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LAVALLE NORMAN (D.) and PETKAS (A.) (eds) **Hypatia of Alexandria**. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. Pp. xiv + 343. €99.00. 9783161549694.

The editors of this excellent volume, resulting from a conference held in 2015 on the late antique philosopher Hypatia, open their work by asking the rhetorical question whether 'there is much left to be said' (1). Indeed, there are several recent biographies of the philosopher (for example, M. Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria*, Princeton 1995; D.J. Watts, *Hypatia: The Life and Legend of an Ancient Philosopher* Oxford 2017), and the scant ancient sources might not justify yet more scholarship. Nonetheless, this volume proves that there is much to be gained from combining close readings of the ancient texts (most of which are collected in Appendices A and B) and a study of the immense reception of Hypatia.

The volume is divided into three sections. The first, 'Hypatia and Synesius', which includes three chapters, focuses on the relationship between Hypatia and her student, the Christian Synesius of Cyrene. The seven preserved letters of Synesius to Hypatia are a key source for our knowledge on the philosopher. Alex Petkas argues that these letters testify to the role which Hypatia played in shaping late antique 'classicism', i.e. the debates about what education (*paideia*) in philosophy should encompass. In contrast, Helmut Seng reminds us that Synesius' letters 'are hardly to be read as straightforward biographical information' (29): Hypatia in the correspondence is to be interpreted less as the historical character than as a 'symbol of philosophy'. Henriette Harich-Schwarzbauer goes even further by suggesting that the letters cannot be read as historical documents but rather as literary devices serving an important shaping function within the corpus of Synesius' letters (156 letters in total).

In the four chapters of the second section, 'Hypatia in context', we turn to the figure of Hypatia in the works of late antique authors. The two first essays focus on accounts of Hypatia's death at the hands of a Christian mob, for which the philosopher is perhaps best known. Walter F. Beers argues that Hypatia's killing played an important role in the career of the bishop Cyril of Alexandria, who would later go on to reshape Eastern Christianity with the empress Aelia Pulcheria. Mareile Haase offers a tantalizing comparison between literary descriptions of Hypatia's death and Rufinus of Concordia's (*Hist. eccl.* 11.23) depiction of the destruction and dismemberment of the cult image of the god Serapis in AD 391/2, concluding that Hypatia can be read as a 'shattered icon'. In the third essay, David Frankfurter says little about Hypatia but gives important contextual information on private devotion (domestic rituals) by Hellenes in the fourth and fifth centuries. Finally, Sebastian Gertz discusses what type of philosophy Hypatia might have taught, arguing that it went beyond the exact sciences, to encompass metaphysics and philosophy.

The final section, 'Hypatia in her Ancient and Modern Reception' comprises four chapters on the reception of Hypatia, starting with very early reception in the form of Hypatian 'resonances' (153) in Nonnus' depiction of female intellectuals in his *Dyonisiaca* (Joshua Fincher). In one of the outstanding essays of the volume, Victoria Leonard focuses on the reception of the episode in which Hypatia used a menstrual rag to avert unwanted male sexual attention (Damascius, *PH* 43 A and C), showing that a positive feminist reading of the episode is possible, one reflecting a female embodied experience of menstruation. Meanwhile, Edward Watts studies the rich reception of Hypatia in eighteenth-century France and England. Lastly, Cédric Scheidegger Laemmle examines the figure of Hypatia in Alejandro Amenábar's *Agora* (2009), suggesting that the film is more than a single point in the tradition of Hypatia, in so much that it engages fully with important moments of previous reception, and 'thus invites reflection on the idea of reception itself' (215).

The volume ends with two appendices. Appendix A collects the main ancient sources on Hypatia in an excellent English translation by the editors; Appendix B is a textual commentary on Socrates Ecclesiasticus' description of Hypatia's death (*Hist. eccl.* 7.15) by Mareile Haase.

As a historian of science, I might have liked to read a bit more on Hypatia's mathematics and astronomy (discussed briefly in the chapters by Gertz and Scheidegger Laemmle), but I came to realise that, by overfocusing on science, one risks presenting a disembodied image of Hypatia, one where she becomes a 'symbol of philosophy', an expression used by Leng in his chapter. This volume's main success is in offering readings that emphasize embodied experiences, be they that of Hypatia herself or of those who re-appropriated her story over the centuries. The volume also demonstrates that there is much to be gained from moving away from the biographical approach to Hypatia, and instead assembling interpretations of scholars working in various fields.

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