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# Objectification, Orientalism, and Orthodoxy: Hypatia In Modern Centuries

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## Abstract

Hypatia, an educator and philosopher in late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5th-century Alexandria, has lived many lives and died many deaths since she reportedly took her last breath before the Caesareum's altar. She emerges in fifth-century texts as virtuous pagan philosopher caught in the streets and murdered by a crowd of monks, with St. Cyril, bishop of Alexandria at the time, to blame. A contemporary Greek text written for a pagan audience describes Hypatia as a beautiful martyr who unfairly reaped the destruction of true philosophy at the behest of Roman Christianization. Three centuries later, she would be called a witch who tricked men to turn against God. It is not just in these early centuries that we hear about Hypatia; up to fifteen sources varying from historians to novelists and playwrights from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century to date, discuss her too-brief existence and the feminist or Christian meaning behind her death. Who really was Hypatia of Alexandria, and in which ways do her revisions across centuries of literature and scholarly discussion mirror a changing culture? The paper below discusses the major themes of modern literary treatments of Hypatia, placed against the backdrop of our ancient historical sources.

*Keywords:* Feminism, Late Antiquity, Church History, Enlightenment, Violence Against Women

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In antiquity, Hypatia's death highlighted many important things to the sources that recorded the story. To Socrates Scholasticus, her death exemplified the catastrophic violence Cyril invoked upon Alexandria by overstepping his jurisdiction as the bishop. Damascius uses her death to empathetically paint the picture of a true philosopher martyred by a changing world that should be shamed for abandoning the old ways. Lastly, John of Nikiu marks her death as the triumphant end of all idolatry in Alexandria, thanks to the guidance of Cyril's holy leadership. All of these men share a common interest in the symbolism of Hypatia's body, whether it be dismembered with tiles, gouged of her eyes, or paraded through the streets like a totem of the Serapeum's bloody mysteries, denuded of its beauty, virtue, and feminine appeal. Synesius, as one of her students, on the other hand, appeals to her in his letters for her unprecedented knowledge of philosophical secrets and access to rare items he could not get elsewhere; this is an appreciation of her high social-standing and her intellect. With this juxtaposition between the relevance of her body and of her intellect, we can begin to evaluate the classification of Hypatia's symbolism as a character that resonated deeply with those on the outside of extreme religiosity in scholarly discussion and in visual art, poetry, and performance spanning across the 18<sup>th</sup>-century into the 21<sup>st</sup>-century.

### **Protestantism and Enlightenment**

"I cannot but here represent to myself with Pleasure, let who will censure me for it, the Flower of all the Youth in Europe, Asia, and Africa, sitting at the Feet of a most beautiful Lady (for such we are assur'd Hypatia was) all greedily swallowing Instruction from her Mouth, and many of 'em Love from her Eyes," writes John Toland in 1720, a fierce protestant with special vehemence against the abuses of the Catholic church.<sup>1</sup> Toland's pamphlet on Hypatia is a piece

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<sup>1</sup>Toland, J., *Tetradyms*, chap. V, pg. 8.

out of four writings called the *Tetradymus* compiled with historic vision, yet reading as an epistemological manual on ancient and modern Christian thought. An earlier book of Toland's, called *Christianity not Mysterious*, argues that most of the miracles in the Bible can be explained rationally, following John Locke's theories of rationalism. This controversial writing almost had him burned at the stake by the Irish Parliament, who instead burned copies of his book in the streets as Toland remained exiled in England. Most of his following pamphlets and essays are thus narrative tirades against ecclesiastical authorities, specifically the Catholic church.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, Toland's Hypatia easily emerges in his narrative as a noble scholar, who resisted unjust ecclesiastical power despite the uncomfortable tension it provoked in her environment. Alongside the relatable struggle his Hypatia endured, Toland finds an image of beauty and stately womanhood garnered from Damascius's *Life of Isidore* and grasps on to it, taking several narrative liberties in his writing, consistently expounding on Hypatia's beauty and her forlorn nobility against those who tried to undermine her sexuality, recording even some as raping her.<sup>3</sup> Toland vehemently attacks all potential arguments that could be made to detract from her worth on the basis of gender, explaining that his Hypatia was different from modern women because she realized that a "greater Glory for a Woman" lies within her choice to "[teach] in [the philosopher's] Chair," even though "one or two Women have not long since done."<sup>4</sup> According to Toland, Hypatia was powerful for both the dalliances of her sex and for her choice to utilize her body with her superb intellect, which women of his age did not have the ability to recreate.

Despite Toland's factual inaccuracies and saturated interest in extolling his Hypatia's mental stamina above that of contemporary women (evidently a constraint of the poorly

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<sup>2</sup>Watts, E., *Hypatia: The Life and Legend of an Ancient Philosopher*, pg. 135.

<sup>3</sup>Toland, chaps. XIII and XV., pgs. 20-23.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., chap. IV, pg. 7.

translated Greek text he was working with), both Maria Dzielska and Edward Watts assert that his biography was ubiquitously accepted by scholars that went on to write about Hypatia in the following years.<sup>5</sup> Efforts to defend Cyril from John Toland's narrative were altogether ignored, specifically the pamphlet written by Thomas Lewis in response to the *Tetradymus*. This pamphlet posits that Hypatia was truly not a true philosopher or even a scholar of note, and instead if the pagan or primitive Christian sources that list her "achievements" are even true, they merely extol her for yielding corruptible influence over the minds of Alexandrian men for the same behaviors Damascius and Toland extol.<sup>6</sup> Thomas's subsequent arguments that Cyril was certainly within his right to reach beyond the bounds of episcopal authority, considering the fact that Orestes, the prefect, was a heathen, were easily overridden in the rise of an Enlightened, rational man's thinking.

Specifically, Toland wins the consensus for Enlightenment writer Voltaire and historian Edward Gibbon, who echo Socrates' and Damascius' claims of Cyril's envy and obsession with power, though the two certainly belong more in the field of Damascius's pagan sympathies than Toland's Protestant fury. Gibbon, who typically shared empathy with pagan empresses that fell victim to sexist comparisons to Eve and Jezebel than the preachers of "pathetic sermons" and the "temperamental mobs" that listened to them, describes the call for Hypatia's virgin blood over the banishment of a saint as a "gentle [atonement]...of superstition [Christianity]."<sup>7</sup> He records the preceding destruction of "Serapis's temple" in Alexandria with the same grim understanding

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<sup>5</sup>Dzielska, M., *Hypatia of Alexandria*, pg. 2. Watts, E., *Hypatia: The Life and Legend of an Ancient Female Philosopher*, pg. 130. Gibson, Joan. "Educating for Silence: Renaissance Women and the Language Arts." *Hypatia* 4, no. 1, pgs. 9-27.

<sup>6</sup>Lewis, T., pg. 10. Lewis refers specifically to the gift of the menstrual rag to her infatuated student, so embarrassed by the scenario he quotes it in Greek out of the notion that a translation would stain his page.

<sup>7</sup>Gibbon, E., *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: An Abridgement by D.M. Low*, pgs. 390 and 480. Dzielska, M., pg. 3.

of the violent change that it held for the pagan culture that his ancient source, Socrates, did, yet Gibbon is suspicious that the early Christian faith was a breeding ground for the continuation of pagan superstition, with the focal point shifting to martyr veneration rather than mere pagan gods.<sup>8</sup> However, Hypatia in the role of a martyr does not emerge in Gibbon's narrative as she did in Toland's, and neither does she serve much purpose in Voltaire's, aside from a perfect example of how cultic superstition erodes the reasonable faculties of mankind. Jerome Rosenthal approaches Voltaire's philosophy of history with the assertion that Voltaire "evaluated," through satirical rhetoric in the spirit of the age of reason, "the past of man's cultural life either in so far as it offered evidence for what he admired in his contemporary European society or...as it could be regarded as the source of its evils."<sup>9</sup> Perhaps this is why he approaches the crowd of monks that killed her with this chauvinistic comment: "When one strips beautiful women, it is not to massacre them."<sup>10</sup> Regardless of its syntax, this quote revives the question of the role of Hypatia's body and her mind as male authors portrayed the history of her death. The physical image of Hypatia standing naked amidst her attackers stands out, above every other motif in her life, as the most poignant theme. This was the same image others had been exploring through poetry and symbolism as early as the 18<sup>th</sup>-century; a neohellenist poet Charles Leconte de Lisle, writing in the period of French revolution, writes an epic that places Hypatia and Cyril in a direct confrontation, wherein Cyril attempts to connect with Hypatia the way a "distressed father" might "want [his daughter] back in the family home."<sup>11</sup> Despite Cyril's strong appeals for Hypatia's turn from blasphemy, Leconte de Lisle's Hypatia counts above all the true voices of Homer and Virgil, as she believes it echoes all the ephemeral proof the gods have left of their

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<sup>8</sup>Gibbon, E. pgs. 479-480.

<sup>9</sup>Rosenthal, J.. "Voltaire's Philosophy of History." In *Journal of the History of Ideas* 16, no. 2, pg. 152.

<sup>10</sup>Dzielska, M., pg. 3. Watts, E., pg. 139.

<sup>11</sup>Leconte de Lisle, *Charles Maria Leconte Rene de Lisle*, par. 7.

existence. Leconte de Lisle thus champions his belief of the lost classical world due to Christian ferocity in the intellect and beauty of his Hypatia, and echoes Toland's anti-Catholic motif in the lines, "The vile Galilean struck you and cursed you; But in falling, you became even greater", emphasizing that the greatness was housed in her "spirit of Plato" and her "body of Aphrodite!"<sup>12</sup>

Prolifically male imagination of Hypatia's Greco-African pagan lifestyle and beauty can possibly be reduced to the cancerous growth of European orientalism, as this fetishism of Eastern culture was a predominant fad in art and literature within the 18<sup>th</sup>-century.<sup>13</sup> Voltaire, Gibbon, and Toland certainly saw her as a Western influence, enough to combat the tangled superstitions of her culture, yet beautiful and pagan enough to fill the ideal of an Eastern allure. However, writings in defense of Hypatia can also be a form of revolt for certain Protestants against orthodoxy. Whatever fascination Hypatia's death projected in the minds of historians, poets, and scholars, it is a prevalent fact that Hypatia's intellect and beauty are the most notable things about her life, perhaps giving skeptical and fiercely Christian writers like Thomas Lewis a bit of room to air his frustrations with her renown. The famous symbol of her life and her death, which could be manipulated to represent the ideal classical world in accordance with true philosophy in a cryptic, tantalizing, and divine world that had suffocated at the hands of an emerging orthodoxy and yet retained aspects of mythical realism as it ventured into the curriculum of 18<sup>th</sup>-century thinkers,<sup>14</sup> must have certainly irritated those who wanted to believe in the blamelessness of their saints and the idealisms of their history. Even though frustrated Christian writers were often drowned out by lines of beliefs more in line with John Toland's assertions, especially those

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<sup>12</sup>Dzielska, M. pg. 5.

<sup>13</sup>Varisco, D. "The Growth (Benign, Cancerous, or Otherwise) of Orientalism." In *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*, pgs. 79-90.

<sup>14</sup>Rosenthal, J., pg 151.

of male or female French writers, who brought the attention back and forth from Hypatia's scientific accomplishments, her striking beauty, and her vivid death,<sup>15</sup> a more striking and piously Protestant motif gives due diligence to her symbolic existence in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, in the form of an English pastor's novel.

### **The Englishman's Fantasy**

Charles Kingsley's historical-fiction novel, *Hypatia, Or, New Foes with An Old Face*, is 500 pages long and increasingly assiduous in its message as it reads. In his lifetime, Kingsley spent a great amount of time organizing factions for Christian socialists and labour rights; in fact, he was a very active figure in the community, which could be why his depictions of Egyptian monks and priests show extraordinary anger toward the main character, Philiammon, a young monk who wishes to travel to Alexandria and preach the gospel in order to save more souls from hell. Maria Dzielska highlights that Kingsley "detested" the Catholic church for its ascetic, internal values; the same lofty and aristocratic mindset upper class citizens such as his Hypatia exude in his novel toward the Alexandrian mob, such as her "dark-skinned slaves" and "Jewish crones" that behave more like wild gypsies.<sup>16</sup> This mindset, akin with the orientalist's motif of Western influence over Eastern culture, is never better expressed as she shares her mission aloud with the reader: "to show one's self superior to the herd, by seeing boundless depths of living glory in myths" and "to conquer - at least to have my reward...[being] welcomed into celestial ranks of the heroic."<sup>17</sup> It is this striking religiosity alongside her refined Greek features that attracts Philiammon as he becomes her student in the role of a spy for Cyril, and much of the narrative tension blossoms as a deepening eroticism as the two talk on end. In between these

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<sup>15</sup>Dzielska, M., pgs. 10-23. Watts, E., pgs. 137-140.

<sup>16</sup>Dzielska, M., pg. 8. Kingsley, C., *Hypatia, Or, New Foes with An Old Face*, pg. 33.

<sup>17</sup>Kingsley, C., pg. 33.

talks, Hypatia convenes with Orestes and his Jewish slaves to dispose of Cyril before she grants Orestes marriage, with the secret goal that her empire will overthrow all Jewish and Christian influence. Ironically, Cyril seems to have some of the same anti-Semitic aspirations in mind, as he makes plans to destroy the historical uprising of Jewish rebellion in Alexandria: “It is not enough for them to blaspheme God...to have the monopoly of all the cheating, fortune-telling, usury, sorcery, and coining of the city,” but they must take up all of Cyril’s ambitions as they riot and absorb the city’s various maladies. Their uprisings are stoppable only by “God’s power through me,” revealing to the reader Kingsley’s portrayal of Cyril as a power-hungry monarch that wishes to disseminate all opposition, however abusively.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Kingsley’s anti-Semitism and Christian socialist criticism of episcopal and aristocratic power ebbs throughout the novel as the lofty and pretentious Hypatia encounters the errors of her ways often due to the work of a former Jewish student that converted into Christianity, named Raphael, tricking her by dressing as a beggar and demanding alms, a person Kingsley’s Hypatia would altogether “[recoil] from”, unable to “endure the sight of...anything squalid or degraded,” although she taught the philosophy of an ascetic lifestyle.<sup>19</sup> Not only Kingsley’s Hypatia, but his Cyril, through his temper and ambition; Philiammon, who longs to stay a monk although he hungrily listens to Hypatia’s “sorceries” and dreams of her “Greek figure”; and finally, Raphael, a “wily Jew” who, naturally, recognizes the “accursed” nature of his ethnicity and becomes a Christian himself, all conquer the hypocrisy of their lifestyle and are humbled by true Christianity, which is honest, meek, and empirically masculine, as the pagan, Christian, or Jewish women in the novel busy

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pg. 89.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pg. 130.

themselves with their gossip, sorcery, and pretensions.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, even Hypatia's great philosophy is reasonless without the strong hand of Raphael's instruction.

Shortly after she is betrayed by Orestes's manipulative, power-hungry tactics, Kingsley's Hypatia converts. With her will weakened by the sorcery of a Jewish witch, she is ultimately inclined to submit to Raphael's pressures as he explains to her, with the rhythm of Socratic dialogue, how all of her philosophy, inevitably and cyclically, will fail to guard her from his true wisdom: "How sweetly and obediently my late teacher becomes my pupil!" Raphael exclaims after her pagan logic has failed to defend her lost ideals yet again.<sup>21</sup> In this confrontation, Kingsley professes the weakness of a philosophy that does not promote Christian theology, and that Christian theology is lost without true virtue, which Cyril and other power-hungry, self-sufficient episcopal members lack, even though this comes at the cost of negating and ignoring Hypatia's virtue, intelligence, and overall role as a character in the narrative thus far; in fact, her mind is proven absolutely useless after she expresses her deepening insecurity as a scholastic professor, and Raphael responds, "You taught me most, beloved lady, when you least thought of it."<sup>22</sup> Thus, as the "spirit of Plato" turns out to be lacking its highest good without the image of God, Kingsley shifts his attention to Hypatia's "body of Aphrodite," her beauty and grace being one of the most intriguing details of her character. Despite her conversion, his Hypatia is still murdered in the streets by a rabid mob of Christians led by a monk named Peter, as recorded in Socrates's brief biography, and as foreshadowed earlier in the novel before Hypatia's conversion.<sup>23</sup> Philiammon, of course, rushes to save her as a "dark wave of men" steal her from

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pgs. 126, 133, 290, 343.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pg. 433.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pg. 435.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pgs. 298, 438. Socrates Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, Book V.XVI., pgs. 126-127.

his arms and drag her “upon the church steps”; in a matter of one short paragraph, Kingsley’s Hypatia dies naked before a church altar in a highly eroticized scene, fearless as she once predicted she would be, straining one hand to stretch out for her new God.<sup>24</sup>

In Victorian England, Kingsley’s book enjoyed extreme popularity. It was translated into several European languages and remained a favorite of the queen, who kept it in print throughout the 19<sup>th</sup>-century.<sup>25</sup> While Kingsley’s book does not contain much weight for modern scholarship, as Watts and Dzielska openly criticize Kingsley’s racist and anti-Semitic rhetoric, as well as his tensely erotic descriptions of Hypatia’s beauty and death, Watts points out that the popularity of his novel suddenly opened up endless possibilities for “radicalized reinterpretations” of Hypatia’s story. With this realization, productions such as plays, paintings, and poems expanded from Kingsley’s 19th-century Protestant zeitgeist into 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century motifs.<sup>26</sup> Italian and German literature of this time period make her a protagonist that stands bravely against the dissolving philosophy of the Mediterranean world; some authors such as Contessa Diodate Roero di Silazzo and Carlo Pascal question the idea that this lost pagan society should be read as unilaterally negative, as they choose to follow Kingsley’s path of Hypatia’s conversion.<sup>27</sup> Carlo Pascal in 1907, however, is the first writer Dzielska notes that presents Hypatia’s murder as an anti-feminist act: “Formerly free, intellectually independent, and creative, they [women] were suppressed into silence.”<sup>28</sup>

### **“The Course of the World”**

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<sup>24</sup>Kingsley, C. pg. 457.

<sup>25</sup>Watts, E., pg. 141.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pg. 142.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pg. 12.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pg. 13.

Hypatia's literary ascension from a smart and beautiful woman whose death marked the change from a spirited classical society into a Christian supremacy, or otherwise was rewritten to be a figure of Christianity and martyrdom herself, shifts away from Victorian Protestant literary life into a legend that records one of the first renowned victims of many subsequent witch hunts, if we are following Dzielska's chronological timeline, which jumps thematically from Pascal's 1907 article to a 1978 dramatic novel written by Mario Luzi.<sup>29</sup> In Luzi's *Libro di Ipazia*, Hypatia has a premonition of her death, much like Kingsley's, but remains a pagan to the end in order to protect her ideals and her truth. In fact, she looks forward to her death, as her eyes were opened to what would become of women of her caliber in the ages to come, drawing a close connection made by Giulio Gasperini that she was written to immortalize a "new pagan Christ" as she is "dismembered in the center of a Church."<sup>30</sup> As productions based *Libro di Ipazia* ran in Italy, Hypatia was credited outside of literary circles as one of the few women of renown in the scientific world. Margaret Alic, in a chronological novel that records the history of all females involved in science, describes her death as coming to "symbolize the end of ancient science" even though the structures had been in decline for centuries, "after Hypatia only came the chaos and barbarism of the Dark Ages."<sup>31</sup> Likewise, B. L. Van Der Waerden describes Hypatia in a textbook as "the heroine of romantic atrocity tales" and asserts that "Alexandrian mathematics came to an end" because of her death.<sup>32</sup> These sources do not have Protestant agendas that wish to place orthodoxy at fault, nor are they objectifying the Western Hellenistic presence in Africa.

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pgs. 13-14. Edward Watts also makes a significant leap into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, accounting for the suggestion that Hypatia faded into the background of scholastic history, outside of the world of scholarly orthodoxy or neohellenist criticisms.

<sup>30</sup>Gasperini, G., "'Libro di Ipazia': in un mondo che cambia chi sa distinguere il tramonto dall'alba?", *ChronicaLibri*, par. 3.

<sup>31</sup>Alic, M., *Hypatia's Heritage: A History of Women in Science from Antiquity Through the Nineteenth Century*, pg. 42.

<sup>32</sup>Van Der Waerden, B.L., *Science Awakening*, pg. 290.

Alic and Wearden simply serve to credit Hypatia with her scientific accomplishments of which we have no tangible record, placing the faculty of her intellect above that of her symbolism and her new-Christ persona. This sort of fantastical interplay between her mathematical pursuits and her feminist symbolism is exactly the premise of a poem submitted in the fourth issue of *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*.

*Hypatia* began publication in 1986, founded by philosopher and legal scholar Azizah al-Hibri, and runs to this day.<sup>33</sup> The topics range in content, but the journal fields submissions only from feminist theorists or philosophers.<sup>34</sup> Three years after its commencement, a self-described feminist poet and novelist named Ursule Molinaro submitted a poem about Hypatia and Hypatia's death, a historical event that "marks the end of a time when women were still appreciated for the brain under their hair."<sup>35</sup> Molinaro opens the poem with a description of Hypatia's screams that rang in the minds as warnings to "future centuries of reformers & healers that they must hush their knowledge if they wished to avoid burning as heretics, or witches. If they wished to stay alive."<sup>36</sup> Immediately, we must hear the screams of Hypatia as they reverberate from the "moon gate & sun gate of that civilized Egyptian city" and understand the weight it had upon the city and the surrounding world, as the world "run by a new brand of Christians, politicians of faith" would push back on all "independent thought...Especially when taught by women."<sup>37</sup> Molinaro's Hypatia does not belong to this age from the start of her life, as Molinaro juxtaposes St. Augustine's disavowal of astrology as heresy against Hypatia's father

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<sup>33</sup>University of Richmond, "Azizah Y. al-Hibri", *Richmond School of Law*.

<sup>34</sup>*Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, "proposal guidelines for special issues, clusters, and symposia", *Hypatia Philosophy*, (2019).

<sup>35</sup>Molinaro, U., "A Christian Martyr in Reverse Hypatia: 370 - 415 A. D.: A Vivid Portrait of the Life and Death of Hypatia as Seen through the Eyes of a Feminist Poet and Novelist." In *Hypatia* 4, no. 1, pg. 1.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, pg. 6.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, pg. 6.

Theon's casting charts at her birth, and all of the charts he casted on her lovers as she grew older and older. Theon dislikes Hypatia's sexual exploits, and wonders if the mysterious sexual power described within her chart allows her to abuse men as her marriage to Isidore (recorded improbably by the *Suda* and touted by John Toland) continues with Isidore's acquiescence to Hypatia's amorous relations with other men, despite their marriage vows. It is important to note that adultery in the 4<sup>th</sup>-century was severely punishable by both pagan law and Christian law; Hypatia, in Molinaro's account, clearly disregards the morals of her age as she looks toward the future, where she can exist more sexually free.

All her lovers abandon her, along with her city, but Hypatia chooses to remain, despite her father's warnings voicing what the stars say, unable to disbelieve the science that posits her future. Molinaro's Hypatia, like Pascal's and Luzi's, senses what will unfold in the centuries ahead, "beyond which she had no desire to live", as she does not wish to exist in a world that does not allow her to be more learned than her astrologer father and philosopher husband, that does not condone her sexual freedom despite a commitment to a monogamous relationship, and that allows a man such as Cyril to kill her.<sup>38</sup> Molinaro's Hypatia dies, as so many other Hypatias have died, naked in the Christian church of Caesareum:

staring wide-eyed across a sea of bodies that were pausing briefly, getting ready to charge into the new Christian era in which she had no desire to live. Until she realized how long it took a healthy 45-year-old woman's body to be torn fingers from hands from wrists from elbows from shoulders from toes from feet from ankles from knees from thighs. For the 45-year-old heart to stop beating. For her brain to lose its exceptional consciousness.<sup>39</sup>

Molinaro's Hypatia is the perfect feminist martyr, and the perfect Hypatia to represent the journal that shares her name; she is sexually free, smarter and stronger than all of her male

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pg. 7.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pg. 8.

lovers, and without fear of her death or of moral qualms, for she has known her role and purpose since birth because of her surrounding scientific environment. However, she dies like a human in the midst of the chaos of the crowd; shrieking through the pain and shock of the atrocity committed upon her body.

Despite the vastly different rhetorics that went into the various catalogues on Hypatia's death, the motif that remains vivid in every writer's mind is the brutality of the reportedly Christian crowd that killed her. Many have attempted to answer the question of why she died and why Christians did not act like Christians, and many of them have pulled from sources that are hopeful, vehement, or blatantly wrong. Many wish to blame Cyril, yet nothing can truly be conjectured about Cyril's involvement with Hypatia, nor can we speak to a possible underlying hatred of women or an attempt to rise above his episcopal jurisdiction in ways that other church officials contemporary to his time did not do. Regardless of any source's personal belief or ambition, Hypatia emerges over again as a determined and inspired figure that worked to serve the public and those she was closest to the way she believed a Platonic philosopher should. She was born into a dangerous socio-political climate that would have made her religious beliefs challenging, despite the fact the philosophy she taught did not have much need for public ritualism. Insofar as we know, she died a pagan woman, even though Christian opposition would have made maintaining her beliefs more and more difficult. The constant ebb and flow through criticism and rehashings of her influence and death is the most important thing we can learn from Hypatia's narrative use across the centuries mentioned in this paper, as it holds insight into how legends are formed, and how real, living people can be used as tools to fit into the hindsight of any given age's pretensions. Hypatia emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a weapon against orthodox history, and maintained this role as she was used by historians and prevalent skeptics of the

church, who assigned her a role as a Western thinker housed in the body and timeframe of Eastern otherness. Her Westernism is emphatically negated by anti-elitist Kingsley, as he sets the tone for her popularity over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is here where she is given her familiar role as a feminist; now, her name is used to circulate feminist theory and thought. The real Hypatia has been sought out by scholars with a real ambition to discover her vital role in Alexandrian culture, yet much is left to assumption, because the ideals twisted out of her legend bears more weight in the prolific imagination of writers.

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