expression. It is not just limited to texts but can also include pictures, musical notation or graphic elements. But is not simply a catch-all term for anything written in the codex either. For example, purely decorative elements and codicological features such as the page numbers or quire signatures are *not* considered paratexts, even though they may have a paratextual valence.² Physical features such as the writing material or the page rulings are also to be excluded from the category of paratexts.

‘*A priori*’ because, if someone uses the empty pages of a worn Bible to jot down some mathematical exercises or write an alphabet as *probatio calami*, this is definitely a small piece of content in the codex but it is not a paratext of the Bible.

From a book-historical perspective, paratexts can be divided into two classes; (1) manufacturers’ paratexts that include every paratext that was included in the book by the people who manufactured it. These can be separated into traditional and non-traditional paratexts. This means, in the first

1 See Wallraff and Andrist 2015. The project was effectively launched at the beginning of 2015 in Basel with a team of six people: Emanuele Castelli, Saskia Dirkse, Sergey Kim, Ann-Sophie Kwass, Agnès Lorrain and Ulrich Schmid. Andrea Mele joined them in 2016.

2 Andrist forthcoming.



Fig. 1. Basel, Cod. AN IV 2, ff. 4v–5r.

subgroup, all the traditional paratexts whose presence is standard in a Byzantine codex, such as the title at the beginning of the Gospels; it also includes the more ‘optional’ traditional paratexts, such as subscriptions or evangelist portraits. In the second subgroup we find non-traditional paratexts which are unusual or even unique to a particular codex; examples of this type of paratexts are dedicatory epigrams and colophons. The presence of these paratexts is the result of a deliberate choice on the part of the codex’s manufacturers and they determine the character of this ‘publication’; (2) all the so-called ‘post-manufacture’ paratexts, meaning every piece of content which was added to the book *after* it was already in circulation. These paratexts were not part of the initial project behind the book.

In fig. 1, we clearly see the difference between the main text (outlined in red) and the two classes of paratexts. The yellow boxes indicate the manufacturers’ paratexts, including the title, the end of a traditional prologue, the first capitulum in the series attributed to Euthalius, the headpiece, information

relating to the liturgical reading of the biblical text and an unusual initial. In orange we have two pieces of liturgical information added by a later hand.

With the exception of art historians concentrating on the paintings and decoration, scholars have overlooked much of this paratextual material, especially biblical scholars, because historically they have focused their attentions almost exclusively on the reconstruction of the biblical *Urtext*. The project *ParaTexBib* represents a first and major step towards remedying this omission.

Goals, purposes and their link to the database

From its inception the project has had three goals: (1) Identify the paratexts in the manuscripts and record them in a database; (2) Study and publish the most interesting among them, both online and in print; (3) Prepare an electronic *clavis* of the biblical paratexts as a finding aid for those who wish to venture into the ‘paratextual jungle’. These three goals of the project are to be achieved by means of a smart database that forms the heart of the project. This is where we enter our data and through which future users would find information and sometimes links to images of the manuscripts described by the team. Additionally, the database would serve as a basis for the e-Clavis and as a central tool for gathering and organizing material for editions and studies.

As we were planning the project, we explored several possibilities for the database and concluded that the best option would be to develop no new database. The thinking behind this was that we would save a lot of time, money and trouble if we could adapt an already existing database to our requirements, rather than creating everything from scratch. The challenge, however, was to find a database that could answer most of our needs and was run by people with whom we could establish a good working relationship.

We have found an excellent partner in the Pinakes³ database, whose research goals and philosophy align closely with our own.⁴ In 2014, we reached an agreement with the IRHT in Paris to share and adjust Pinakes by adding new fields specific to paratext studies, new internal functions, and to enter our data in their database.

As a result, we are now working on the same back end and the same files with the same inputting principles. We are able to access directly all the data entered by the people at the IRHT and they, in turn, have access to the data that we have entered. Nevertheless, each team remains ‘owner’ of its own data. Users of the Pinakes database also have access to most of these data, with the exception of the new fields, which will be available through our own

3 See <<http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/>>, last accessed 30 October 2016.

4 For an overview of the theoretical framework that underpins this project, see Andrist, Canart and Maniaci 2013.

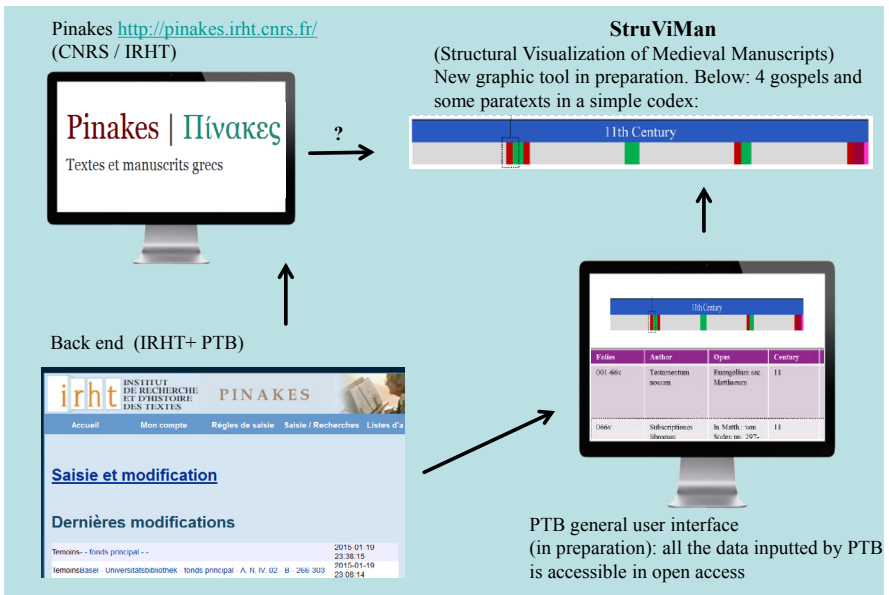


Fig. 2. Planned scheme of Pinakes and the PTB public interface.

public interface when it is launched online. The name(s) of the author(s) of each manuscript description, as well as the team behind it, are also visible in the public environment.

A few weeks ago we received more good news from the ERC; they accepted our supplementary proposal for a proof-of-concept extension of the project. With these additional funds we will build a tool called StruViMan,⁵ which will create a visual representation of a manuscript in the form of a bar (see below) with colours corresponding to particular types of texts. In the example in fig. 2, the gospel texts are in grey, while different types of paratexts are in colour. Significantly, StruViMan will be entirely customizable—including the colour code—and will be available on an open access platform with a Creative Commons license. Any project working with manuscripts or even standard printed books will be able to use it free of charge and can adjust it to their own interface. This last aspect in particular proved decisive for its success in obtaining the additional ERC grant.

Source of data

As noted above, we plan to survey all of the *c.*2,300 Gospel manuscripts in Greek,⁶ hunting for particularly interesting paratexts and instances of para-

⁵ Structural Analysis and Visualization of Medieval Manuscripts.

⁶ Lectionaries are excluded.

textual organisation within each the codex. We call this fast-tracking. Our aim is that every manuscript be evaluated by at least two different people, in order to diminish the chances for errors and prevent any interesting data from being overlooked. We have at this time already had a first look at *c.*1,300 manuscripts.

In cases where printed catalogues recorded biblical paratexts, it is sometimes possible to use them for fast-tracking. But this is not always the case, especially—but unfortunately not exclusively—in older catalogues. Our principal source of information are therefore photographs of the codex, mostly in electronic form. Some of these are available to the public through various library websites and portals, but biblical scholarship is privileged to have specific databases for ancient manuscripts of the Bible online. For the New Testament the most important place is the New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room (NTVMR), run by the Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung in Münster (INTF),⁷ perhaps best known for their critical editions of the Greek New Testament. More importantly for our purposes, the INTF owns a microfilm copy of nearly every extant manuscript witness of the New Testament in Greek and are in the process to making them available online. More material is put at users' disposal by the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts (CSNTM).⁸ When a manuscript is not available online and its best available catalogue entry is lacking or unsatisfactory, we sometimes visit libraries to inspect the manuscripts in person, especially when there are several manuscripts to be viewed in the same library.

In the database, the information resulting from a fast track is often not longer than a title line. It mentions the kind(s) of paratexts found in the manuscript without going into further detail. For example, 'Tetraeuangelium cum prologis, capitulis, subscriptionibus et epigrammatis' or 'Tetraeuangelium cum capitulis et subscriptionibus; Praxapostolus cum Apocalypse' or 'Tetraeuangelium (fragm. ex Luc., 2 f.)'. If there are no paratexts or if they all belong to a list of paratexts that we have determined to be standard, the codex will not be described further and the information stays as is.

If there are unusual paratexts (or an unusual configuration of paratexts) the codex is marked as 'to be described.' In such a case we exclusively use NTVMR as a source, as we have created an electronic 'bridge' between NTVMR and Pinakes. This bridge allows us to annotate paratexts on the images in NTVMR and it automatically imports the data into Pinakes entry for the manuscript in question in a pre-formatted way. If the manuscript is not

7 <<http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/home>>; <<http://egora.uni-muenster.de/intf/>>, last accessed 30 October 2016.

8 <<http://www.csntm.org/>>, last accessed 30 October 2016.

in NTVMR, our colleagues in Münster have kindly agreed to expedite the manuscript's digitisation process for us and make it available online. The description in Pinakes focuses on the content of the codex: every piece of content, including the Gospels and all the paratexts around them, is identified and registered in a specific record, while other biblical books (or other types of content) are listed as a group. If the text is not standard, the title, *incipit* and *desinit*, and other important information, such as the biblical book it is a paratext of, are also recorded. For obvious reasons, the manuscript's physical features are mostly left to the side.

Conclusion

While it is still early days and perhaps too early still to draw any lasting conclusions, it is our hope that the *ParaTexBib* project will represent a milestone in the study of the Greek Bible and its reception. Through a novel approach to manuscript descriptions which incorporates both traditional and highly innovative technology and methodology, and subsequently through the publication of studies and editions of their paratextual material, we hope to shed a necessary light on an important part of the biblical tradition that has lingered in obscurity for far too long.

References

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