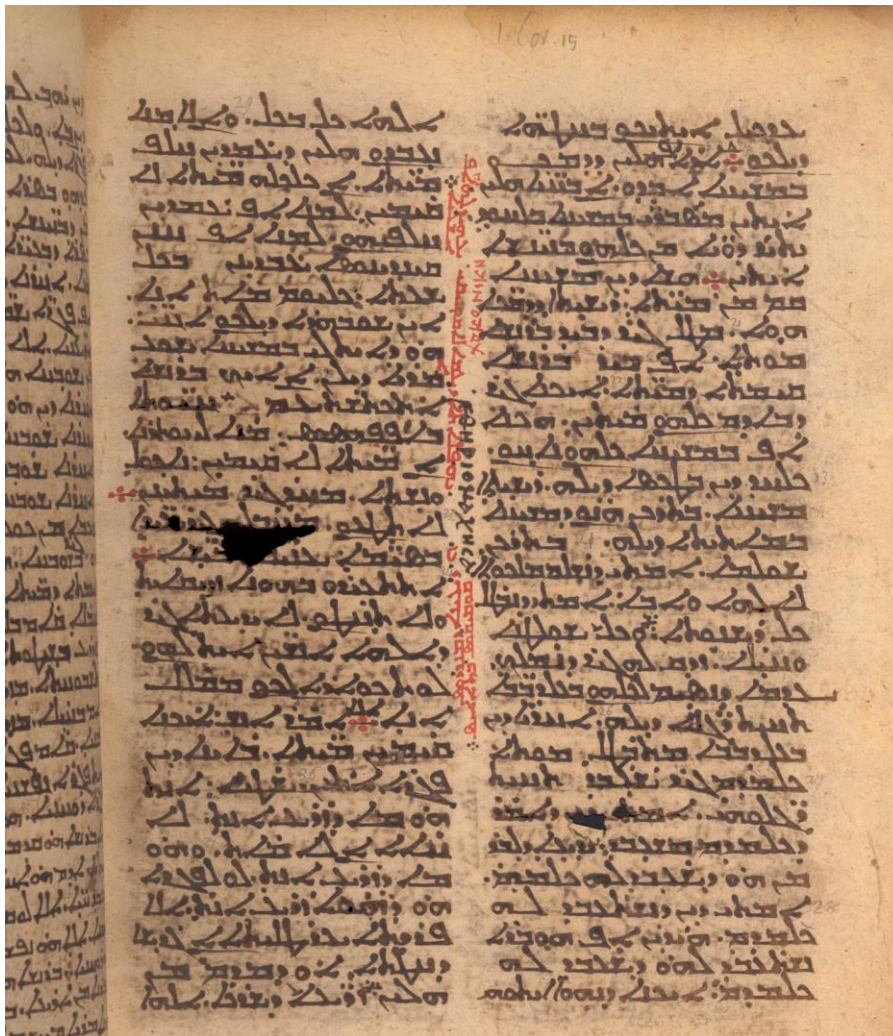


New College MS 333: The Euthalian Apparatus and Menander's Lost *Thais*

Recently I had the pleasure of examining New College Library MS 333, or rather, to be more accurate as my knowledge of Syriac is non-existent, to witness the delight of Dr Bradley Marsh in examining the manuscript. New College 333 is one of three Syriac manuscripts that contain a version of the Euthalian apparatus in translation. The Euthalian apparatus is a collection of material that probably dates from the mid-fourth century CE, and contains such material as lists of quotations, both scriptural and non-scriptural, prefaces to the Pauline and catholic letters, summaries, chapter headings and so on. (It occurs in part in early editions of the Greek New Testament, such as Erasmus (1516), de Colines (1534), and the *Editio Regia* of Robert Estienne (1550), and traces of it can be found in the Authorised Version.)



New College Library, Oxford, MS 333 f. 228r

The Euthalian apparatus is of interest to me as I am engaged in a part-time D.Phil. looking at the interaction and interplay of classical literature with the nascent church in the Greek East from the New Testament to Clement of Alexandria. In 1 Corinthians ch. 15 v. 33 Paul quotes an iambic trimeter $\varphi\theta\epsilon\iota\rho\upsilon\sigma\iota\nu\ \eta\theta\eta\ \chi\rho\eta\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \acute{\omicron}\mu\iota\lambda\iota\alpha\ \kappa\alpha\kappa\alpha\iota$. (In case any New College classicists are reading this, the lack of elision is intentional; from the 1st century CE elision was not always observed and the manuscript tradition and that of the Fathers is unanimous on this reading.) The line is usually ascribed to the *Thais* of Menander—a lost play—on the evidence of a scholion or marginalia seen by Robert Estienne's son, Henri, who collated some 15 manuscripts for his father

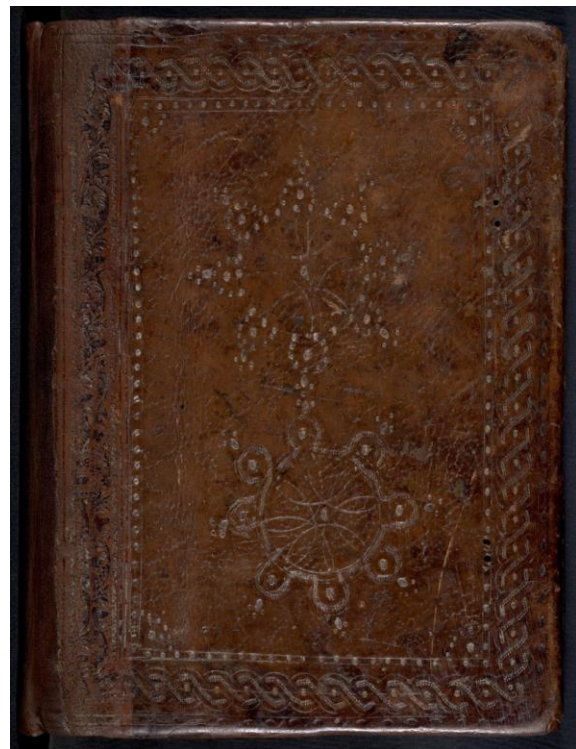
for the latter's edition of the New Testament, the *Editio Regia*. My researches have indicated that this scholion, which is now lost, cannot be relied upon, and as far as the Greek sources are concerned, the name of the play remains a mystery. (Henri Estienne, though a passionate lover of Greek—it was like a second language to him—was not always the most reliable of scholars.) It is in this context that New College 333 assumes some importance as it seems, with the other two manuscripts (one in the British Library and the other in a Greek monastery) to support the ascription to the *Thais*. New College 333 was bequeathed (with other manuscripts, including New College 334) to the college in the late eighteenth century by the Revd. Gloster Ridley, who had also been a fellow of the college. The manuscript was consulted or collated by the Swiss scholar Jakob Wettstein, on a visit to England in the late forties of the eighteenth century, in preparation for the publication of his edition of the New Testament in 1752, a monument of immense classical erudition in the number of authors cited as parallels to the Greek text of the New Testament. Wettstein cites it as *versio Syriaca* in a footnote to 1 Corinthians 15 v. 33. It was later used by White in his edition of the Philoxenian (Syriac) text of the New Testament; in fact White was in error as New College 333 attests to a later version of the Syriac—the Harklean, a version made in 608 by Thomas of Harkel.

It was a fascinating experience to share in Dr Marsh's enthusiasm as he examined the manuscript—sadly there were book marks in several places; in the past manuscripts were not always treated with the same care and respect as they are today. The reading in New College 333 has left me with an interesting problem, as to how to explain the attribution to the *Thais* could have occurred in these three manuscripts, when all other ancient sources, Greek, the Armenian, and Georgian version of the Euthalian apparatus, are innocent of the attribution to this lost play of Menander. That is my problem, but I and Dr Marsh were very grateful to the librarian for the opportunity to examine this fascinating manuscript.

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MS 333, binding, front board exterior



MS 333, binding, back board exterior