# Hypatia of Alexandria

# Edited by DAWN LAVALLE NORMAN and ALEX PETKAS

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# Hypatia of Alexandria

Her Context and Legacy

Edited by Dawn LaValle Norman and Alex Petkas

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# For Robert Germany (1974–2017)

πάτερ καὶ ἀδελφὲ καὶ διδάσκαλε καὶ διὰ πάντων τούτων εὐεργετικὲ καὶ ἄπαν ὅ τι τίμιον καὶ πρᾶγμα καὶ ὄνομα.

(Paraphrase of Synesius, Epistle 16)

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## List of Abbreviations

#### **Authors**

Ach. Tat. Achilles Tatius

Amm. Marc. Ammianus Marcellinus Historicus

Ammon. Ammonius

Apul. Lucius Apuleius Madaurensis

Aug. Augustus

Augustinus Augustinus Hipponensis

Clem. Al. Clemens Alexandrinus Theologus

Dam. Damascius Philosophus Demetr. Demetrius Phalereus Rhetor

E. Euripides Tragicus

Eun. Eunapius

Eus. Eusebius Caesariensis Scriptor Ecclesiasticus

Hes. Hesiodus Epicus

Hierocles Platonicus Philosophus

Hom. Homer

Joh. Chrys. John Chrysostom

Lact. L. Caelius Lactantius Firmianus

Lib. Libanius Sophista Livy Titus Livius

Marin. Marinus Biographus Non. Nonnus of Panopolis Olymp. Olympiodorus Philosophus

Orig. Origen

Phlp. John Philoponus

Phot. Photius

Pl. Plato Philosophus

Plu. Plutarchus Biographus et Philosophus

Porph. Porphyry

Procl. Proclus Philosophus Procop. Gaz. Procopius of Gaza

Prudentius Aurelius Prudentius Clemens Simp. Simplicius Philosophus Socr. Socrates Scholasticus

Sozom. Salminius Hermias Sozomenus

Syn. Synesius of Cyrene

Them. Themistius

Works

Augustus

R. G. Res Gestae Divi Augusti

Apuleius

apol. Apologia

De deo Socratis

Cassidorus / Epiphanius

Hist. eccl. tripart. Socrates Ecclesiastical History (Latin Translation)

CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS THEOLOGUS

Protr. Protrepticus Strom. Stromateis

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

Adv. Iul. Against Julian

Damascius

PH The Philosophical History

Demetrius Phalereus Rhetor Eloc. Demetrius on Style

**Epigrams** 

AP Anthologia Palatina

Eunapius

VS Vitae Sophistarum

EURIPIDES

Ba. Bacchae

Eusebius

Comm. in Is. Commentary on Isaiah
Dem. ev. Demonstratio Evangelica
De eccl. Theol. Ecclesiastical Theology
H. E. Ecclesiastical History
Praep. ev. Praeparatio evangelica

HESIODUS EPICUS

Fr. Fragmenta
Op. Opera et Dies
Sc. Scutum Herculis
Th. Theogonia

HIEROCLES PLATONICUS PHILOSOPHUS in CA in Carmen Aureum

Homer

Il. Illiad Od. Odyssey

Hymni Homerici

hVen. hymnus ad Venerem (Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite)

**IAMBLICHUS** 

de Anima De Anima

Commentarius Commentary on the Timaeus

in Timaeum

**JEROME** 

Vir. ill. De Viris Illustribus

**JOHN OF EPHESUS** 

E. H. Ecclesiastical History

John of Nikiu

Chronicle The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu

LACTANTIUS

Div. Ins. Institutiones Divinae [Divine Institutes]

Ps.-Aristeas Letter of Aristeas

Libanius

Or. Orationes

Livy

AUC Ab Urbe Condita

Nonnus of Panopolis
D. Dionysiaca

P. Paraphrase of John

Olympiodorus

in Alc. in Platonis Alcibiadem commentarii in Grg. in Platonis Gorgiam commentaria

Proll. Prolegomena

Origen

schol. in Lc. scholia in Luc.

PHILOPONUS

de aeternitate On the Eternity of the World, against Proclus

PHILOSTRATUS

Vit. Apoll. Life of Apollonius

Photius

Bibl. Bibliotheca

**PLOTINUS** 

Enn. The Enneads

PLATO

R. Respublica Symp. Symposium

PLUTARCH

Pyrrh. The Life of Pyrrhus Apoph. lac. Apophthegmata Laconica

Is. Os. Isis and Osiris

Porphyry

Abst. de Abstinentia Aneb. Letter to Anebo

de Regressu Animae On the Return of the Soul

Plot. Vita Plotini Marc. Ep. ad Marcellam

PROCLUS PHILOSOPHUS

in Ti. in Platonis Timaeum commentarii in Cra. in Platonis Cratylum commentaria

PROCOPIUS OF GAZA

In. Is. Commentary on Isaiah

PRUDENTIUS

Ad. Sym. Contra Symmachum

Rufinus of Aquileia

Hist. eccl. l. Ecclesiastical History (Latin Edition)

Salminius Hermias Sozomenus

HE Ecclesiastical Histories

SIMPLICIUS PHILOSOPHUS

in Cat. in Aristotelis Categorias commentarius

SOCRATES SCHOLASTICUS

Hist. eccl. Ecclesiastical History

Suda

Suidae Lexicon (Adler, ed.)
Synesius of Cyrene

Aeg. de providentia

astrolab. sermo de dono astrolabii

de Dono. De dono astrolabii

Ep. Epistles insomn. de insomniis

THEMISTIUS

Or. Orationes

Theodoret

Hist. E. Ecclesiastical History

Theodosian Code

Cod. Theod. Codex Theodosianus

VERGIL

Aen. Aeneid

*Iournals* 

ACO Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum

Acta Antiqua Acta antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae

hungaricae

AJA American Journal of Archaeology

Anabases Anabases: traditions et réception de l'Antiquité

Apeiron Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science

ARG Archiv für Religionsgeschichte

BICS Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies

Byz. Z Byzantinische Zeitschrift BzA Beiträge zur Altertumskunde

ByzSt Byzantine Studies/Études byzantines.

Church. Hist. Church History
CJ The Classical Journal
Class. Mediaev. Classica et Mediaevalia

CPh Classical Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Classical Anti-

quity

Crit. Stud. Media Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies

Commun.

CPG Clavis Patrum Graecorum

CR Classical Review

DACL Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie EMWJ Early Modern Women: an Interdisciplinary Journal

Fem. Stud. Feminist Studies

Gnomon Gnomon: Kritische Zeitschrift für die gesamte klassische Altertums-

wissenschaft

GRBS Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies

Gregorianum: periodicum trimestre a Pontificia Universitate Grego-

riana editum

Gymnasium Gymnasium: Zeitschrift für Kultur der Antike und humanistische

Bildung

HSCP Harvard Studies in Classical Philology
Hermes Hermes: Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie
Historia Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte
Hypatia Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy

Isis Isis: An International Review Devoted to the History of Science and Its

Cultural Influences

Klio Klio: Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte
JEA Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JECS Journal of Early Christian Studies
JEH Journal of Egyptian Studies
JHS Journal of Hellenic Studies
JJS Journal of Jewish Studies

JMEMS Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies

JLA Journal of Late Antiquity
JRS Journal of Roman Studies
JRA Journal of Roman Archaeology
JTS Journal of Theological Studies

LSJ Liddell and Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., rev. H. Stuart Jones

(1925-40); Suppl. by E. A. Barber and others (1968)

LIMC Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae

MH Museum Helveticum

Millennium Millennium: Jahrbuch zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahr-

tausends n. Chr.

Mnemosyne Mnemosyne: bibliotheca classica Batava.

OLD Glare, P. G. W. 1982. Oxford Latin Dictionary, Oxford.

OSAPh Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy

PCP Pacific Coast Philology

Philologus Philologus: Zeitschrift für antike Literatur und ihre Rezeption

Phronesis: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy

PG Patrologica Graeca

PGL Lampe, G. W. H. 1961. A Patristic Greek Lexicon, Oxford

PLRE The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire

Philologus: Zeitschrift für antike Literatur und ihre Rezeption.
Phoenix: Phoenix: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada revue de la

Société canadienne des études classiques

P. Oxy. Oxyrhynchus

Promethius Prometheus: rivista quadrimestrale di studi classici

PW "Pauly-Wissowa", i. e. August Friedrich von Paulys Real-encyclopädie

der classischen Altertumswissenschaft

RAC Rivista di archeologia Cristiana

RÉAug Revue des études augustiniennes et patristiques

REG Revue des études grecques

RFIC Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica RGRW Religions in the Greco-Roman World

TAPhA Transactions of the American Philological Association

TCH The Transformation of the Classical Heritage

TRE Theologische Realencyclopädie

WJb Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft

VChr Vigilae Christianae

Vic Lit Cult Victorian Literature and Culture

ZPE Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

#### Introduction

# The Timeliness of Hypatia

#### Dawn La Valle Norman and Alex Petkas

Hypatia is something of an academic household name. The story is so familiar, the sources for her life so apparently scarce, that one may wonder if there is much left to be said. Even as this volume was being finalized, a new biography of Hypatia appeared (written by one of our contributors). But scholarship and culture continue to develop, and we are confident that each of the essays gathered here have some new perspective to share about Hypatia and her legacy.

To take one example, in early 2017 Hypatia's name was all over the internet, especially in those streets and alleyways of the web frequented by members of the academy. The reason was a controversy over an article published by *Hypatia*, a feminist journal which takes its name and inspiration from the topic of this volume, the fifth-century CE Platonist Hypatia of Alexandria.<sup>2</sup> The author of the article examined from a philosophical perspective the parallels between transgenderism and transracialism. This provoked a backlash in which many academics demanded that *Hypatia* rescind the article, an action which the editors ultimately did not take.

This controversy stirred discussion on issues relevant to all academics, about the publication, reception, and censorship of peer reviewed scholarship that risks or provokes public backlash. Turning to the historical Hypatia in terms of this debate can help us to approach aspects of her career with fresh eyes: how might she have reacted? Hypatia herself edited and published several school texts of notable mathematicians and astronomers, but she also seems to have published the controversialist intellectual work of her contemporaries, such as those of her student Synesius (see the first essay in this volume). And most vividly, Hypatia was also a female intellectual who faced public ire, albeit of a different sort.

Hypatia is unfortunately most famous for her untimely end, which has often been seen as marking the end of a great age – of learning and free thought, tol-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Edward J. Watts, *Hypatia: The Life and Legend of an Ancient Philosopher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Rebecca Tuvel, "In Defense of Transracialism," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 32.2 (2017): 263–278.

erant multiculturalism, or even classical antiquity itself. In 415 a gang of Christians caught her off-guard in the streets of Alexandria and brutally lynched her.

The essays collected herein were first presented at a conference at Princeton University titled *Hypatia: Behind the Symbol*, which took place in December 2015, and was partly inspired by the 1600-year anniversary of her death. As the title of that conference suggests, the notion that her death was such a symbolic and epoch-making event is itself a viewpoint examined critically, rather than explicitly adopted, by contributors in this volume. The causes and consequences of this gruesome tragedy are indeed examined in detail in many of the essays in this volume, but we hope that, on the whole, this book has succeeded in getting past the age-old pattern of seeing Hypatia's death as the most noteworthy moment in her life.

We felt Hypatia to be a timely subject in 2015, and we believe this to be even more the case upon publication. Public and political interest in women's leadership in the arts and sciences has only increased and shows no signs of waning. In times of change, people often turn to history for ethical examples. Hypatia's life can provide one, for instance, to women interested in lessons for success in a male-dominated political and intellectual climate. Her publishing and teaching achievements matched or exceeded those of many of her noteworthy male contemporaries. But she also grounded her personal effectiveness in skills and activities which are often gendered as female, such as interpersonal charm, relationship cultivation, and (probably) conforming to gender-specific models of virtue enforced by her culture, such as her much-discussed chastity.

But one aspect of her life that deserves particular attention here, because it may be less obvious, is Hypatia's interest as a male role-model. This is not only because men can (of course) learn much from emulating admirable women, but also because Hypatia is a striking example of how many ancient men, too, were at least partially aware of this fact. In the absence, for the most part, of formal certifying bodies, intellectual formation in the ancient world was much more explicitly interpersonal, based on teacher-disciple relationships, and frequently theorized in terms of mimesis (e.g. in Plato's Symposium and Phaedrus). Hypatia taught, mentored, and thus left her own ethical imprint on a predominantly male student body - the clearest example is her student Synesius of Cyrene. Indeed, Hypatia and Synesius constitute perhaps the best documented historical example of female-male mentorship surviving from antiquity. Synesius is granted significant space in this volume, but he is not the only evidence one can find herein of men modeling themselves after this woman - see, for instance, Joshua Fincher's treatment of Nonnus' female intellectual figures in Chapter 8 or Edward Watts' discussion of Rev. John Toland in early eighteenth-century England in Chapter 10. We hope readers, regardless of their identity, will find this volume useful in clarifying their own reflections about the continuing timeliness of Hypatia.

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## Creating Unity from Fragments

Our knowledge of Hypatia herself rests upon a rather thin body of evidence, almost all of which we have collected and translated afresh at the end of this volume (Appendix A). These are followed by an in-depth commentary on some of the difficult parts of one of our most important sources, Socrates Scholasticus' Historia Ecclesiastica (Appendix B). As mentioned above, a frequent frustration for interested scholars is both the lack of sources and the outsize role her death plays in many of those we do possess. The only trace of actual textual products we might have from Hypatia are from technical works of mathematics (see the selection of Hesychius from the Suda in Appendix A). Most promisingly for our purposes, her father Theon says in his introduction to his commentary on Book III of Ptolemy's Almagest that the text was "edited by my daughter the philosopher Hypatia" (παραναγνωσθείσης τῆ φιλοσόφω θυγατρί μου Ύπατία).<sup>3</sup> While the surviving version of Theon's mathematical works must owe something to Hypatia's editing hand, it is impossible to disentangle with any confidence her ipsissima verba from the treatises. In addition to her (probably) text-critical work on the Almagest, she also produced her own (lost) commentaries on Diophantus' Mathematica, the Astronomical Canon of Ptolemy and the Conics of Apollonius. It has been suggested that the first six books of Diophantus' work owe their survival in part to her commentary, which ended after book six.<sup>4</sup>

While she would surely be glad to be known by her scholarly and mathematical works, we can gain a more vivid picture of Hypatia by studying her impact on her students, and above all Synesius. Synesius' letters to Hypatia suggest at times that we are glimpsing the relationship between teacher and mentor in action. Like the mathematical traces, they offer a route toward Hypatia before her death. Because of their status as our earliest and most intimate evidence for Hypatia's life as a teacher and mentor, we begin the volume with three essays that look specifically at the Synesius-Hypatia epistles. First, Alex Petkas argues that the correspondence between Synesius and Hypatia reveals her investment in contemporary debates about the content of paideia, especially an intra-Christian discussion about the role of Classical texts and values. Following on from this social-historical reading come two literary examinations of the Synesius-Hypatia correspondence, which problematize their status as historical sources. Helmut Seng looks as the role Hypatia plays in the correspondence less as an actual historical individual, and more as a symbol of philosophy. The cor-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Cited in Alan Cameron, "Isidore of Miletus and Hypatia of Alexandria: On the Editing of Mathematical Texts," *GRBS* 31 (1990): 106.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Thomas Heath, *Diophantus of Alexandria: A Study in the History of Greek Algebra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 5–6, 18. Michael A.B. Deakin, "Hypatia and her Mathematics," *The American Mathematical Monthly* 101.3 (1994): 234–243 discusses what we know of her other lost commentaries.

respondence breaks down in-step with the breakdown in Synesius' own hope in finding consolation from philosophy itself. Synesius thus uses Hypatia for his own self-formation and in addressing his rising despair after the deaths of his sons. Henriette Harich-Schwarzbauer goes one step further, stepping back to look at the epistolary corpus as a whole and its arrangement by Synesius as an intentional story that develops through the placement of individual letters. As such, it is not a reliable window onto any reality beyond that of the author Synesius' literary intentions. Thus, both Seng and Harich-Schwarzbauer argue that even the evidence which brings us nearest in time and place to Hypatia must be read as through a distorting mirror, or even perhaps more as fiction than fact.

After Synesius, our evidence lies almost exclusively in late ancient historians. Walter Beers takes up the challenge of reading Hypatia's role in our longest testimony, the Historia Ecclesiastica of Socrates Scholasticus. He argues that the story Socrates tells is not really about Hypatia at all, but about Cyril of Alexandria, the man behind her death. And if there is any woman of primary interest to the story, it is the Empress Pulcheria rather than the philosopher Hypatia. Mareile Haase likewise looks to the use of Hypatia by historians, especially (like Beers) to Socrates' Hist. eccl. Drawing on the concept of "substitutive image act," she investigates the motifs that literary accounts of Hypatia's murder share with depictions of the destruction of the Alexandrian cult statue of Serapis. Haase concludes that Socrates uses iconoclasm as a metaphor to create a graphic mental image capable of counteracting the authorities' silence about Hypatia's violent death. The final two essays in this section examine different aspects of Hypatia's identity: her religion and her philosophy. David Frankfurter's essay delves into what we can know about the religious life of late-ancient followers of traditional religion, among whom we must number Hypatia, by all accounts. He concludes that in the fourth and fifth centuries there was a privatization of traditional religion, where sacrifices at home took the place of proscribed sacrifices in temples. Such domestication changed what it meant to "do" paganism and allowed a certain merging of traditional religious practices with Christianity. Sebastian Gertz's contribution gathers what we can guess about Hypatia's life as a Neoplatonic philosopher at this time, especially as it relates to her evident focus on mathematics. Gertz suggests that Hypatia's work as a philosopher should be seen in the context of the earlier Neoplatonism of Plotinus and Porphyry, rather than the next phase in the long and creative development of Neoplatonism. Most likely she would have seen her mathematical projects as necessary preliminary work in a course of Platonic clarification and ascent.

The line between ancient and modern receptions is labile. Already, the letters of Synesius could be fruitfully looked at as a reception of the Hypatia-story in a particular time and place. This is even truer for the historians who wrote in the following centuries, examined primarily in the essays of Part II. Yet Hypatia continued to be important long after late antiquity. Her voice echoes

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through the ages, albeit only through the words of others, ancient and modern. We begin Part III by looking at two early receptions of Hypatia. The first is a suggestive argument by Joshua Fincher that echoes of Hypatia can be heard in the fifth-century epic poetry of Nonnus of Panopolis' Dionysiaca. The academic women in this poem share important details that could evoke links in the minds of its readers to the most famous recent female philosopher from the same region. Victoria Leonard's essay continues the interest in ancient reception, while also pushing us forward into more recent moments of reception. Leonard looks at the memorable scene, recorded only in Damascius' Philosophical History, of Hypatia's display of her menstrual blood to ward off an unwanted suitor. By looking at Damascius' narration of this scene, Leonard argues that the patterns of misogyny which it begins are continued in the use and abuse of Hypatia into the modern era. Edward Watts' essay also pauses over the gendered modern reception of Hypatia's story, especially in her rich eighteenth-century reception in England and France. There he discovers a tussle over Hypatia's legacy. Was she of interest as a pawn in a political game more centrally about Cyril (as we have seen argued in Beers' essay in this volume), or as a model of an educated intellectual woman? While male writers of the eighteenth century tended to focus on the former, female writers from the same period were more interested in the later, which leads Watts to suggest that the main reason that Hypatia's death overshadowed her life for so long is that almost all of our textual descriptions of Hypatia are written by men. The final contribution, by Cédric Scheidegger Laemmle, turns to the cinematic rendition of Hypatia's life in Alejandro Amenábar's Agora, and finds there a subtle tug-of-war over how readers (and viewers) take Hypatia's story and remake it to suit their own desires, much like the fictitious slave Davus' flash-back during the scene of Hypatia's death, which constructs a new narrative at odds with Hypatia's self-conception throughout the film.

All of these readers, both ancient and modern, provide us with different angles from which to view our elusive subject, proving her perennial interest and seeming inexhaustability. We hope that this volume contributes to the continuing conversation over Hypatia's life and legacy in yet another phase of her rich reception.

In the process of producing this volume, we have contracted many debts of gratitude. First of all, for Christian Wildberg, who inspired us with the idea for the conference and volume in the first place. Also, to Alan Cameron, who was able to attend the conference and provided valuable feedback on many papers, but who unfortunately did not live to see the outcome of the conference in book-form. Then, to all of the financial sponsors at Princeton University who underwrote the conference from which this volume descends: the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies, the Committee for the Study of Late Antiquity, the Classics Department, the Council of the Humanities, the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies, the Center for the Study of Religion, and Classical Philosophy. The

range of sponsors points to how many fields the study of Hypatia necessarily touches. Likewise too, we would like to thank all of the participants and attendees at the original conference who helped create the rich conversation that produced this volume. In the production of the volume we owe especial thanks to Carolyn Alsen, who tirelessly and carefully helped with editing and formatting. Finally, we dedicate this book to the memory of our common mentor, Robert Germany, who was truly a "father, brother, teacher and benefactor" to both of us, and whose conversation we miss daily.

# Hypatia and the Desert: A Late Antique Defense of Classicism

#### ALEX PETKAS

#### Introduction

Hypatia, as far as we can tell, spent much of her career in the public eye. This is partly because she taught philosophy, a subject generally associated with the leading citizens in late antique society. But it is also because she did not limit her intellectual practice to teaching: She maintained an active patronage network, was a confidante to city councillors, and advised at least one imperial governor in Alexandria. Indeed, it was not so much her purely academic pursuits that led to her death, as the fact that she commanded real political influence, and used it.<sup>1</sup>

How did Hypatia's calling as a public philosopher influence her teachings? Many studies have carefully assessed the doctrinal content of her philosophical and mathematical curriculum.<sup>2</sup> This is an important task, and a challenging one, since we must extract clues from the very limited number of direct sources on Hypatia, as well as comparative evidence of other philosophers, including her student Synesius.

In this essay, however, I will take up a far less examined aspect of Hypatia's teaching, and propose that her role in the history of classicism has been underestimated. I will argue primarily from the writings of her student Synesius of Cyrene. By "classicism" I mean a discourse based around emulation of a set of canonical ancient texts and compositions, which aimed, in its highest registers, to reproduce the Attic Greek literary language.<sup>3</sup> This classicism was underpinned,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Edward Watts' account of her death, in *Hypatia: The Life and Legend of an Ancient Philosopher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121–134, makes this particularly clear.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Including Gertz's in this volume. See also Watts, *Hypatia*, 37–50; Michael A. B. Deakin, *Hypatia of Alexandria: Mathematician and Martyr* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2007), 77–106; Maria Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 27–65.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The cultural politics of this system are somewhat better studied in the earlier empire: Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 17–42. See the introduction to James Porter, ed., *Classical Pasts: The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) in which Porter discusses the difficulty of defining what is classical. Despite the absence of a clear Latin or Greek terminological equivalent, we can find a notion of the classical and classicism at work in antiquity, "existing not as a unified phe-

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in the late antique East, by traditional patterns of Greek education, a diverse set of practices which fell under the heading of rhetoric. The Greek word *paideia* is frequently used in modern scholarly discussions to denote the shared literate culture of east Roman elites, for whom mastery of a classical canon and a code of decorum thought to be found therein was necessary for many types of public persuasion. Although Synesius does use the word in a very classicizing sense, *paideia* was also a generic term for "education" or the "culture" inherited from one's upbringing. By the fourth century AD, a time of great debate about the sources of prestige and authority, the word *paideia* had been used by many Christian authors over the centuries to refer to alternative forms of education, such as even monastic and proto-monastic life.

It is likely that Hypatia shared Synesius' interest in classical paideia, given her public-facing career. She would have frequent need of rhetoric in her advisory activity to the governor Orestes and the civic council, as well as in mantaining her patronage network, which included many former students.<sup>7</sup>

In Hypatia's day, participation at a high level of civic life of Alexandria also meant engaging with Christianity. Scholars have frequently observed that Hypatia's school was distinctive for the number of students she had from prominent Christian families. But her involvement in the public culture of Christianity runs deeper than we have hitherto appreciated. In what follows, I will carefully read a few select passages of works Synesius sent to Hypatia, and argue that it makes the most sense to see both their opponents and primary audience as Christians. Hypatia thus emerges as a conscientious participant in civic debate

nomenon ...", but "as a set of attempts to retrieve, reproduce, and so too to produce a hegemonic cultural signature" based on a canon that we could today recognize as classical (Porter, *Classical Pasts*, 29). Every artist's classicism will be an idiosyncratic negotiation between personal taste and the canon they sense or select.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Donald Russell, *Greek Declamation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) is a standard introduction. See also Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1992) is fundamental. A recent volume by Lieve Van Hoof and Peter Van Nuffelen, eds., *Literature and Society in the Fourth Century AD: Performing Paideia, Constructing the Present, Presenting the Self* (Leiden: Brill, 2015) aims to bridge the artificial scholarly gap between earlier imperial and late antique rhetorical culture.

 $<sup>^6</sup>$  Cf. PGL s.v. παιδεία. The more Christian senses were, however, generally secondary extensions of the more traditional semantics of the term. I advocate using "classicism" or "classical paideia" instead not so much in order to criticize existing work on late antique *paideia*, as to bring it into tighter theoretical dialogue with studies of classicist literary culture in earlier and later periods.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The public or political aspects of her career were noted by Socrates and Damascius, and are also borne out by many letters of Synesius, e. g. 81. See also Watts, *Hypatia*, on her philosophical school as a civically minded project (see especially p. 79–92).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Synesius is the most famous, and concrete information about others is derived from his letter collection. Watts, *Hypatia*, 63–78; Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria*, 27–46.

about the status of classical literary culture in a Christian dominated Alexandria. In order to provide more detailed picture of the kinds of political issues this debate related to, I present a brief account of the Origenist controversy, a contemporary disturbance which brought Alexandria and the nearby desert ascetic communities into conflict.

## Hypatia the Publicist

Towards the end of 404 AD, Synesius sent Hypatia a letter (154 in modern editions) from his native Libya, with three treatises attached. At the end of the long letter, he makes it clear that he wants her to share one of the treatises, entitled *Dio*, among Alexandrian learned circles. *Dio* is a complex polemical work, and Synesius spends most of the prefatory letter explaining who its targets are, in order to make sure it is interpreted correctly. Epistles of this kind were expected to be shared. Letter 154 thus merits our careful attention, for in it Synesius outlines what could be described as Hypatia's rhetorical mandate with respect to the debate that the *Dio* provokes.

Why was *Dio* worth Hypatia's (and our) consideration? It can be described, in short, as a literary-philosophical manifesto. The treatise takes its name from Synesius' favorite early imperial Greek author, Dio of Prusa, nicknamed "Chrysostom." Synesius presents Dio's *bios* or career in a positive light, as a paradigm according to which he has modeled his own life. The treatise moves on to defend the importance of classical *paideia* to anything worthy of the title of the philosophical life. This included both the (neo-)Platonism common in Hypatia's day, which was particularly interested in theology and salvation, and also other forms of life claiming to be "philosophy," such as Christian asceticism. <sup>11</sup> Classical *paideia*, Syn-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> For another approach to this letter and its significance, see also Harich-Schwarzbauer's essay in this volume.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Syn. Ep. 101 and 105 are well-known examples making this common expectation explicit. Cf. Pauline Allen, "Christian Correspondences: The secrets of Letter-writers and letter-bearers" in *The Art of Veiled Speech*: Self-Censorship from Aristophanes to Hobbes, eds. Han Baltussen and Peter Davis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 209–232; Scott Bradbury, Selected Letters of Libanius (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 19–20; Michael Trapp, Greek and Latin Letters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 17.

On Synesius as a theological and religious figure, Samuel Vollenweider, Neuplatonische und christliche Theologie bei Synesios von Kyrene (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985) and also Donald Russell and Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, On Prophecy, Dreams, and Human Imagination: Synesius, De Insomniis (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). Jay Bregman, Synesius of Cyrene, Philosopher-Bishop (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) is useful on Neoplatonic doctrine in Synesius, though for his religiosity see Alan Cameron and Jacqueline Long, Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 19–39. For monasticism as "philosophy," Anne-Marie Malingrey "Philosophia:" Étude d'un group de mots dans la littérature grecque des Présocratiques au IVe siècle après J.-C. (Paris: Librarie C. Klincksieck, 1961).

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esius insists, is essential not just as a preparatory exercise but as a lifelong aid to keeping up a contemplative discipline. In articulating his vision, Synesius draws deeply on Plato – not just for the doctrines of the *Republic* and *Phaedo* but also some of the *loci* and literary discussions of the *Phaedrus* and *Theaetetus*. <sup>12</sup> He also displays profound classical *paideia* while arguing for it. Letter 154 characterizes the *Dio*, using terms drawn from sophistic cuture, as "no less a display of wide learning than a praise of it" (πολυμαθείας οὐχ ἦττον ἐπίδειξις ἢ ἐγκώμιον). The the text is filled with references to the classical tradition he is defending, including Homer, Thucydides, and Aristophanes. Synesius also engages with the second sophistic authors Philostratus and Aristides as peers (§ 1–3). The language is high Attic, and ornate even by classical standards. In the treatise he also devotes substantial space to a lampoon of professional teachers, as well as a criticism of "barbarian" ascetics, who are clearly some sort of Christian monks.

Being a manifesto of an already well-established literary author, *Dio* takes up many points Synesius had broached in earlier writings, including arguments and *topoi* he probably learned at Hypatia's school. In one of his first letters (137), to his fellow student Herculian, he includes a cryptic reference to the mythic shapeshifting god Proteus. <sup>13</sup> The obscurity and specificity of his comment suggest, in context, that it was a teaching familiar to his addressee from Hypatia's school, which he expected Herculian to recognize immediately. He returns to the theme more fully in the *Dio* (5.7–6.3). There Synesius makes clear clear that for him, Proteus was a positive paradigm for a philosopher who knows profound mysteries but can also adjust his self-presentation to disarm and charm the Everyman, who might not be ready to hear hard doctrines. This Proteus allegory thus serves an argument that the philosopher should take rhetoric seriously.

It may also be a window on to how Hypatia conceived of her own public career: she had to control the audience and reputation of her teachings, which posed much more risk to her, as a pagan woman, than to her male Christian students. You suggestive elaborates the Proteus principle with another allegory especially suggestive of Hypatia's situation: if Ixion had not been given a cloud-decoy, he never would have given up chasing Hera (5.7).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Many references can be found in Kurt Treu, *Synesios von Kyrene: ein Kommentar zu seinem* "Dion." (Berlin, Akademie Verlag 1958) e.g. on § 12 of the text, as well as in the notes to the CUF (Budé) edition of Lamoureux and Aujoulat. Michiel Op de Coul, "Aspects of Paideia in Synesius' Dion," in *Synesios von Kyrene. Politik – Literatur – Philosophie*, eds. H. Seng, and L. M. Hoffmann, Byzantios 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 110–124 is a good starting point for study of the *Dio*. The text runs between 45 and 60 pages in modern editions.

<sup>13 &</sup>quot;I forgot the wise art of Proteus, which was none other than to spend time with people, not as a divinity but as a fellow citizen" (τῆς σοφῆς τοῦ Πρωτέως ἐπελαθόμην τέχνης (οὺ γὰρ ἄλλη τις ἦν ἢ συνεῖναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οὺ θείως, ἀλλὰ πολιτικῶς). Perhaps not coincidentally, it was on the shores of Egypt that Menelaus met Proteus, on his way home from Troy (*Odyssey* 4.435–570).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> The allegory draws both on a passage in Plato's *Euthydemus* (288b7–c2) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Demosthenes* § 8. Cf also Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 1.4; Lib. *Or.* 18.176.

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