

**A STUDY OF THE RECEPTION OF THE LIFE AND DEATH OF THE NEO-  
PLATONIST PHILOSOPHER HYPATIA OF ALEXANDRIA IN AMENABAR'S  
FILM *AGORÁ***

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## DECLARATION

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This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university;

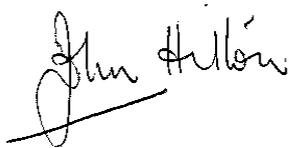
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hilton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Professor J. L. Hilton

## ABSTRACT

The film *Agorá* is better appreciated through a little knowledge of the rise of Christianity and its opposition to Paganism which professed ethical principles inherited from Greek mythology and acknowledged, seasonal rituals and wealth in land and livestock. Neoplatonism developed from the Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle over a period of centuries. The learned proponents of Neoplatonic philosophies were viewed as elitists. Alexandria clung to Neoplatonic philosophy despite the edicts of Constantine the Great; a brief account of his influence and exertions to establish Christianity throughout the Roman Empire caused dissension among Christian bishops and split the Empire into two religious divisions, namely the Orthodox See of Byzantine and the Holy Roman Catholic Church of Rome. Chapter Two acknowledges that little information about Hypatia could be retrieved from the past but the discovery of the archived *Letters of Synesius* (played by Rupert Evans) redeemed her name from total obliteration; these letters, together with a selection of other authors are discussed. How the film *Agorá* was produced is examined in Chapter Three, in which media in film communicates and reflects social conflicts, local politics and power struggles of past and recent times, resulting in interaction with the audiences' reception and perception in current times. Chapters Four and Five describe how Amenábar produced *Agorá* and the contents of the chapter that relate to what Amenábar says are on the Spanish Blu-Ray disc and his personal commentary comprises a scene by scene explanation of production methods. Although the video disc is recorded with Amenábar speaking in Spanish, the subtitles run in English; it is these comments that formed the bases of note taking in the progress of this dissertation with the intention of bringing new material to bear on the subject of *Agorá* as related to Amenábar's production methods. The disc is mentioned as source material in references. Chapter Six focuses on Davus (played by Max Minghella), who is a fictitious central character in slave service to Hypatia. Slavery is current in the twenty first century, when migrant workers contract themselves to twelve years labour and surrender individual freedom for livelihood; current cinema audiences are aware of this exploitation and empathise with those so exploited. Amenábar returns to this form of service in the time frame of Hypatia's epoch. Mateo Gil the screen script writer seemed aware of the name Davus as used in the Classic *Discourses of Plato*, because Davus was a commonly known slave name. The other classic description of slavery is more humorous in Horace's

*Saturnalia*, the Roman Festival that allowed the slave to speak his mind freely to his master for three days of festivities during the winter solstice of Capricorn from 17 to 19 December; the festival was marked by abundant feasting, drunken revelry and Saturn's mis-rule. The tradition accompanied *sigillariae* (gift giving) while the elite wore a mixture of colourful clothes called *synthesis* (put-together) and waited on slaves. The Saturnalia cap of freedom was called a *pilleum* and was worn extensively while winter decorations of holly and berries festooned the halls; the festival was later incorporated into the Christian festival of Christmas. Slavery remained an element in Alexandria during distant centuries.<sup>1</sup>

Chapter Seven is the Summary and Conclusion of the entire dissertation and reviews the six chapters and contents in the light of film media productions and their influence on conditions in the current twenty-first century through the qualitative examples of love and hate, intolerance and destruction as seen in *Agorá*. One truth is evident that it is easier to destroy than to construct as the film testifies, when after the fall of the Roman Empire the Holy Roman Catholic Church and its Patriarchs attempted to reign over the chaos of the dogmatic Dark Ages and condemned to death independent research thinkers as heretics. Intelligent progress was polarised from the fifth century CE until the commencement of the Protestant Reformations of the fifteenth century.

The limits and delimits in the dissertation on *Agorá* are usually referred to as paradigms. A paradigm recognises the limits of an argument. In *Agora* the time-line paradigm establishes the limitations of time over events. Methodology falls into either Qualitative Methodology which examines sentiments and feelings; and Quantitative Methodology which controls the value of quantities in film management, *Agorá* is limited to the timeline paradigm between 391–415 CE, which marks the end of the fourth century and the commencement of the fifth century CE. *Mise en scene* of the historical period agrees with known data regarding fashions, furniture and household items, architecture, cultural traditions and character types. The cinematic re-creation of the historical destruction of the Serapeon, as represented through modern technology and viewed by twenty-first century audiences, crosses the boundary between time-line paradigms when past social conflict relates to modern conditions, and impacts on the senses of the audience, who are immersed in the drama. Film viewing is unlike reading printed publication matter as the audience cannot step back and

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<sup>1</sup> Roman Religion Classical Civilizations 102: Course Book *Words and Ideas of Rome* Classics Programme Howard College Durban. Also published lecture of Dr Carey Fleiner, University of Winchester (2013) URL [www.http://historyextra.com/feature/how-did-romans-celebrate-christmas](http://www.historyextra.com/feature/how-did-romans-celebrate-christmas). (accessed 2016/03/12)

logically reason filmic events, which engage an individual viewer's sensitive, confidential and psychological emotional responses. Although the scenes in Alexandria occurred seventeen hundred years ago an audience reflects on similar social conditions in current times. Modern technology brings the feeling of the fictionalised past to the experience of present day audiences; this defines a delimitation of the timeline paradigm.

As already mentioned, the film *Agorá* is better appreciated through a study of the rise of Christianity and its opposition to Paganism. However, in the early fourth century CE Constantine the Great firmly established Christianity throughout the Roman Empire; a brief account of his influence and Christian regime follows in Chapter One.

## **DEDICATION**

Sheik Auda broke in ... 'Lads we know our districts, our camels, our women. The excess and the glory are to God. If the end of wisdom is to add star to star our foolishness is pleasing.'

*Seven Pillars of Wisdom* by T.E. Lawrence  
Chapter XLIX. East & West

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## **PREFACE**

### **Aims, Scope and Method**

The study aims to consider the work of Alejandro Amenábar from his perspective as a Spanish-born individual and not as one raised in our familiar western English speaking world which is influenced by monopolies of Hollywood's American film production that extend distribution controls internationally.

The study will evaluate the work in relation to the dominant trope of Hollywood film perspectives and the production of *Agorá* from the Spanish producer Amenábar. Although *Agorá* was produced as an English-medium film and released internationally, it nevertheless fell between two cultures namely that of Spain and the entertainment culture in the western secular hemisphere.

Film production cannot escape the complexities of the epoch in which it is produced, this applies to the film *Agorá*. Film as an element of communication controls public opinion through popular media. The internationally powerful media moguls censor criticism to ensure public opinion remains *politically correct*. Articles, books, journals and films entrench public opinion in favour of the governing body and the policies of the country. Alejandro Amenábar is a rebel producer who ignores the term.

### **Who is Alejandro Amenábar?**

Alejandro Amenábar was born in Santiago, Chile on 31 March 1972, but he was raised in Madrid from 1973. The dissertation on the evaluation of *Agorá* is based on information which was recorded through funding of Blu-Ray Discs<sup>2</sup> and made in the Madrid Studios of *Himenóptero* (a four winged insect that bites, sucks and stings), which is Amenábar's film company. Amenábar commenced his film career in his early teens and was self-taught in photographic experiments, music and musical score compositions. On graduating from high

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<sup>2</sup> The Blu-Ray disc is further explained in Chapter Four of this dissertation where Amenábar makes his own commentary. A written English publication of that dialogue is not available. The Blu-Ray video disc is the unique reference to this study.

school he attended the University of Madrid to study the methodology of film production. He disagreed with the methods and dropped out after six months and at only nineteen years of age he proceeded to produce his first film. Amenábar's film company *Himenóptero* achieved its first success with his feature film *la Cabeza* (The Head) which was re-made in Hollywood as *Vanilla Sky*; (starring Tom Cruz) thereafter followed *Tesis* (*Thesis*), which premises a psychological drama set on a University campus where an attractive female research student stumbles on information that threatens her life. Amenábar also won great acclaim for his film *The Sea Inside* which examines the suffering of a paraplegic and his psychological struggle to overcome his hapless state. Amenábar's film *Agorá* presented at the Cannes Film Festival in 2009 features the fictional life of Neoplatonic philosopher Hypatia of Alexandria, a fourth century astrophysicist and mathematician. Amenábar does not admit to having had an education in Classical Civilizations. Film producers conceive film narratives from instinctive inspiration. Amenábar's brief biography relates that when he was on holiday in Malta he was astounded to see the summer night skies filled with multitudes of stars. Malta lies south of Sicily and approximately north of Tunisia and Algeria, on the 36<sup>th</sup> parallel above the tropic of Cancer. The spectacle of the stars above Malta inspired Amenábar to make a film on cosmology. Research in astronomy led him to the legendary name of Hypatia, and induced him and his partner, screen script writer Mateo Gil, to go to Egypt where they examined the artefacts and data of Alexandria fourth century CE. How much historical information was there on the woman called Hypatia? And how important was she to the science of astronomy? Would a film on astrophysics and the heroine Hypatia (played by Rachel Weisz), composed within the framework of big screen genre, succeed with a modern audience? These were important considerations when encouraging investors' funding to the project. Amenábar, however, believed that the Alexandrian period of Hypatia's lifetime was filmworthy.

## **Scope**

It is a known fact that the film-going public prefer to avoid classical history and religious argument. This truism applies to *Agorá*. The audience attendances in Spain resulted in good box-office returns. However, in the English speaking western circles Amenábar's production did not attract distributors to extended film theatre outlets despite the film achieving nominations and awards at the Cannes film festival. Critical censorship followed, one assumes, in protection of the Vatican's wider billion dollar international audience, who

patiently stand in holiday seasonal queues to enter the Vatican City and see the original artefacts and works of art from the world's greatest masters of past centuries, also the tombs of past Popes and the catacombs beneath the great altar called the Pope's Altar with the confessional to the right. It features four great, high, twisted marble pillars that support the bronze *baldachino* canopy that covers the altar and it is the work of seventeenth century sculptor Bernini who completed the masterpiece in 1623 for Pope Urban VIII.<sup>3</sup> Modern day pilgrims exercise patience standing in long queues, buy tickets and enter the Vatican City of St Peter's in organised groups.

## Methodology

The cinematic re-creation of the historical destruction of the Serapeion, as represented through modern technology and viewed by twenty-first century audiences, crosses boundaries between timeline paradigms when past social conflict relates to modern conditions, and impact on the senses of the audience, who are immersed in the drama. Film viewing is unlike reading printed publication matter as the audience cannot step back and logically reason filmic events, which engage an individual viewer's sensitive, confidential and psychological emotional responses. Although the scenes in Alexandria occurred seventeen hundred years ago an audience reflects on similar social conditions in current times. Modern technology brings the feeling of the fictionalised past to the experience of present day audiences; this defines a delimitation of the timeline paradigm.

The study seeks to mount the relevance between Alexandria 391-415 CE and the cause of the twentieth century collapse in Classic film attendance. The first signs appeared in the Spanish film industry where producer Samuel Bronston was dedicated to a renewal of Rome's ancient magnificence for his film titled: *The Fall of the Roman Empire*; the film's premise depicts that Rome succumbed to the weaknesses from within its own power base. The director was Anthony Mann. The film failed to recover the enormous expenditure of its production process and caused the liquidation of Bronston's renowned Madrid film studios. Simultaneously Joseph Mankiewicz in Hollywood produced and released *Anthony and Cleopatra*, which likewise failed to attract box-office profitability. Hollywood ceased to make further Classical-based movies for forty decades. The study examines the issues of the 1960 decade and considers how world events moved from security to insecurity with the rise

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<sup>3</sup> WEB18 [http:// www.stpeter'sbasilica.info/Altars/PapalAltar/PapalAltar.htm](http://www.stpeter'sbasilica.info/Altars/PapalAltar/PapalAltar.htm) (accessed 2016/03/13)

of the Afro-American struggle for equal rights, as enshrined in the American Constitution under President Abraham Lincoln following the abolition of slavery 1865.

Amenábar is an innovative film producer who deserves a fairer review of his production methods than biased movie critics gave to *Agorá*. Amenábar's film production was denounced, but his work and his effort remain a unique achievement in an age when audiences are bent on the Hollywood Superman image.

Times and tides change and new generations move forward but we should not leave understanding and tolerance behind. *Agorá* presents a movie that may not be repeated for many decades. The production is made authentic in detail and artistic dedication to the hypothetical but plausible circumstances that transformed thousands of lives in the revolutionary conflict of Paganism versus Christianity, the result of which, on the African continent, ripples in waves of continuing religious dissension to be reconciled by new generations.

## **Introduction: Emperor Constantine's Christianity in a Pagan World**

*Agorá* depicts the ultimate revolution in the last decade of the fourth century CE when the polytheist Roman Empire hosted numerous poly-gods and their temples. Chapter introduces the reader to the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, whose reign during the early decades of the fourth century CE attributed to the historical rise of Christianity throughout the Roman world. Christianity encouraged various religions, with their mix of deities, to ally with the rise of the Christian Roman Empire and its Supreme Pontiff Constantine the Great. The transition from polytheism affected the Greek founded city of Alexandria which by that time was a colony of Rome. The development of historical circumstances followed the foot-prints of elected pontiffs:

The pontiffs were chosen among the most illustrious of the Senators; and the office of Supreme Pontiff was constantly exercised by the emperors themselves. They knew and valued the advantages of religion, as it is connected with civil government.<sup>1</sup>

However, barbaric invasions shook the Roman Empire at the commencement of the fifth century CE, when Alaric, King of the Visigoths, sacked Athens in 408 CE, and thereafter Rome in 410 CE:

The Goths, instead of being impelled by the blind and headstrong passions of their chiefs, were now directed by the bold and artful genius of Alaric. That renowned leader was descended from the noble race of the Balti.<sup>2</sup>

Continued belief in the pagan cults was the dominant factor that opposed the rise of Christianity. Uncompromising leadership orchestrated the struggle between the founding church and paganism, which included Neoplatonic philosophies; these are issues which are brought to the screen in Amenábar's film, *Agorá*.

The Mediterranean Roman Empire extended from Europe to Asia Minor, the Levant, as well as North Africa which included Egypt, Cyrene, and by 117 CE, as far as the shores of the Atlantic Ocean (opposite today's Gibraltar). Antiquity testifies to divided cults and ideologies that were traditional to the people and cultures of the various lands conquered by the Roman armies. Rome's pagan world was polytheist in worship, and was ruled over by the Pontifex Maximus in toleration of the Empire's many mythical divinities. Octavianus Augustus Caesar was the Pontifex Maximus at the turn of the first century CE.

However, the Roman world was about to change forever, when an unknown Hebrew mother gave birth in Bethlehem of Judea, to a son named Jesus, and so commenced the first century CE

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 2.56.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 30.42.

during the last decade of the reign of Octavianus Augustus Caesar (from 31CE–14 CE). Yet, before the end of the first century Christianity had penetrated the halls of Rome. However, the city that witnessed the deaths of St Paul and St Peter, and thousands of Christians under Emperor Nero, 54-68 CE underwent an inexplicable change in religious ideology when Constantine the Great established Christianity in the Roman Empire and founded Constantinople as the eastern capital of the Roman dominions during the early fourth century (313 CE).

In the second century CE (161-180) the bishop Melito of Sardis writes the following to Marcus Aurelius Emperor of the Roman Empire:

Our philosophy became a good omen to your Empire, for from that time [of Augustus Caesar] the power of Rome has increased in power and splendour. You are now his happy successor and shall be along with your son, if you protect the philosophy which grew up with the Empire and began with Augustus [namely, Christianity]. Your ancestors held it in honour together with other religions.<sup>3</sup>

Note the remark, ‘together with other religions.’ The Bishop Melito of Sardis would not have expressed this reminder, which mentions the superstitious adherence of the Roman public to the polytheist religion that continued to govern the state and the individual households:

In the mid-third century, to honour the pagan gods was still to expect their protection, in cities or in battles, at home or on travels abroad. They were old and proven companions whose very antiquity earned them respect.<sup>4</sup>

Historians are not certain of the precise date of Constantine’s birth (c.272-22 CE) but at his death in May of 337 CE he was reputedly sixty-five years of age, when his life expired after receiving baptism and confession from Bishop Eusebius, who was his personal advisor and confidante. Constantine’s life had been active, full and dangerous from his earliest years. His father was one of Diocletian’s appointed Caesars in a formation of a Tetrarchy of three Caesars, which the Roman administration devised in order to maintain control over its expanded empire.

The city of Rome (284-305 CE) ceased to be the normal abode of Roman emperors, during the third century. Diocletian and his colleagues and successors visited the former capital on rare and special occasions; they normally resided in cities nearer the frontiers, where they were free from the restraints which the survival of Republican forms still imposed on them in Rome itself. They were

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Dungan 2007:33

<sup>4</sup> Lane Fox 1985: 11

moreover often forced to undertake journeys through the provinces and along the frontiers in order to protect themselves and their subjects from internal rebellion and foreign invasion.<sup>5</sup>

Constantius Caesar was appointed to administer North West Europe, and that included Britain, Gaul and the territory of the Lower Rhine to the borders of Germany. On the promotion of Constantius Chlorus to be a ruling Caesar of the Tetrarchy, he was obliged by hereditary protocol of the Imperial dynasty, to marry Theodora, the daughter of Maximian, and to set aside his wife Helena. The life of his son Constantine changed when he was placed under the royal court of Diocletian, which served as his education during his adolescent years which was followed by military service as an officer under Galerius in his military confrontations. Constantine at nineteen years of age had already distinguished himself on the battlefield, when he led a legion of troops in support of Galerius's battle against the Samartans (294 CE) and was the military hero to those who served under him.

His father Constantius in Britain sent word to Galerius saying he was ill and in need of his son. Constantine reached his father in York<sup>6</sup> where he supported him in his duties and (according to British history) he made a young marriage to Minervina, of York (Eboracum) by whom he had his first son Crispus. However, within two months of Constantine's arrival in York his father, Constantius Chlorus, died. MacMullen notes that 'Constantius, in the palace at York on July 25, 306 CE was the first Tetrarch to die, the first to be declared a god after his death'.<sup>7</sup> Then followed the abdication of Diocletian (308 CE) which heralded a struggle for supreme leadership. Constantine's life was at risk. Maximian arranged the marriage between Constantine and his daughter Fausta (307 CE) in order to claim the heritage to the imperial throne through matrimonial lineage.

On his father's demise in 306 CE Constantine made his headquarters in Gaul at Treves (Trier) on the Moselle.<sup>8</sup> However, on the death of Maximian, Constantine was opposed by Maxentius, who was the son of Maximian and who ruled in Rome.<sup>9</sup> The third member of that Tetrarchy was Licinius, who reigned from Nicomedia, Byzantium. Constantine moved on Rome. Maxentius and his army called on their various gods, idols and auguries but Constantine placed his faith in the sign of he had seen in the heavens of the sun in a blazing Christian cross. The sign encouraged Constantine, who designed the insignia of the Labarum to carry before his military legions. The armies of Maxentius held to the beliefs of polytheist gods and superstitions. Maxentius<sup>10</sup> was convinced that he could prevent Constantine's military advance on the Milvian Bridge before his opponent entered Rome. Maxentius gathered a superior force in numbers and blocked entry at the Milvian Bridge, north of the city where it crosses the Tiber. MacMullen records that:

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<sup>5</sup> Barnes 1982: 47

<sup>6</sup> MacMullen 1970:32

<sup>7</sup> MacMullen 1970: 38

<sup>8</sup> MacMullen 1970: 59

<sup>9</sup> Maxentius was the hereditary son of the Tetrarch Maximian and the brother of Fausta, the second wife of Constantine.

<sup>10</sup> Barnes 1985: 266. Maxentius was the brother of Fausta and therefore Constantine's brother-in-law. See the Stemma in Barnes 1985: 266

Constantine's forces were greatly out-numbered, Maxentius had enrolled deserters from Severus' and Galerius' armies; recalled regiments from Africa and Italy. With the Praetorian Guard he vastly outnumbered his enemy.<sup>11</sup> Constantine began to pray and to beseech 'the God of his father' for help... Constantine told Eusebius ...around noon the next day a supernatural portent in the 'shape of a cross of light' appeared in the heavens, accompanied by an inscription in the sky: *hoc signo victor eris* 'By this sign you will be victor' [Eusebius continues] As he slept the Christ of God appeared to him holding the sign which had appeared in the sky...and urged him to make himself a copy and use it as protection [alexēma, safeguard] against the attacks of the enemy.<sup>12</sup>

Constantine's inspired army scattered the forces of the pagan Caesar Maxentius over the Battle of Milvian Bridge outside Rome on 28 October 312 CE when the vanquished enemy fled and victory marked the Christian transition that influenced Europe, Egypt and North Africa. Constantine implemented the Edict of Milan (313 CE), following on the Milvian Bridge victory:

The Edict of Milan secured the revenue as well as the peace of the church as soon as Christianity became the religion of the emperor and the empire the national clergy might claim a decent and honourable maintenance.<sup>13</sup>

The Roman prefects of the first century: had noted that persecutions against Christianity had resulted in the subversive conversion of multitudes of followers early in the first century CE 'These that have turned the world up-side down are come hither also.'<sup>14</sup>

Constantine, like King David in the Old Testament,<sup>15</sup> bequeathed the treasures from his victorious battles to the Christian Church, when in token of thanksgiving he ordered the construction of Christian basilicas to the honour of the Lord God Almighty as the Holy Trinity.<sup>16</sup> The listing is found in Constantine's endowment of the Lateran church, Rome: *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber pontificalis* 34.9) at the time of Pope Silvester:

*A ciborium* of beaten silver which has in front the Saviour seated in a chair, 5 foot high, weighing 120 lb, and the twelve apostles, each 5 foot high and weighing 90 lbs, with crowns of purest silver and weighing 140 lb, and four silver angels, each 5 foot high and weighing 105 lb, with gems from Alabanda [in Caria] for eyes ... The vaulting of purest gold, and a light of purest gold which hangs beneath the canopy with fifty dolphins of purest gold, weighing 50 lb, with chains which weigh 25 lb ...

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<sup>11</sup> MacMullen 1970: 78

<sup>12</sup> Dungan 2007: 99

<sup>13</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 20.333.

<sup>14</sup> The Holy Bible, King James translation: Acts 17:6. The witness here declares this testimony against St Paul in first century Thessalonica 'where was a synagogue of the Jews where Paul preached openly and also in synagogues (Acts 17:6.)

<sup>15</sup> The Holy Bible, The New International Version, Old Testament 2 Samuel, 8: 8-11

<sup>16</sup> Lee 2000: 228 quoting *The Book of Pontiffs* 34.9-12 (tr. Loomis 1916)

Constantine as Emperor and *Pontifex Maximus*<sup>17</sup> designed a policy for Europe, in which he sought a unification of conquered territory as far as the eastern coast of Byzantium, where he founded the city of Constantinople, situated at the mouth of the Bosphorus, as the most easterly capital of Roman power and the seat of his Imperial Palace, and there he declared Constantinople as the new Christian city established under the will of the Lord Almighty.<sup>18</sup> As the sole Emperor of the Roman ruled world he initiated the rapid acceptance of Christianity throughout existing Roman provinces, colonies and dominions by promises of large ‘golden’ rewards. Constantine’s promulgations affect our lives to this day. He declared Sunday as the day of Christian worship when no labour was to be undertaken. Constantine’s world of 272-337 CE was already a confused mix of Christian cults,<sup>19</sup> and together with Eusebius, Bishop of the Church of Caesarea, Constantine called up the Synod of Nicaea in 325 CE:

It was in June of 325 CE that more than two thousand [persons] bishops, presbyters and deacons with their servants and attendants, descended upon Nicaea, a pleasant hill town northeast of Constantinople, where Constantine owned a spacious summer palace overlooking a beautiful lake. Of approximately three hundred bishops who came, only a few were prominent western bishops...but the eastern bishops were out in force.<sup>20</sup>

This was a gathering of some two thousand ecclesiastics (comprising three hundred bishops), who were divided in their interpretations of the Holy Trinity as One God in three persons, Constantine dismissed these divisions after persuasive argument and claimed a general accord to the universal acceptance of the Nicene Creed and a condemnation of heretical schisms.

Constantine sent his ultimate edict in a letter to ‘the impious persons as pernicious enemies of the human race.’ as reported by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea:

Victor Constantinus, Maximus Augustus, to the heretics. Understand now at this present statute, ye Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, and Paulians, ye who are called Cataphrygians, and all ye who devise and support heresies by means of your private assemblies, with what destructive and venomous errors, your doctrines are inseparably interwoven...We have directed accordingly, that you

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<sup>17</sup> Note that the title of *Pontifex Maximus* was originally held by Octavianus Augustus Caesar and indicated that the Emperor himself was a god of all the polytheist god-heads, not only an earthly ruler but a human of divine powers, through whom all acquisitions and conquests of lands and peoples were unified under the Roman Empire. Note too that the honour descended on the English throne under the Roman Catholic Church when young Henry VIII was blessed by the Pope of Rome as *Defender of The Faith*, as in terms of a *Pontifex Maximus of Christianity* in England’s sixteenth century. Recently, and by analogy, in the twenty-first century, with a change in population ratios and immigrants of various Eastern faiths the Crown of England now adopts the term not of Pontifex Maximus but of Defender of the Faiths, multi-plural religious tolerance as established in Rome in the first century CE.

<sup>18</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 17.201

<sup>19</sup> MacMullen 1970:102-3 notes that Constantine was essentially a military genius and historians point out that he preferred to leave ecclesiastical polemics to the experts, unless forced to intervene under the old Republican Law of ‘Appeal to Caesar,’ so that in his earliest ascendancy the Bishop Ossius of Cordova was his mentor and guide and acted as the imperial emissary to assist in resolving debatable Christian disputes. The Donatist dispute that arose in Numidia, the Carthage environ, was the most disruptive and indissoluble dispute of Constantine’s reign and finally led to their elimination as we see under Archbishop Cyril in the film *Agora*.

<sup>20</sup> Dungan 2007:111

be deprived of all the houses in which you are accustomed to hold your assemblies ...and that you enter the Catholic Church and unite with it in holy fellowship ... [and your houses] made over without delay to the Catholic Church.<sup>21</sup>

The Creed of Nicaea remains in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and in the Church services and canon of the Roman Catholic Church to this day.<sup>22</sup>

Factors that contributed to the rise in Christianity were also due to Constantine's social reforms.

A considerable amount of Constantine's social legislation shows a desire to approximate to Christian standards, as early as 315 CE the crucifixion of slaves was abolished; slaves were not to be prevented from attaining their liberty when the usual conditions were satisfied; and the families of slaves were not to be dispersed when their ownership changed hands. Savage punishments were inflicted for failure to observe the moral law, and the practice of concubinage was prohibited to married men. Children began to enjoy some measure of protection, they could still be sold at birth and exposure was not forbidden, but the practise was relieved by the declared willingness of the state to raise foundlings.<sup>23</sup>

Also note that (*ibid.*) :

'[The] manumission of slaves was allowed to be performed in the churches just as it was already performed in the temples and the church was given the same power to receive legacies as was already possessed by the pagan organizations.'

### **Constantine's Delayed Christian Baptism**

The issue of Constantine's conversion to Christianity is controversial, since his youth he had imbibed a climate of mythical polytheism, although his mother Helena was believed to be a Christian, his father Constantius Chlorus considered its tenets to be philosophical principles. Nevertheless, he centred his beliefs and those of his court on the Sun god Apollo as the centre of life giving creation, to which god the lesser gods were subordinate; it was under this persuasion that Constantine ascended to the appointment as Caesar on his father's death. In later years he decreed that Sunday, the day of the god Apollo, should henceforth be the Christian day of worship and no work was to be undertaken by man or beast. Further to Constantine's questionable Christian commitment, Lee points out that in the Edict of Milan, which was agreed to by both Constantine and Licinius, the many religions of the

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted by Dungan 2007:116

<sup>22</sup> The precepts of the Creed acknowledge the unity of the Holy Trinity. The modern trend contradicts the Creed of Nicaea as the Queen of England as Head of the Church is also Head of the Commonwealth of Nations and England today declares recognition of all faiths and philosophies. The position is analogous to the Roman Empire prior to the Edict of Milan.

<sup>23</sup> Wand 1977: 133

Roman Empire were tolerated as found in the declaration of Constantine and Licinius of 313 CE section 4.4, when Christianity was thought to represent the minority of religious philosophies:

Every person who wishes to adhere to the religion of the Christians may now earnestly do so, freely and openly, without any disturbance or interference ... Your Devotion will also understand that we have likewise granted to others the open and free right to observe their own religion in accordance with the peace of our time, so that everyone should have the opportunity to worship whatever they have chosen...<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, although admitting to Christianity through the miraculous victory of Milvian Bridge, nevertheless, as an Emperor his life required acts that were against Christian ethics, such as the murder of his eldest son, Crispus in June 326 CE, and later his second wife, Fausta (daughter of Maximian), who had instigated him to murder Crispus, her step-son on marriage, who had been born to Constantine by his first wife Minervina. The murders of Crispus and Fausta were two deliberate murders which, in Christianity, are counted as unpardonable 'cardinal sins.' The argument contends that he had not been baptised, and even though Constantine espoused Christianity, he had procrastinated on baptism due to the uncertainty of his convictions, and also perhaps due to the conspiracies of his position as Emperor.<sup>25</sup> The catechism of the early centuries preached one baptism alone remitted the sins of a man's past life, when it was believed that on baptism his character was transformed from impurity to purity by the grace of the Holy Spirit entering into his living soul and conscience. Baptism was an act of repentance and dedication undertaken by adult persons in full remorse and pledge to conversion. Baptism was not a function performed on an infant, for Synesius also undertook a late baptism which was common practice.

Constantine was about sixty-five years of age when en route to Jerusalem in order to be sanctified in the river Jordan. However, severe illness overtook him. Constantine was attended by Eusebius the Patriarch of Caesarea, to whom he confessed and repented his sins. Finally the first Roman Emperor to institute Christianity based on the Creed of Nicaea, died a baptised, converted Christian of the Roman Catholic universal faith, receiving the confession and last rites.

The Emperor Julian, after Constantine's death (in 337 CE), reverted Rome and her empire to paganism and confiscated Christian property and rights:

But the whole empire, and particularly the East, was thrown into confusion by the rash edicts of Julian; and the pagan magistrates, inflamed by zeal and revenge, abused the rigorous privilege of the

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<sup>24</sup> Lee 2000: 80-84

<sup>25</sup> Constantine's Christian baptism is noted in Pollard & Reid 2006 and Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 20.325-327.

Roman law, which substitutes, in the place of his inadequate property, the person of the insolvent debtor.<sup>26</sup>

However, Julian, after only eighteen months as Emperor, and at thirty-two years of age, died of his wounds suffered in battle against the Persians in 363 CE.<sup>27</sup> Thereafter, Christianity returned to the Roman governed world. Julian's pagan preference is relevant to the first half of the fourth century, when Alexandria adhered to Julian's tolerance of pagan gods and had indeed enjoyed Julian's special protection. However, Constantine's decrees invested the Nicene Creed 'with unique inviolable status.'<sup>28</sup> These were issued sometime before Constantine's death in 337 CE.

Amenábar shows in *Agorá* the effects of the Nicene Creed, which was accompanied by laws of expropriation of pagan proprietorship to any found adhering to pagan customs; the law impacted on the Egyptian Greco-Roman city of Alexandria in 391 CE, when Cyril, the Pontificate of the Church of Alexandria took merciless reprisals against all citizens of varying beliefs, whether of Judaism or Neoplatonism or an alternative persuasion of Christianity, such as Arian or Novatian as listed above in Constantine's edict. Barnes notes that, 'the Council of Nicaea failed to bring harmony to the Christian Church'<sup>29</sup> and the implementation of the canons of the Creed caused suffering and intolerance throughout Egypt.

### **Religion 337-391 CE: Alexandria after Constantine**

Alexandria was established as Greece away from Greece, by Alexander the Great and underwent three cultural influences, from the third to the fifth century CE. First were the Greek language, culture and legal heritage, applied to those who claimed Greek heritage and Hellenization. Along with Alexander the Great and the Ptolemaic reigns came the mythical gods of Olympus, who adopted a new guise beneath the masks of Egyptian gods, by example, the Greek earth goddess Demeter was Isis in Egypt:

One of the most popular Greek cults of the time was the Eleusinian mystery cult of Demeter and Persephone. The annual festival in Eleusis, near Athens, was considered to be one of the most important in the ancient world, and, as with all cults, the secrecy which surrounded it attracted adherents by the thousand. Central to these were the five clans whose families ... provided the priests who administered these undisclosed rites. Ptolemy managed to persuade one of these clan members, Timotheus from the Eumoplid family to support his new god Serapis.<sup>30</sup>

The imported Olympian mythologies were adapted to many divisions of the Egyptian religious rites, culture and metaphysical philosophies and transformed into superstitious witchcraft. Second, Graeco-Egyptian paganism remained the conscientious cult of those who worshipped in Egypt's

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<sup>26</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 23: 126

<sup>27</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 24.165-169

<sup>28</sup> Barnes 1980:225

<sup>29</sup> Barnes 1980:225

<sup>30</sup> Pollard and Reid 2006: 44

Serapeions throughout the land. But the third influence was by 390 CE predominantly Christian, and included numerous Roman immigrants, who had been encouraged to settle in conquered territory, including the Province of Egypt. These people preferred to practise and appeal to the Roman law and Roman power as seen in the presence of the Prefect of Alexandria, and either openly declared themselves Christian or were covert Christians in fear of persecution, which occurred from time to time in Egypt.

### Transitions

Although Constantine's edicts on the firm establishment of Christianity were introduced into Alexandria during the fourth century (313 C.E.), nevertheless, Christianity had initially arrived in Alexandria when Christians fled from the persecutions in Jerusalem from 40 CE to 70 CE.<sup>31</sup>

St Mark, who was in Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion and resurrection, was originally from Cyrene (some seven hundred miles to the west of Alexandria) and he returned to Egypt when persecutions against the Christians arose in Jerusalem. St Mark is traditionally held to have founded Christianity in Alexandria. Theophilus was the Patriarch of Alexandria during the fourth century and his correct title was the Pope of St Mark's, the See of the Coptic Christian Church of Alexandria. During the third century, saints such as Saint Clement fled from Roman persecutions against Christians in Egypt.

Origenes Adamantius (twenty years older than Plotinus) was born and raised in Alexandria as a Christian by his father, Leonides, a Greek teacher, and his mother who was Jewish, who taught him to sing the psalms in Hebrew. His father gave him an excellent education and he attended the lectures of both Clement at the catechetical school and those of [Saccas] Ammonius in his school of philosophy ... In 202 CE Emperor Septimus Severus ordered ... the persecution of Christians. Leonides was dragged from his house by Roman soldiers...Origen followed to the Caesarium where he saw him executed and his head thrown onto a pile of heads and his body cast aside ... Bishop Clement of Alexandria ... [sought] refuge in Palestine.<sup>32</sup>

In addition Lane Fox<sup>33</sup> describes in the first chapter of his account of *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World*, how, during the third century the Roman Empire was marked by strong adherence to Roman and Athenian gods up to the borders of Persia and from Alexandria to Carthage, where pagans and Christians witnessed the death of St Cyprian the 'born again' bishop of Carthage in 258 CE. Yet within the span of sixty years, persecution of Christianity was ended by the Edict of Milan, and by the end of Constantine's life in 337 CE, the new religion was ratified by Theodosius I, who ascended as Christian Emperor of Rome. Theodosius I was an ardent and committed Christian

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<sup>31</sup> Tombs 1998: 93-98

<sup>32</sup> Pollard and Reid 2006: 251

<sup>33</sup> Lane Fox 1986:13-16

under whose influence the entire ruling body of Roman power submitted to his Edict of Thessalonica that firmly established the Christian Canon throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>34</sup>

It is important to bear in mind that in an age devoid of rapid communication, preaching and teaching was by individual conversion as received from apostles and disciples, who walked thousands of miles across the Roman Empire declaiming the gospel message of salvation to mankind. The transformation of the Roman world from Paganism to Christianity can only be termed as a phenomenal transition brought about by word of mouth, and spread by preachers walking and talking throughout the extensive Roman Empire and Christianizing the harsh brutalities of the Graeco-Roman civilization. Momigliano finds the Christian success versus Roman paganism unique:

First, the Christians obviously did not yield or retreat, as did the Druids. Second, the Christians never became outright enemies of, or rebels against the Roman State. The providential character of the Roman State was a basic assumption of Christianity. The workings of Providence were ... that Jesus was born under Roman rule, while the Roman state had destroyed the temple of Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews, thus making the Church the heiress to the third Temple. Third, the Christians were interested in ... classical culture. Their debate with the pagans became increasingly a debate within the terms of classical culture; the Jews however, soon lost their contact with classical thought even such men as Philo, who had represented them in dialogue with classical culture. Fourth, Christianity and its ecclesiastical organization provided what could alternatively be either a rival or subsidiary structure to the imperial government, which under Constantine chose the church.<sup>35</sup>

However, by the early decades of the fourth century CE events within the Roman Empire, from Europe and throughout Asia Minor, were in a flux of transformation from the ancient ways of mythical gods to the new persuasion of Christianity.<sup>36</sup> Alexandria, nonetheless, remained both cosmopolitan and polytheistic during most of the fourth century CE and when Athens collapsed to Alaric, King of the Visigoths in 395 CE, Alexandria became the last centre of honoured learning in a changing world.

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<sup>34</sup> The Edict of Thessalonica, was published during the reign of Theodosius I., established The Ecclesiastical Edicts of the Theodosian Code which was jointly issued by Theodosius I, Gratian and Valentinian II on 27 February 380 CE; see WEB1.

<sup>35</sup> Momigliano 1987: 197

<sup>36</sup> Rowlandson 1998: 77

## Dangerous Faiths

The *parabalani*,<sup>37</sup> a body of church helpers, were appointed as charitable and unpaid assistants to the poor and destitute of Alexandria. They had already risen among the brethren as early as 325 CE, when mentioned by Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea.<sup>38</sup> Amenábar correctly shows the presence of this corps in the earliest scenes of the film. Therefore, when the Edict of Thessalonica was published in February of 380 CE, the *parabalani* were acceptable as a group of minor clerics.<sup>39</sup> As previously noted The Edict of Thessalonica banned all pagan assemblies and gatherings, nevertheless, Alexandria clung to its many gods, occult cults and pagan temples, whether openly or covertly. Among the throngs that moved among the crowds, were another strange group of men from Persia proselytising their decrees in Alexandria

## Mani, Manichaeism and the *Parabalani*

Mani was a Persian philosopher whose theories infiltrated the Christian monasteries of the fourth century monks<sup>40</sup> through Syria. The philosophy held women as inferior and natural sexuality between male and female was interpreted as lust of the flesh, consequently *parabalani* monks<sup>41</sup> were influenced under the Persian cult that dominated the Middle-East, (and which continues within cults in certain Asian areas); Manichaeism excluded women from celibate desert monasteries. In the early decades of the fifth century CE, the philosophy<sup>42</sup> was useful in Egypt at that time of frugal impoverishment with little to feed the masses.<sup>43</sup> The consequences of holy fasts and self-flagellations induced delusions and dementia among the weakened and famished monks. The Church fathers then confined the demented celibates from society in hidden monastic cells. Alternatively the monks themselves hid from humanity in dark caves, where pitying peasants left dishes of food for the starving survivors of religious dementia. Patriarch Theophilus, also denounced the Persian cult as dangerous to mind and health and ordered that the sect be eliminated from Christian precepts in the fourth century.

The monk-like celibacy of the *parabalani* is not to be confused with the Manichaean cult, although the disciplines of self-denial and fasting were similar. *Parabalani* were an official body of semi-clerics already present in Alexandria as charitable workers, caring for the impoverished and

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<sup>37</sup> The spelling *parabalani* rather than *parabolani* is adopted on the authority of Bowersock 2010: 51.

<sup>38</sup> Bowersock 2010: 50

<sup>39</sup> Bowersock 2010: 49

<sup>40</sup> Note that Archbishop Theophilus took a strong stand against Manichaeism and dispersed those followers from the monasteries of the Nitrite Mountains, but his nephew Cyril encouraged their presence during his reign.

<sup>41</sup> In terms of modern psychology the collective classical conditioning of the Mané Creed induced a change of conscious responsibility and such murderers are currently not deemed fit to stand trial by reason of dementia.

<sup>42</sup> Wand 1937: 50, 124,140 ff., 202, 225

<sup>43</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 27.306

famished and destitute strata of citizens. Bowersock in his paper of 2010 titled *Parabalani; A Terrorist Charity in Late Antiquity*, explains that the *parabalani* undertook works of charity and assistance, and they acted as paramedics. Their duties were regulated by the Theodosian Code of Thessalonica also known as *Cunctos populos*, which was issued on 27 February 380 CE, and firmly established Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire, after which date no pagan persuasion, temple or worship was permitted. In accordance with civic administration and Christian Charity the *parabalani* were selected from impoverished, but strong and healthy men who were nominated to gather the indigent and sick from the streets. Whether the *parabalani* deliberately gathered in the sick Bowersock finds debatable, but because of impoverishment and starvation, the population of the lower strata of Alexandria did not comprise many healthy specimens. This feature is seen in the film *Agorá*.

The *parabalani* were recognised as appointed to their duties under the name of Christian charity by the authority of the bishops. The Theodosian code set regulations of control after it was found that this group could become violent and fanatical:

The emperors ordered that the *parabalani* be limited to a corpus of no more than five hundred persons and that they be nominated by the corporati from the ranks of the city's poor [*pauperes*] in a way that would reflect their distribution among the people of Alexandria [*pro rata Alexandrini populi*]. ... The emperors then spelled out an overall prohibition on the presence of *parabalani* at the theatre, at the curia and in court (except on those occasions when one of them might be on trial or be bringing an action).<sup>44</sup>

However, note that those limitations only applied after Hypatia's murder in Lent of 415 CE, and that the code was again ratified in 416 CE defining the duties of the *parabalani* and listing places from where they were to be exempt. The Theodosian code states that the *parabalani* fell under the directive of the Patriarchy of Cyril of Alexandria. Cyril's regime propitiated the 'good works' of Christianity that instigated the *parabalani* to act as hospitable social volunteers.

The film *Agorá* demonstrates how this body of men formed themselves into clandestine lawless groups, as exemplified when jostling aggressively and their threatening attitudes in public places of Alexandria in 391 CE.

In accordance with civic administration and Christian Charity the *parabalani* were expected to receive provisions from traders' stalls, and then gather the impoverished and sick from the streets. The rise in hospital care and formations of such places of care within monasteries and convents marked an impressive Christian improvement, but because of impoverishment and starvation, the people were unhealthy specimens of the lower Alexandrian society, as seen in the film *Agorá* and a separate system of hospitalising the ill had developed when Honorius issued to the eastern *praefectus praetorio* in 416 CE and 418 CE re-affirmed the Theodosian orders due to unspecified terror that they caused:

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<sup>44</sup> Bowersock, 2010: 49

In view of unspecified terror caused by those called *parabalani* we in our clemency decide that clerics should have nothing to do with public acts or matters pertaining to the *curia*: ... *quod quidem terrore eorum, qui parabalani nuncupantur . . . placet nostrae clementiae, ut nihil cum clerici cum publicis actibus vel ad curiam pertinentibus habeant.*<sup>45</sup>

This indicates a phlegmatic dismissal of moral obligation, in that the regulation recommends the ministry to distance the Church from violent behaviour. It does not denounce to punish, or to dishonourably dismiss, or to hand over to justice the thugs and murderers of violence and outrage, because that body were under the orders of the Patriarch, who might then be regarded as an accessory to the fact. In Amenábar's film the *parabalani* as a terrorist group appear to wear camouflage guise, and by analogy were not unlike the old Jerusalem Temple guards, who assaulted the prisoner Jesus under the eyes of the High Priest and Sanhedrin – a convenient method of transferring unlawful aggression to an alternative group.

## **Summary**

Chapter One has provided the background to Constantine the Great and his decrees on Christianity. Upon his death power struggles within his family's dynasty proved too weak to maintain the strength and vitality the dead Emperor had exerted in his lifetime. Alexandria rejected the influence of Christianity. The changing empire moved in weakening cycles towards Hypatia's decade of 390 CE. Chapter Two reviews the works of renowned writers who contributed to the legendary name of Hypatia and expands the reader's perception on the differences in modes and biases through the passing generations.

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<sup>45</sup> Bowersock 2010: 49

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction: The Various Faces of Hypatia

The study of the film *Agorá* is enhanced by further readings and reviews of some of the literature that has haunted Hypatia's name since her murder at the hands of misogynist monks in 415 CE when, despite the passage of time, her name became legendary. Cyril's effort to censor scientific abstract thought, philosophies, cosmology and mathematics outlived the intolerance of his day

To mention a few of these writers, whose hands indelibly penned Hypatia's name into history, the first was Synesius, a contemporary of Hypatia and a devout man, who was called on to be Bishop of Cyrene in the fifth century. Synesius's first steps into Christianity were through Neoplatonist pagan philosophy under the instruction of Hypatia, when she led a selected few of her disciples into the metaphysical dimension of union with the *Logos* (the Eternal Creator). Synesius's testimony is intensely personal and he never supposed that the private letters he wrote to her, or the letters to friends about Hypatia would be found, enumerated and read almost two thousand years later. Other historians of the time penned their observations, such as Socrates Scholasticus, Damascius, and Philostorgius, and then a thousand years thereafter, the encyclopaedia *Suda* acknowledges her name among leading mathematical philosophers.

### Synesius, Bishop of Cyrene, Salutes Hypatia

Hypatia's image has been recreated in various ways through the changing time frames of the centuries. If Hypatia's works had not been destroyed more would have been known of her life and her work; as the data now stands more is known of her death than her life.

Hypatia's name was preserved in the Christian Church archives by Synesius,<sup>46</sup> who wrote to her from the capital city of Ptolemais in Cyrene, which was located 720 kilometres west of Alexandria in Libya Superior. Trusted mutual friends delivered the letters to Hypatia in Alexandria, in which he pays homage and respect to his 'revered' teacher. Synesius was a faithful and courageous bishop and did not desert his congregation in the face of Ausurian barbarian invasions. Synesius' letter to Hypatia No.15 commences 'I am in such evil fortune that I need a hydroscope. See that one is cast in brass for me and put together...' In letter No.16 Synesius addresses her as follows: 'I am dictating this letter to you from my bed but may you receive it in good health, mother, sister, teacher, and withal benefactress, and whatsoever is honoured in name and deed...' In letter No 10, Synesius wrote:

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<sup>46</sup> The letters of Synesius have been translated into English by Fitzgerald 1926.

‘I salute you, and I beg of you to salute your most happy comrades for me, august Mistress...But now your silence has added to the sum of my sorrows. I have lost my children, my friends and the goodwill of everyone...The greatest loss of all however, is the absence of your divine spirit, I had hoped that this would always remain to me to conquer both the caprices of fortune and the evil turns of fate.’

Synesius’s first steps into Christianity were through Neoplatonist pagan philosophy under the instruction of Hypatia, who led a selected few of her disciples into the metaphysical dimension of union with the *Logos* (the Eternal Creator). Synesius’s testimony is intensely personal and he never supposed that the private letters he wrote to her, or the letters to friends about Hypatia would be found, enumerated and read almost two thousand years later. Other historians of the time penned their observations, such as Socrates Scholasticus, Damascius, and Philostorgius, and then a thousand years thereafter, the encyclopaedia *Suda* acknowledges her name among leading mathematical philosophers.

Letter No 4 is addressed to his brother and relates to a hazardous sea voyage between two ports in inclement weather. Despite these difficulties Synesius writes of the experience with humour and ends his letter asking his brother to remember him to friends: ‘Salute for me the most holy and revered philosopher, and give my homage also to the company of the blessed who delight in her oracular utterances.’

Letter No 33 is a scrap from a missing letter. Letter No 81 is addressed to Hypatia and Synesius regrets the loss of his influence due to the vicissitudes of fortune and the deaths of his beloved sons. He writes:

‘I account you the only good thing that remains inviolate, along with virtue. You always have power, and long may you have it and make good use of that power. I recommend to your care Nicaeus and Philolaus, two excellent young men united by the bond of relationship. In order that they may come again into possession of their own property, try to get support for them from all your friends, whether private individuals or magistrates.’

The phrase, ‘I account you the only good thing that remains inviolate, along with virtue’ is strong testimony touching the character of Hypatia, who attracted hundreds of influential followers to her door as one who emanated light, truth and virtue in her discourse.

To Hypatia letter No 124 on page 214, is the saddest letter and reads:

‘Even though there shall be utter forgetfulness of the dead in Hades even there shall I remember thee, my dear Hypatia...I am breathing air tainted by the decay ...how can one

keep hope when the sky is obscured by the shadow of birds of prey? ...Why then do I suffer? Because I am a Libyan...and it is here I see the honoured tombs of my ancestors.'

There are six letters to Hypatia, and we know from a scrap that others must be missing, but Synesius also mentions her in four other letters. Dzielska points out that 'the students always feel the presence of her divine spirit...disclosing the sacred sense of philosophic inquiry'<sup>47</sup> and this is also testified by Synesius in Epistles 133 and 137.

These letters witness to the beauty of her character. The relationship of mentor and disciple developed through Hypatia's spiritual leadership, when disciples followed her Neoplatonist meditations towards the *Logos*, entering into a transcendental experience in harmony with Creation's divine perfection. Deakin explains that the 'Plato Abstract' concept is an ability to form an idea and the wider the notion, the clearer the essence.<sup>48</sup> Synesius describes the transcendence to the 'ineffable' translucent 'truth' (abstract noun) and 'beauty' (abstract noun) which adopt tangible reality. Contemporaries noted Hypatia's presence radiated an inner illumination in her lectures as one divinely inspired. Archbishop Theophilus did not condemn Hypatia's teachings; which included the assumption that 'two are equal to three'. This, in Christian terms, could refer to 'where two or three are gathered together there am I,' which implies the majority embraces the doubting friend, but Dzielska points out that it comes from Euclid's geometric principles<sup>49</sup> that two similar numbers are equal to three, and therefore results in brotherly unity.

Synesius' letter No 4 portrays his own interpretations of Greek mythological culture. However, when called by Archbishop Theophilus<sup>50</sup> to become Bishop of Cyrene he wrote to his brother that he was prepared to serve the Lord God Almighty in truth but he required a dispensation to remain a 'married man' or he could not accept the office. Synesius loved his wife and sons. On ordination he prostrated himself in obedience and rose to the demands of his Christian mission, which called on him as a man of faith, prayer, and a militant defender of his congregation;<sup>51</sup> these are the sentiments he expressed in letters No 10, 81 and 124. He never forgot Hypatia's teachings leading to enlightenment and peace. His letters do not speak of a 'witch' but of an illuminated soul devoid of evil theurgist witchcraft.

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<sup>47</sup> Dzielska 1995: 47.

<sup>48</sup> Deakin 2007: 36.

<sup>49</sup> Dzielska 1995: 36.

<sup>50</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 20.337

<sup>51</sup> Synesius' approach to his duty was not dissimilar to Kingsley's 'Muscular Christianity' as it required attention to the social ills afflicting Cyrene. Theophilus was familiar with the higher teachings of Hypatia and knew Synesius was a cultured, literate aristocrat, who was urgently recommended by the Christians of Ptolomais. Fitzgerald's Introduction: 43-44 on the *Letters of Synesius* reads, 'The situation at Cyrene was pressing. There were not merely religious questions...the bishop was the real political leader in the province...and head of the army...Synesius was forced into accepting the ...bishopric by the determination of his friend Theophilus. Dzielska 1995: 42-43: 'What is more Synesius regards Hypatia on equal terms...'

The Christian Church, according to Gibbon,<sup>52</sup> invested spiritual and temporal powers in those called to the bishop's office, therefore Archbishop Theophilus only selected aristocratic and educated men to this function. While Synesius laments not having a reply from Hypatia, the evidence is that no letters from Hypatia to Synesius survived the centuries, and in all probability her letters were intercepted by spies. Patriarch Theophilus died in 412 CE, when persecutions followed the ascension of Cyril, who erased Hypatia's name and work from the records of Alexandria's philosophic gentry.

### **Palladas**

Palladas,<sup>53</sup> was a contemporary poet of the time (probability 360-420 CE) and also had reason to celebrate Hypatia's extraordinary gifts, a verse or two of his paean of praise is generally accepted to allude to the joy that emanated within Hypatia's loveliness. Palladas was known to be more of her father's contemporary and critically cynical of women, nevertheless, he found the nature and spirit of Hypatia worth recording to verse in honour of her memory, Georg Luck, the well-known scholar has this to say about Palladas:

I have not mentioned one important text because it suggests a number of problems that have been ignored so far. It is the often quoted epigram Anth.Pal.9.400, addressed as the *lemmata* dedicates to Hypatia the daughter of Theon

The Virgin's starry Sign when e'er I see,  
 Adoring on thy works I think and thee:  
 For all thy virtuous works celestial are,  
 As are thy learned Words beyond compare,  
 Divine Hypatia, who dost far and near  
 Virtue's and Learning's spotless Star appear.<sup>54</sup>

Palladas, according to Luck, was only fifty years of age at the time of Hypatia's death, and according to his description, although he was a cynic with Neoplatonic, pagan tendencies, it appears that he may have been in Theon's circle of philosophical discourse. Palladas expresses Hypatia's virtues as a 'Starry virginal sign'; the metaphor 'starry'<sup>55</sup> symbolised the stars of virginity.

The *house of the Virgin* is a standing phrase in Byzantine poetry and designates always a church as a Mother of God. It is called starry (*astrigera*, as Hugo Grotius translated correctly) ... Time and

<sup>52</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 20.337 A gradual change in the appointment of bishops occurred between 360 CE when bishops were freely elected by parishioners, this evolved into places going to the rich and corruptible. Archbishop Theophilus, who was versed in Church Cannon, prepared his nephew Cyril's formal education in the Nitrite monastery.

<sup>53</sup> Luck 1958: 462

<sup>54</sup> Palladas' verse translated here by Toland, who was a proficient but impoverished scholar.

<sup>55</sup> Luck 1958: 455-461

again, the authors of *ekphrasies* [a rhetorical phrase of spiritual vision as symbolised in the] marvel at the mosaics of stars, sun and moon in the churches they describe ... [to do with heavenly purity and virginity.]

Here again is found the same living witness to her character, which is described as ‘spotless’ ‘virtuous,’ ‘wise’ and ‘learned’ in speech and manner by historians of Hypatia’s time and by Synesius. The metaphor of *starry*, as ascribed to virginity, was similarly used by Emperor Constantine in his starry basilica to the Virgin Mary. In an age when women were dismissed as chattels, generally suitable to domesticity under patriarchy, the remarkable fact remains that the aristocrats and city counsellors, (archons) paid their respects to Hypatia each morning, in order to be prepared for the issues of the day in civic affairs; they undoubtedly benefitted by her confidential counselling on difficult matters and no thought of devious, lustful motives was attached to the concourse of elect administrators who sought her advice.<sup>56</sup>

However, Luck does write further that he is not entirely convinced and alludes to the generally accepted theory that Palladas was born about 360 CE, and he further states:

Palladas is a very elusive writer. As soon as we try to commit him to a specific point he seems to wrestle free from our grip. ... [he holds] a precarious balance between the schools and religion ... between Christianity and Epicureanism.<sup>57</sup>

Scholars after Luck, namely Cameron and Bowra revised the timeline<sup>58</sup> based on the evidence from a verse by Palladas that he had been deprived of his salary and feared that he would finish his life in poverty. This refers to the time when Theophilus commenced persecutions of pagans in Alexandria and destroyed the Serapeion in 391 CE, which is precisely the time span of the film *Agorá*.

The most recent modern study on this conundrum is proposed by Wilkinson:<sup>59</sup>

But in any event, whether the longer version of the epigram was composed by Libanius or some other contemporary critic it should not be ascribed to Palladas, who had no known connection with these eastern élites and who was almost certainly long since dead in A.D. 384.

In support of this argument Wilkinson avers that the Palladas dating may have to be re-adjusted to an earlier date of birth than has yet been considered possible. He refers to the fact that:

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<sup>56</sup> Damascius *Life of Isidore* c. 530 = Photius Bib. s.v. ‘Hypatia’.

<sup>57</sup> Luck 1958 : 461

<sup>58</sup> Wilkinson 2009: 40

<sup>59</sup> Wilkinson 2009: 60

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University own an unpublished Greek epigram codex. Though the manuscript in its current fragmentary state contains no indication of authorship, one of its poems also appears in the Greek Anthology ... with the broader range of dates for the manuscript (A.D.275-325, possibly 350) Bowra's revised timeline looks decidedly suspicious.

Taking into consideration the considerable time spent on the Palladas investigation, the elusive author of the beautiful verse attributed to Theon's daughter of Alexandria by the *lemmata*, is doubtless an elegy of grief and that by a poet who knew Hypatia, but who masks his identity beneath the name of the (dead) poet Palladas in fear of Cyril's ceaseless reprisals on her pagan followers. And if Wilkinson considers that previous conclusions are suspicious, his theory likewise falls under the same doubt. In preference Cameron and Bowra win the firmer ground.

### **Other Ancient Sources**

The encyclopaedia generally referred to as the *Suda* was compiled in the tenth century and incorporates a brief note on Hypatia in the following terms:

So then once it happened that Cyril who was bishop of the opposing faction, passing by the house of Hypatia, saw that there was a great pushing and shoving against the doors, "of men and horses together" (*Il.* 21.16), some approaching, some departing, and some standing by. When he asked what crowd this was and what the tumult at the house was, he heard from those who followed that the philosopher Hypatia was now speaking and that it was her house. When he learned this, his soul was bitten with envy, so that he immediately plotted her death, a most unholy of all deaths. For as she came out as usual many close-packed ferocious men, truly despicable, fearing neither the eye of the gods nor the vengeance of men, killed the philosopher, inflicting this very great pollution and shame on their homeland.<sup>60</sup>

These ancient records of the Christian versus Pagan conflict of Alexandria in 391-415 CE bear testimony to historical social upheavals that descended on Hypatia and swept her up in the frenzy of *parabalani* monks, who have since been regarded as the patriarch's extreme sycophants.

The positive compliments to Hypatia are reiterated in the *Suda* namely that Hypatia assisted her father in compiling his treatise on Ptolemy's *Almagest*, and that:

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<sup>60</sup> Suda s.v. 'Hypatia' Upsilon 166. Translations of the Suda are taken from the Suda online project and are available at WEB2. The Suda entry on Hypatia consists of fragments taken from Damascius' *Life of Isidore* for which see Athanassiadi 1999.

In addition to her teaching, attaining the height of practical virtue, becoming just and prudent, she remained a virgin. She was so very beautiful and attractive that one of those who attended her lectures fell in love with her. . . . Such was Hypatia, both skilful and eloquent in words and prudent and civil in deeds. The rest of the city loved and honoured her exceptionally, and those who were appointed at each time as rulers of the city at first attended her lectures, as also it used to happen at Athens. For if the reality had perished, yet the name of philosophy still seemed magnificent and admirable to those who held the highest offices in the community.<sup>61</sup>

Wilkinson (2009) contradicts the former scholars, in his argument based on some *lemmata* that:

It is quite clear that they do not preserve integral information that goes back to the original production of the epigrams. But what of the three epigrams that give detailed information of a historical sort? It is scarcely credible that this trio of Palladan epigrams came through the manuscript tradition with original descriptions attached whereas the other 150 or so did not. The truth must be that these late marginal notes like others are inventions. In the three cases the lemmatists attempted to supply historical context. Their notices are nothing more than guesswork.<sup>62</sup>

*The Prosopography of the later Roman Empire (PIR)* collects the quotations from other historians, such as Socrates Scholasticus, Damascius, Philostorgius and the Patriarch Theophilus, who acknowledge Hypatia's erudition and modesty. One hundred years later her detractor, John of Nikiu (see appendix for the source), besmirches her honoured memory.

About her death the *PIR* quotes from Socrates Scholasticus and mentions that:

Her popularity and influence, together with her paganism, aroused the hatred and envy of the patriarch Cyril and the more fanatical Christians, and in March 415 she was attacked and brutally murdered by a mob of Cyril's followers.<sup>63</sup>

The above testimonies pay respectful tribute to Hypatia's character, and dignity as a leading philosopher-scientist, in an age when womanhood bowed to idols and was dominated by superstition and witchcraft. Cyril espoused a revengeful Christianity against those who ignored his authority on the premise of the Edicts as established through the Nicene Creed. He expounded a dominating Christian gospel and won the confidence and support of his audiences who were blind to his ubiquitous

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<sup>61</sup> Suda s.v. Hypatia quoted from the Suda online project.

<sup>62</sup> Wilkinson 2009: 37

<sup>63</sup> Jones and Martindale 1980 s.v. 'Hypatia'.

ambition for totalitarian power, and towards which his unpaid *parabalani* assistants exerted duress and psychological terror.

### **Toland 1720**

The Suda encyclopaedia's record of Hypatia gained renown when it was rediscovered during the Age of Enlightenment in eighteenth century Europe. John Toland produced his historical narrative account of Hypatia which caused a considerable stir in England. Toland (1670-1722) was a travelled and a well-read Irish scholar and devout monk, who lived at a time when Roman Catholic devotees, then in England, were held suspect of loyalty to the British crown. Toland was an Irish Roman Catholic. His historical biography excels on Hypatia's beauty, celibacy and holiness, which was ripped to shreds at the hands of Cyril's Nitrite *parabalani* supporters. Toland enjoyed public popularity on publication of his biography of Hypatia and consequently was countermanded by protestant criticism at the time from Thomas Lewis.

Toland's publication was entitled *HYPATIA or the HISTORY of the moft beautiful, moft vertuous, moft learned and every way accomplifh'd LADY; WHO Was torn to pieces by the clergy of Alexandria, to gratify the Pride, Emulation, and Cruelty of their Archbishop commonly but undeservedly titled St. CYRIL* (printed by Cooper, Reeve and Simpson: London in 1720). Toland's title of the 'history' is a synopsis of the narrative and a judgement on Cyril before the reading of the first paragraph. Suffice to say that John Toland was not a charlatan but a scholar. The short biography of Toland by Hunt<sup>64</sup> states that he was born in Ardagh, Ireland on 30 November 1670 and died in London on 11 March 1722, only fifty one years of age. Toland, when in England to further his studies at university level, converted from his Irish upbringing in Roman Catholicism to Protestantism at sixteen years of age; for to be a Roman Catholic in England was tantamount to betrayal to 'the Crown of England' and to be refused entry at the established universities. He studied at the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leiden and Oxford; and at nineteen years of age achieved a Master of Arts Degree which was conferred on him at Edinburgh University. Toland was a linguist and was fluent in French. He was a Protestant in the era of Enlightenment and as a result was a controversial figure in London's literary and philosophical circles.

Toland's *History of Hypatia* reflects an understanding of the celibate academic, for in his time he lived like a cloistered monk, whose Christian conscience was nurtured on the liturgy of Morning Prayer and the rosary to the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. However, Toland proved to be a radical thinker in the early decades of Enlightenment and Protestantism. Toland's history of *Hypatia* echoes his sympathy with those dedicated scholars, whose search for truth rested in their celibate discipline and religion. Toland emphasises Hypatia's virtue and her accomplishments, which were the

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<sup>64</sup> Hunt 2001: 238.

attributes described by her contemporary disciple Synesius. Toland's 'history' sold well (1720) and created public re-action which included a retort from Thomas Lewis, who titled his work as *The History of Hypatia, a Most Impudent School-Mistress of Alexandria in Defense of St Cyril and the Alexandrian Clergy from the Aspersions of Mr Toland* (1721)

The response of Lewis was spurred by the need to defend the faith of the Protestant Church of England from the criticisms of Enlightenment. Lewis's title implies a tone of disdainful class discrimination in the wording of '*Most Impudent School-mistress.*' This term is disparaging and it implies that England's aristocratic establishment despised school-teachers and governesses, who were regarded as menials of the lower orders. The name 'Hypatia' stirs controversy for any author, who deigns to touch on her legendary history, which is forever aligned with the despotic traits of Cyril's sainthood, and which in turn touches the Universal Catholic Church and the tenets of outraged Christianity.

### Gibbon's Hypatia (Age of Enlightenment and Reason 1620-1780)<sup>65</sup>

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) lived during the Age of Enlightenment (1620-1780) which eventually culminated in the French Revolution, when the energy of reformist philosophers was shaking off the Roman Catholic dogma that had caused the earlier closing down of science and empirical astronomical enquiry up to the time of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), all of whom re-asserted the ancient findings of Aristarchus, who had lived more than a millennium before the fifteenth century. In 1755 Gibbon toured Switzerland under the guidance of Pavilliard. In this environment he was introduced to the eighteenth century works of the Age of Enlightenment, which included the foremost intellectuals of France and Holland. Gibbons history deals with the rise of Christianity and on Hypatia's murder he writes:

On a fatal day, in the holy season of Lent, Hypatia was torn from her chariot, stripped naked, dragged to the church, and inhumanly butchered by the hands of Peter the Reader and a troop of savage and merciless fanatics: her flesh was scraped from her bones with sharp-oyster shells, and her quivering limbs were delivered to the flames. The just progress of inquiry and punishment was stopped by seasonable gifts; but the murder of Hypatia has imprinted an indelible stain on the character and religion of Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>66</sup>

The historical account continues to explain that: Cyril made it known to his inner circle that Hypatia was a 'stumbling block' between him and the prefect Orestes.<sup>67</sup> Peter the Reader obligingly incited the *parabalani* to kill the pagan witch Hypatia, 'A rumour was spread among the Christians that the daughter of Theon was the only obstacle to the reconciliation of the prefect and the Archbishop.' Gibbon notes that:

Furthermore, Damascius' account states, 'and while she was still feebly twitching they beat her eyes out ... .' <sup>68</sup> The gory murder of Hypatia not only signified female gender sadism, but also pronounced tyranny against the élite.

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<sup>65</sup> Note that the Age of Enlightenment is conventionally dated from 1620 and commenced in England when rebellion against the Crown was led by Oliver Cromwell who defeated the Royalists, and after standing trial King Charles I was accused of treason and executed. Questions concerning the public right to hold parliament which the King closed led to this impasse which set England to question and led to the rise of literary figures with the publication of the Wealth of Nations and also alerted the Protestants in England to the Protestant debates in Europe. Therefore Edward Gibbon's father sent his son to Switzerland to be educated within the Age of Enlightenment by the great thinkers of France.

<sup>66</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 47.33 References to Gibbon in this dissertation are by chapter and page number in Betty Radice's Folio Society edition of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

<sup>67</sup> According to the account given in the Suda s.v. 'Hypatia' Peter the Reader is referenced within Gibbon's <sup>(72)</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Quoted by Deakin 2007: 142

### Charles Kingsley (1819-1875): Hypatia in a Patriarchal Social Frame

The political and social gender perspectives of the Victorian era of Kingsley's life (1819-1875) reflect in his romantic history *Hypatia, New Foes with Old Faces* (1853). Victorian morality on social and moral grounds arose in the Chartist Movement with demands for universal male suffrage (1837-1847). Female suffrage was never mentioned. Dr Pusey became a popular preacher who espoused the Oxford Movement and preached sexual celibacy to males and females,<sup>69</sup> which profession he adopted from the Manichaeon disciplines, and which became the doctrine of the Oxford Movement.<sup>70</sup> The literary circles of the day denounced Kingsley's novel as 'immoral and radical' proving that the press was influenced by the trend of the Oxford Movement. Kingsley condemns the assassination of Hypatia, as well as the promulgation of Manichaeon celibacy. In the context of the novel, *Hypatia, New Foes with Old Faces*, the heroine is the victim of two politically ambitious men, Cyril and Orestes, who implicate her with Heracleon, Emperor of North Africa, and schemed to institute him as Caesar of the Byzantine Empire, with an intention to marry Hypatia and enthrone her as his future Empress. Cyril's envy of her determined her assassination in order to render Orestes powerless. Kingsley's Hypatia had fatefully moved from philosopher to politician, she is however, gracious and learned, but ultimately illogically believes that she sees Apollo and is deceived and humiliated. Kingsley disapproved of feminine gender equality<sup>71</sup> and in this novel exposes Hypatia's flaws as a pagan Neoplatonist devoted to Apollo, which induced illusionary reasoning, moral weakness and resulted in her death.

Kingsley's patriarchal Victorian approach to the gender debate can be seen within the novel, where he quotes, in verse: 'Woman is passion's slave, while rightful lord / o'er her and passion rules.' However, true to the title of the novel, *Hypatia, New Foes with Old Faces*, Kingsley recreated the struggle of ideologies within the fragmented Roman Empire, which had fallen to the Visigoths from Athens to Rome.

In his interpretation, Kingsley's novel conceives the pagan Neoplatonist Hypatia as a weak and deluded pawn in the political entrapment of that period. Manichaeon sexual discipline (re-instituted by

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<sup>69</sup> Pusey's persuasion caused Kingsley and his chosen fiancée, bitter experience of enforced separation with unfortunate results on both young people. Kingsley practised self-flagellation and Kitty lost weight and almost pined to death in France, when sent abroad on senior sister's orders, for a year in France as a cure for her infatuation of Kingsley of whom her sisters disapproved.

<sup>70</sup> Mani (217-274 CE) was a Persian philosopher, who advocated celibacy, fasting and flagellations with self-repentance. Many Nitrite monks practised this creed and became famished and insane, then the church either locked them away from mankind, or they hid in caves like animals during the fourth to fifth centuries CE. Dr Pusey re-introduced these concepts of Persian austerity to England and advocated, celibacy, self-affliction and self-sacrifice; he was opposed by Kingsley, who argued against this unnatural creed; as a result Kingsley's book *Hypatia* was condemned, as 'pornographic' (1863) by the sanctimonious Victorian society who supported Dr Pusey.

<sup>71</sup> Klaver 2006: 600.

<sup>71</sup> Information from IMDB at WEB3.

Dr Pusey's Oxford Movement) had been condemned by Emperor Constantine before his death in 337 C.E. As previously mentioned the movement sprang from a Persian philosopher, Mani. Dr Pusey re-instituted the ancient philosophy in the nineteenth century churches of Victorian England and attracted a class of well-to-do spinsters, and not-so-well-to-do bachelors, to dedicate their lives and possessions to missionary outposts. The philosophy on morality as propounded by Dr Pusey involved penance for sin (sexually normal compulsions renounced under Manichaeism), had become a moral institution of the Church of England during the nineteenth century.<sup>72</sup> Dr Pusey merged Persian Manichaeism with the Anglican Christian Victorian conventions.

Kingsley believed that female superiority was the first sign of weakening empires, as exemplified in the fall of Rome. Kingsley died before feminine gender suffrage shook the final decades of the nineteenth century. However, Kingsley's unwitting contribution to the furtherance of the emancipation was *Hypatia, New Foes with Old Faces*.<sup>73</sup> According to Klaver, patriarchal Victorian households of 1863 condemned the novel as 'pornographic' and banned the novel from their households for fear of it corrupting their wives and daughters; Victorian patriarchs favoured Dr Pusey's celibate doctrines.

Kingsley's novel is barely read in these modern times. However, the novel poses clever arguments on social, economic, and religious issues aligned to Hypatia's Alexandria and by similar analogy to the socially deprived conditions of England's Victorian era at a time of the Industrial Revolution that, on one hand professed Christianity, but was socially impoverished on the other hand. Kingsley championed the suffering of the working class majority and espoused muscular Christianity for improved living conditions.

### **Rist 1965<sup>74</sup>**

J.M Rist debunks the writings of Gibbon of the eighteenth century and the 'altar novel' by Charles Kingsley of nineteenth century Victorian England. Rist posits a critical analogy against Kingsley and compares his historical novel with an unnamed writer, whose narrative is set in

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<sup>72</sup> In the famous nineteenth century romance of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning the patriarch father ruled his Wimpole Street household of twelve children from a Manichean perspective and male to female friendships beyond the doorstep of his house were condemned. The semi-invalid Elizabeth Barrett eloped by escaping at night down a ladder into the waiting arms of Robert Browning and she took her beloved dog Flush, the spaniel, with her. The couple married and lived in Florence Italy. Elizabeth died age 55 in 1861.

<sup>73</sup> Klaver 2006: 601. See Kingsley's Victorian attitude to gender equality. Kingsley's private opinion, which he later did not mention in the Mills Public Address on the female emancipation issue, but which accounted for his 'not unconditional' tone, and was published in his Lectures to Cambridge University of 1860 and in Lecture 1. *The Ptolemaic Era* on page 17 he writes on the death of Diodorus: 'Poor Diodorus went home, took pen and ink, wrote a treatise on the awful nothing and died in despair, leaving five 'dialectical daughters' to be thorns in the sides of some five hapless men of Macedonia, as 'emancipated women,' a class but too common in the later days of Greece, as they will always be, perhaps, in civilizations that are decaying and crumbling to pieces, leaving their members to seek in bewilderment what they are, and what bonds connect them with their fellow beings'. The decade was the 1860s when Oxford comprised a totally male population of professors and students.

<sup>74</sup> Rist 1965: 214-225

twentieth century Nazi Germany, where the premise involves a beautiful Jewish heroine, who falls victim to the holocaust of the concentration camps; Rist's words are: 'This is fine polemic, though the details of the assassination have been rendered more lurid than they actually were.'<sup>75</sup> This statement from Rist shows little respect for humanitarian values, which have shown scant progress since the establishment of the International Court of Justice at Den Hague in Holland and the perpetration of the fifth century murder of Hypatia in Alexandria. The Halls of Justice in the name of International Peace at Den Hague condemn man's inhumanity to man but, nevertheless, multiple acts of violence against women and children remain a scourge of current terrorism. The International Court that denounced Ali Bashir remains too weak to implement arraignment and judgement. Rist by similar analogy skims over Roman tortures that debased victims prior to and during the early Christian era,<sup>76</sup> when Roman law meted out severe punishments to slaves, non-Roman citizens and Christians. Rist infers that Hypatia's sufferings were minimal, and proceeds to make sweeping criticism of Gibbon's life's work in his ten years of piecing together the almost lost details of the epic history of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, from the ruins that lay around his feet during the Age of Enlightenment eighteenth century (1620-1789). Gibbon devoted his life to composing from the disorganised and almost obliterated past centuries, a chronological masterpiece of the fall of the world's greatest Western empire in its decline under invasions from 410 C.E.

Rist glosses over the period 350-415 CE, when he compares the subject of Hypatia by analogy against persecutions of the Jewish Holocaust in Germany during the Second World War in the following words:

Yet the memory of Hypatia is no better served by this partisan treatment than are those of the victims of the concentration camps by a recent author, who in his novel introduced explicitly erotic tones into an account of the meeting of his beautiful Jewish heroine with Hitler at a gala occasion of the thirties.<sup>77</sup>

Rist, in this paragraph, fails to prove that the twentieth century holocaust was not extreme sadistic inhumanity, just as surely as the periods of Empires from the Assyrians to the Romans proved their power through the deaths of thousands with torture and atrocities. Similar cruelty persisted within the rabble nature of the *parabalani* mob at the time of 415 CE when, with fanatical savagery, they mutilated Hypatia.

David Tombs' article points out the horror of torture, human abuse and sexual humiliation within the crucifixions of the Roman period, and he finds that element is unremarked on in the Gospels, and therefore, he prompts argument that similar human abuse has recently been perpetrated

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<sup>75</sup> Rist. 1965: 214-225

<sup>76</sup> Tombs 1998:89-109

<sup>77</sup> Rist 1965:214

under totalitarian regimes, by example in Argentina and Pinochet's regime in Chile, whilst in South Africa secret tortures and deaths were committed during the Freedom Struggle.<sup>78</sup> Similar atrocities were committed in Germany under the Nazi Regimes, when doctor Josef Mengele 1911-1975, known as the *Angel of Death*, performed sexual experiments on Jewish prisoners and children. He lived to elude capture and fled to South America on the fall of Germany 1945.<sup>79</sup>

Rist in his article is not satisfied with demonstrating his superiority over Hypatia and other human sufferers, but continues to tear at Kingsley as 'a perverted clergyman, whose novel was full of eroticism.'<sup>80</sup> However, Kingsley was an erudite Cambridge graduate and was ordained to the ministry. He felt strongly towards the impoverished multitudes of Briton's post-war population (thousands of maimed and demobbed soldiers from the Napoleonic Wars) that returned to an Industrialised England deprived of home crafts and land rights and living in filth, drunkenness, squalor and impoverishment. Kingsley's tackles social concerns in *Hypatia, New Foes with Old Faces*, on the strength of his Muscular Christianity, he aimed at the Oxford Movement and Dr Pusey's espousing perverted sexual abstinence with self-inflicted flagellations and fasts. Where Rist keeps within his subject of Alexandria 391-415 CE and the ancient philosophers citing historiographers of the period, he is worth reading, but when he ventures to air his opinions and concludes his argument on the justification that if any other reader following his paper disagrees with him then they must be either amateur or unprofessional, his inhumanity is blatant in the last scathing remark:

Her death ensured ... she could win admiration of that less professional audience which to this day has reacted so favourably towards her.<sup>81</sup>

As a critic, Rist wears 'blinkers.'

### **Wider 1986**<sup>82</sup>

Kathleen Wider's article gives a valuable account of the numerous female philosophers of the Classical and Late Classical Greek periods. Wider does not fail to point out the gender limitations on women inherent in the traditional practises of previous centuries within the Mediterranean world. Nevertheless, extraordinary and gifted women made their mark as philosophers. The term 'female philosopher' in the broadest sense depended on the master philosopher, under whose guidance they were welcomed into the circle of the exclusive schools of ancient times. The Pythagoreans accepted

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<sup>78</sup> These tortures were revealed after 1994 by the Reconciliation Commission under the jurisdiction of Lord Chief Justice Andrew Wilson, with Attorney Robin Brink.

<sup>79</sup> See Nuremberg Trials history of the twentieth century and also on view in the Holocaust Museums and one in Durban at the Jewish Club (the epoch of the Holocaust 1939-45 falls within living memory).

<sup>80</sup> Rist 1965: 215.

<sup>81</sup> Rist 1965: 225

<sup>82</sup> Wider 1986: 21-62

female thinkers, as well as Theophrastus of Aristotle's Lyceum in Athens and several others. Wider mentions that:

It was not a rare exception to find a woman in philosophy. There were women in most if not all the ancient schools ... Given the lack of evidence, my argument is not that their contributions to philosophic thought were original ... but that they did contribute on a fairly constant basis throughout Greek antiquity.<sup>83</sup>

Wider writes on Hypatia of the late Classical School of Alexandria as being the foremost philosopher, mathematician and astrophysicist of female scientists and refers to the known ancient historical data:

Many of the ancient writers speak highly of Hypatia's eloquence and skill as a teacher. The Suda praises her teaching methods and tells us that because of her ability as a teacher, Orestes, the civil ruler of Alexandria came to her for training, Socrates Scholasticus and Philostorgius tell us that not only Egyptians but students from other parts of Africa and from Europe and Asia as well came to her classes.<sup>84</sup>

The facts of Hypatia's murder at the hands of the *parabalani* are recorded in Wider's article, where she draws from the account of Socrates Scholasticus that reports as follows:

Some of them therefore, hurried away by a fierce and bigoted zeal, whose ringleader was a reader named Peter, waylaid her returning home, and dragging her from her carriage, they took her to the church called Caesareum, where they completely stripped her, and then murdered her with tiles. After tearing her body in pieces, they took her mangled limbs to a place called Cinaron, and there burnt them.<sup>85</sup>

Socrates' succinct account of Hypatia's death presents a gory comparison to Gibbon's elegant eighteenth century English prose.

Wider's article follows the general trend of retracing the few basic facts that are known on Hypatia from ancient records. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, gave 'seasonable gifts,' according to Gibbon, and 'according to Wider 'bribes,' (semiotic synonyms) by which Cyril succeeded in deflecting the 'course of justice,' at a time when little justice was awarded to women under patriarchal dominance.

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<sup>83</sup> Wider 1986: 56

<sup>84</sup> Wider 1986: 56

<sup>85</sup> Socrates Scholasticus *Ecclesiastical History* 7.15 translated in Schaff and Wace 1979.

Both Rist and Wider reiterate the fashionable criticism against Kingsley without taking into account the fact that Kingsley (through his novel, *Hypatia, New Foes with Old Faces*) was criticising the skewed Manichaeic Persian Philosophy, as discussed earlier in this study. The discipline was imbibed throughout the monasteries of Egypt, and can only be likened to egotistical self-inflicted sado-erotica. Constantine condemned the Manichaeic philosophy. Kingsley, in the Victorian era, was scathing of the adoption of this ancient practise, which became fashionable through the preaching of Dr Pusey and was favoured by parents in wealthy circles, who encouraged spinster daughters to adopt the nunneries if they failed to make a suitable marriage within their 'coming out season.'<sup>86</sup> Kingsley's life and personal suffering due to this form of Christianity can be found in Klaver's *Apostle of the Flesh*.<sup>87</sup>

*Hypatia Incorporated* is a journal of New York published in Hypatia's name, and the present study cannot overlook the influence of that journal that prompted the women's Emancipation Movement in America. The *Emancipation of Women* as a movement was founded in London by Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst, 1903-1918, widow of medical practitioner Richard Pankhurst, who died in 1898.<sup>88</sup> Mrs Pankhurst found that at the end of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, womanhood in England was subjected to poverty and unemployment as a result of the Industrial Revolution. The *Votes for Women* movement gave rise to a shift away from the law of patriarchal dominance, and this inspired women in the USA to respond similarly to their subjected status by a demand for equal voting rights. The argument made a ready readership for the journal known as *Hypatia Incorporated*. The journal examines, publishes and challenges universal gender discrimination and through the synergy of Reception studies locates traditional gender inequality in differing philosophies and cultures. Regrettably in modern society, to the east of Thessalonica, and in Africa, as well as the impoverished regions of Latin South America, women are victims of discrimination, especially where populations resort to gender disparity, trafficking women as sex slaves. This multi-million dollar business was in ancient times the only recourse open to displaced and foreign females, who were forced to find their livelihood as *hetaerae* (brothel prostitutes); such unfortunate circumstances continue to flourish in this century, where sociologists have noted a rise in enslaved prostitution as a business enterprise.<sup>89</sup> Reception studies examines the fact that social scales are not universally equal, neither in the past nor in the present century, and Hypatia's Alexandria

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<sup>86</sup> Other authors on the subject of women, marriage and sexual frustrations during the Victorian era include novels by Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), Henry James, *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872), and the play by Rudolf Besier (1930) *The Barret's of Wimpole Street*, in which the dominating father of Elizabeth Barret refused to allow his eleven adult children friendships of a heterosexual nature. Elizabeth Barret (poetess) eloped with Robert Browning (poet). Screenplay by David Ogden (1934)

<sup>87</sup> Klaver 2006

<sup>88</sup> WEB4 - there are several articles dealing with the WSPU, (Women's Social Political Union) of the Suffragette Movement (1903-1918), Suffragette Movement and Votes for Women, Women Demand the Right to Vote, The Pledge of Citizenship and Basis of all Liberty.

<sup>89</sup> A recent film by Gael Garcia Bernal of Mexico City, *Les Invisibles* (2012) exposes modern labour and prostitute trafficking in the USA.

weighed heavily against the female gender. In contrast to the *hetaerae* were the vestal virgins,<sup>90</sup> who served in the pagan temples; this form of celibacy was translated to Christianity in the dedication of (third to fifth century CE) convent nuns. In this respect Hypatia was sworn to virginity as a Neoplatonic philosopher and astrophysicist.

### **Penella 1984**<sup>91</sup>

Penella's article examines the date of Hypatia's birth through varied ancient historians and contemporaries. Like many other scholars on the subject, he conjectures on the two contrasting descriptions, one that she was young, beautiful, intelligent, fluent in her subject of mathematics and Neoplatonic philosophy, and she inspired the admiration of the most aristocratic and influential men of her day through her modesty, statesmanlike comportment and virtue; yet in her youth and beauty, she devoutly practised continence in favour of the pursuit of logic and empirical science, mathematics and astrophysics, of which the proofs of this testimony are found written by contemporary historians of Hypatia's time. The debate regarding her age is concordant with feminine charm and if she was 'old' by the date of her murder then her death is generally assumed to be of less importance, the dispute arises, according to Penella, from the description given by John Malalas:

First John Malalas calls her old (*palaea*) at the time of her death in 415 CE (p. 359 Dindorf)...How 'old' Malalas means is not clear, but if Hypatia was born around 370 CE, she will have been only in her mid-forties in 415 CE that does not seem to be as old enough to be described as *palaea*.<sup>92</sup>

However, there is no reason to suppose a woman of Hypatia's status, who had remained virginal, and free of the harassments of an early patriarchal arranged marriage, which could have been followed by three or four subsequent marriages, coupled with the hazards of child bearing, would necessarily be described as 'old' in her mid-forties. By analogy consider Cicero's daughter Tullia,<sup>93</sup> who was married by patriarchal arrangement by the time she was twelve and re-married twice thereafter, and who had given birth and ultimately died during childbirth at only thirty years of age. Therefore, one must be circumspect when speculating on Hypatia's appearance compared to other women, who may have lost their charms due to domestic hardships. Penella's concluding argument is stated as follows:

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<sup>90</sup> Lee, 2000: 262-263.

<sup>91</sup> Penella 1984: 125-128

<sup>92</sup> Penella 1984: 127

<sup>93</sup> For Tullia, see Treggiari 2007.

This discussion should not end without alluding to the relative ages of Hypatia and her pupil Synesius. Conjectures on Synesius's year of birth have ranged from 360-380 CE. If Synesius's biographers are right in placing his birth in 365 CE (Bregman) or 370 CE (Lacombrade), then the acceptance of Hoche's conjecture for Hypatia's birth year means that she was somewhat younger or at least not older than her famous pupil.<sup>94</sup>

What is interesting is that Hoche, 'who made 370 CE the standard conjecture for Hypatia's birth year, placed Synesius's birth around 380 CE – that is, he assumed the teacher was somewhat older than the pupil'.<sup>95</sup> Hoche allows that Hypatia may well have been only a few years senior to Synesius. Whether age is relevant or irrelevant to intellectual exchange depends on perceptions, many ancient philosophers, whether young or elderly were plagued by political adversaries and their lives were seldom secure, nevertheless, although flight from danger took them far from their original source, philosophers (by example the fourth century CE, Aristotle) usually attracted the patronage of a king and a circle of aristocratic followers. Hypatia came at the end of an age of philosophers, which had commenced some seven hundred years before her time in Athens, Greece, where Socrates accepted execution by consumption of poison hemlock, dying in his fervent philosophy that man had an inextinguishable eternal soul.<sup>96</sup>

### **Dzielska 1995**

Dzielska relates that she took an interest in the life of Hypatia through her work on the life of Synesius of Cyrene. In Chapter One Dzielska introduces the reader to various writers, who through the centuries, have penned their versions of the life of Hypatia, who was Alexandria's fourth century female mathematician and research astrophysicist, and who lived in an age when mankind faced the instability of Rome's crumbling Empire. In the tumultuous background of these political hazards womanhood was a chattel of patriarchy, in submission to the superior will of the dominant family patriarch. These were the elements that pervaded the Greek and Roman foundations of Alexandria as Hypatia moved through her specific and learned Graeco-Roman academy, where, with her extraordinary strength of character, she challenged values through her Neoplatonic search towards truth and validity in astrophysics, mathematics and metaphysics. Dzielska unfolds Hypatia's life as the daughter of Theon, Director of the Serapeion's Museum, and leading mathematician of his time to the ultimate destruction of the Serapeion in 415 CE and the assassination of Hypatia.

In Chapter Two of her book, Dzielska discusses Hypatia's contemporary circle of disciples and followers, particularly *The Letters of Synesius of Cyrene*, who had been Hypatia's student in Athens and whom Archbishop Theophilus later appointed as Bishop of Cyrene. In this chapter a paragraph in

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<sup>94</sup> Penella 1984: 128

<sup>95</sup> Penella 1984: 128; Hoche 1860: 446.

<sup>96</sup> Penella 1984: 126-28.

one of Synesius's letters (139 and 140) explains the disciplines of Neoplatonic philosophy into which Hypatia led a selected few of her special students. Dzielska notes that:

The spark of wisdom kindled by the 'divine guide,' that 'hidden spark which loves to conceal itself,' turns into a large flame of cognition (*Ep.* 139), thus concluding the journey of the soul which Plotinus termed *anagoge*, the ascension toward heaven, toward divinity. The goal of philosophizing is achieved; the mind is in a state of revelation, contemplation, *theoria* (*Ep.* 140; *Dion* 6-9). This is the consummate experience, incontrovertible, for it touches on prime being, true reality, and the original cause of temporal reality. This indeed is the most important realm in human life: 'to be given over to the things above and entirely to the contemplation of Reality and the origin of mortal things' (*Ep.* 140).<sup>97</sup>

The paragraph is explicit in the Aristotelian principles of philosophy and empirical research.

Dzielska researched the contemporary biographers and historians of Hypatia's epoch – these include Damascius, Socrates Scholasticus, Philostorgius, John Malalas and two later historians, Cassiodorus and Nicephorus Callistus.<sup>98</sup> From her research into the character of Hypatia, Dzielska concludes that:

Hypatia set the highest requirement for the cleaning of the soul ... her *sophrosyne* manifested itself in complete sexual continence ... strengthened her reputation for holiness spread by her disciples. She remained a virgin to the end of her life, always behaved moderately, practised asceticism in everyday life (for instance by wearing the philosophic *tribon*) and reserved restraint and decency in every situation.<sup>99</sup>

Hypatia's moral and spiritual ethics not only rested on her Neoplatonic philosophy of *sophrosyne*, but on her intellect in mathematics applied in astronomical calculations. Hypatia and her father Theon worked closely on the mathematical principles of Apollonius and Euclid. She also knew the algebra of Diophantus of Alexandria, as well as the works of Claudius Ptolemy and also expounded Pythagorean geometry to astrophysical observations, which were previously used some seven hundred centuries earlier before and during the Aristotelian Classical period. Hypatia selected disciples from aristocratic backgrounds and once chosen they followed the strict disciplinary path of *sophrosyne* and were avowed to maintain secrecy over their lectures in divine mysteries and transcendence into the reality of the *Logos*. They were forbidden to disseminate the subject matter to rude and uninitiated groups of the vulgar populations. The words of love, brotherhood and friendship

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<sup>97</sup> Dzielska 1995:48

<sup>98</sup> Dzielska 1995: 52

<sup>99</sup> Dzielska 1995: 53

were unanimously expressed,<sup>100</sup> and included Hypatia as a person in ‘brotherhood’ and not as a ‘woman’ in an age when women were regarded as man’s pejorative chattel. Noticeably similar rules existed known as ‘Community Rules’ among the sacred order of the Essenes,<sup>101</sup> and in the Christian teachings of Jesus of Nazareth who similarly warns: ‘Give not that which is Holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.’<sup>102</sup>

According to Dzielska,<sup>103</sup> Hypatia’s readings and lectures ordered ‘self-cleansing exercises,’ which led the disciples to a state of holy spiritual worship of ‘the *Logos*, Reality, or Creator’ as in ecstasy, ‘he celebrates the silence of the spheres over which God<sup>104</sup> reigns.’

In Chapter Three Dzielska outlines the life of Hypatia as the daughter of Theon of Alexandria and explains that her dedication to mathematics was in pursuit of spiritual philosophy, whereby calculations of the various masters from the algebraist Diophantus of Alexandria, through to Hipparchus in geometric principles of the measurements of infinitudes and Claudius Ptolemy, as well as the conics of Apollodorus, and ‘the arcana of Pythagorean mathematics’.<sup>105</sup> Hypatia believed that mathematics were derived through intellectual inspiration, when clarified through meditation in transcendence with the *Logos*, and therefore mathematics validate ultimate spiritual truths in conclusive abstracts. In Chapter 3, Dzielska further outlines that despite the prevailing conventions that subordinated womanhood, Hypatia gathered the respect of the elite counsellors and administrators, who recognized her unique intellectual brilliance. But for one man, Cyril, the patriarch of Alexandria, she was a light to be snuffed out. To this end Cyril cast suspicion on the association of Orestes the Roman Prefect of Alexandria, and Hypatia, from whom Orestes frequently sought counsel, Dzielska explains:

Hypatia’s support of Orestes – a momentous move – is reported by Socrates in a short but significant sentence. He says that ‘Men of the Christian population’ started to spread a

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<sup>100</sup> Similarly see 1 John, 4:7 ‘Dear friends let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God.’

<sup>101</sup> The rules and disciplines of the Neoplatonist philosophy as taught by Hypatia are analogous to the Essenes’ order of Hebrew monks, see Vermes 2004: 102 describes the virtues to be followed which are, truth, purity and charity, ‘a humble conduct sprung from an understanding of all things, and of faithful concealment of the mysteries of truth. These are the counsels of the spirit to the sons of truth in this world.’

<sup>102</sup> The Holy Bible – The King James Version Matthew 7.6

<sup>103</sup> Dzielska 1995: 65

<sup>104</sup> *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* describes the numerous derivatives of the word God, or god, or gods from Old English, Old Frisian, Old Saxon (Dutch) Old High German and Norse, probably from Sanskrit *hūi*. ‘In any of various monotheistic systems of belief, a sole divine creator and ruler of the universe esp. (and orig.) as opposed to deities exalted by other faiths; also such as a being as seen in a particular aspect or function in relation to the universe.’

<sup>105</sup> Dzielska 1995:55

slanderous rumour that Hypatia was the lion in the path to reconciliation between the bishop and the prefect.<sup>106</sup>

Dzielska continues to outline that Hypatia was described as:

A traditionalist embodying in word and deed the Aristotelian *aretai politikai*, she was swift and ingenious in arguments; in action she was known for prudence and political virtue.

Dzielska outlines the dissension between Orestes and Cyril, where she explains that Orestes was a recent arrival in Alexandria and found Archbishop Cyril interposing his religious office into civic affairs and orchestrating dysfunctional political circumstances, Dzielska writes:

The bloody conflict between Christians and Jews and the expulsion of the latter from the city, the monks attempt on his (Orestes) life, and Cyril's other religious demonstrations fed his obstinacy ... Clearly Orestes's unyielding position toward the patriarch's actions had strong backing from influential people, members of the ruling class in the city and its environs.<sup>107</sup>

A surreptitious rumour was spread among the superstitious multitude of fanatical *parabalani* monks, who, determined to set out on a holy and righteous witch-hunt and, having abducted Hypatia, they flayed her alive before the altar of the Caesarium Church.

Dzielska concludes her historical biography cautiously pointing out that Hypatia was not killed for her paganism but on the ostensible condemnation of, as seen by the ignorant, to be found in the tools of algebra and geometry; she explains:

Pagan religiosity did not expire with Hypatia, and neither did mathematics and Greek philosophy. After her death the philosopher Hierocles initiated a rather salient development of eclectic Neoplatonism in Alexandria.<sup>108</sup>

Nevertheless, despite this debate Archbishop Cyril ruled from Alexandria to Byzantium Church with an iron will and imposed the decrees of the Edict of Thessalonica that ordered the expropriation of pagan property, shrines, treasures and stores wherever found. The heads of many great families fell in the struggles that followed. The installation of Emperor Justinian (529 CE) closed the Athenian academy and any remnants of pagan philosophy. Hypatia was rediscovered when the

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<sup>106</sup> Dzielska 1995:87

<sup>107</sup> Dzielska 1995: 87

<sup>108</sup> Dzielska 1995: 105

archives of Constantinople moved from Byzantium to Rome and came to light before the eyes of inquisitive scholars, who treasured the intellectual finds of ancient predecessors. The Renaissance dispersed long hidden knowledge of scientific enquiry that had lain dormant for centuries under dogmatism and intolerant heretical condemnation by the Inquisition.

Dzielska unfolds Hypatia's life through the chapters of her book, both as the daughter of Theon, Director of the Serapeion's Museum, and as leading scientific exponent as the last emblem of learning related to the Western hemisphere before the closure of the Dark Ages. Dzielska's concludes her historical biography on the death of Hypatia as follows:

Men in Cyril's employment assassinated Hypatia. It was a political murder provoked by long-standing conflicts in Alexandria. Through this criminal act a long standing supporter of Orestes was eliminated. Orestes himself not only gave up his struggle against the patriarch but left Alexandria for good. The ecclesiastical faction paralysed his followers with fear and pacified the city; only the city councillors attempted – with meagre effect – to intervene with the emperor.<sup>109</sup>

Dzielska's publication and interpretation of available historical facts on *Hypatia of Alexandria* stands as an example of civilizations struggling towards freedom of thought, gender parity and tolerance concerning religious persuasions, which in the Middle East, remains dominated by superstition; (the evil eye), religion and power struggles between close neighbouring states, analogous to the religious intolerance that contributed to the death of Hypatia in Alexandria of 415 C.E.

### **Deakin 2007**

Deakin's perception of Alexandria and Theon is as follows:

[Theon] lived at a time when scholarship was under threat and the priority lay in the preservation of knowledge. He had cause, as we have already seen, to complain about the poor background of his students. Nonetheless, his work survives, and his name lives on because he did the job so well.<sup>110</sup>

In consideration of the imminent importance in the development of mathematics from 500 CE to the fourth century of Theon and Hypatia, Deakin presents his publication of Hypatia differently from that of Dzielska's Hypatia, and whilst he does not contradict Dzielska, nevertheless, Deakin focuses his research on the mathematical aspects of Hypatia's life's work. Deakin acknowledges in

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<sup>109</sup> Dzielska 1995: 104

<sup>110</sup> Deakin 2007: 101.

Chapter One, *Alexandria's Intellectual Background*, and in this chapter explains that Ptolemy Soter I established the greatest library and museum, (meaning a place to muse and think), in the Mediterranean world, and that it was established in the Greek language and culture. Renowned Greek philosophers were encouraged and employed at the state's (Pharaoh's) expense to think (philosophise) according to empirical inquiry as set down by Plato for questioning assumptions and searching for valid answers or the alternate most likely valid answer to a proposition, termed the Null or Alternative hypothesis.

The centuries between Ptolemy Soter I to Theon, Director of the Serapeion Museum-Library, are over five centuries; the dangers of such a time gap does not preclude erasure from memory of valuable cultural traditions and the re-writing of history by changing regimes. However, certain scientific and mathematical accomplishments of the great masters were too valuable to be lost to future generations. Theon well understood the dangers inherent in retrogression, especially where students lacked the learning to comprehend the mathematical principles important to logic and civilized progress. Theon, and his daughter Hypatia, worked together in re-writing the hand inscribed copies of renowned works, which replaced much of the lost scrolls that had been devastated in the misfortunes of war, civil unrest and the harbour fire of Julius Caesar in 47 BCE. A royal city without a museum and library, or an idolised godhead, in the early or late Classical Civilizations could not be regarded as a *civitas*, a civilized city.

The historical heritage of archival bibliographic depositories prior to the Alexandrian museum-library were those of the Akkadian-Sumerian Mesopotamian civilization that invented cuneiform script writing on clay tablets or cylinders, to record the state's expenditures and business dealings. The Sumerian region of Ur of the Chaldeans<sup>111</sup> is first mentioned as a thriving urban centre in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, the book of Genesis. The Syrian conqueror and supreme Empire ruler, Assurbanipal of Nineveh, on defeating his foes ordered the collections from their ancient libraries, or storage archives, for the royal library of Nineveh, (670-655 BCE). Note that Assurbanipal orders the collection of all written records, and tablets (clay, cuneiform) that were previously collected from defeated kingdoms, from ages past, and those collections date back almost another two thousand years BCE:

The collection can be attributed to two of Assurbanipal's greatest predecessors on the throne of Assyria – Tukulti-Ninurta 1 (1243-1207 BCE) ... Tablets dating back to the reign of Hammurabi of Babylon (1792-1750 BCE) were acquired by these two Assyrian kings...<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> The Holy Bible – The New International Version, Genesis, 11: vv 27-31.

<sup>112</sup> MacLeod 2001: 27

Mankind developed a need to write to maintain accurate calculations in business dealings, and the Sumerians formulated economic laws. According to Potts,<sup>113</sup> the oldest written scripts were discovered at Warak, an ancient city of Uruk in Southern Iraq dating to between 3400 BCE-3000 BCE.<sup>114</sup> The environment incorporated the ancient Ur of the Chaldeans, where Magi observers recorded the movements of stars and planets from the earliest centuries, and their astronomical records attracted Pythagoras who studied their mathematical calculations in astrophysics and passed that forward as the Pythagorean mathematics which were assimilated and taught by Aristotle.

In retrospect Theon, as the Director of the Museum and Library of Alexandria, was the equivalent of the Chancellor and Principal of what was then the world's leading centre of accumulated knowledge that housed thousands of volumes from the ancient archives of the Mediterranean civilizations. Theon's aim was to support Alexandrian scholarship and rescue the work of civilizations' great master mathematicians in order to forward science to future generations in what was already a declining Roman Empire.

Deakin does justice to Theon's efforts in Chapter Two, by explaining that Theon wrote his dissertation on the *Almagest* as a result of his study of the great mathematical masters and scientific astrophysics philosophers, who had been appointed under the Ptolemaic Pharaohs as early as 300 CE and as late as the last Roman Emperor of the fourth century CE.

Theon and Hypatia made the reassessment of these great masters the subject of their life's work, (so Theon wrote on his theories on the *Almagest*) and was assisted by Hypatia, with commentaries attached in order to facilitate the study of mathematics to students. According to Deakin:

[Theon] lived at a time when scholarship was under threat and the priority lay in the preservation of knowledge. He had cause, as we have already seen, to complain about the poor background of his students. Nonetheless, his work survives, and his name lives on because he did the job so well.<sup>115</sup>

Mathematics is a specialist field of scientific abstract thought and a hidden mystery to the common majority who, although introduced to ordinary calculations of daily life in agriculture, trade and taxes, were unfamiliar with the higher abstruse disciplines with the result that the general population saw astrophysics, geometry, trigonometry and algebra as tools of magicians and witches.

It is reported that although Theon produced no new or original mathematical innovations during his term of office in fourth century CE, his works on the existing formulations of his predecessors of the Greek Classical School, were precise and accurate. Hypatia, Theon's daughter, learnt his scrutiny as she copied scrolls and assisted her father's work, which was also in commentary format that

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<sup>113</sup> MacLeod 2001: 27

<sup>114</sup> Cited by MacLeod 2001:20

<sup>115</sup> Deakin 2007: 101

preserved invaluable mathematical theories, which might have been lost to following generations of mathematicians and astrophysicists if they had procrastinated with their efforts. Deakin also affirms that:

When Theon is described as a philosopher, it is surely in the second sense. He emerges as a specialist mathematician and astronomer, the author of commentaries – essentially student guides to mathematical classics.<sup>116</sup>

The combined work of Theon and Hypatia was preserved through ecclesiastical records and Islamic Arabic geometrists. Theon also wrote commentaries on Ptolemy's *Handy Tables*. Referring again to Deakin he explains that Ptolemy's *Handy Tables* were, 'tables required for the making of astronomical calculations.'<sup>117</sup> Deakin maintains that proof of Theon, as an astrophysicist, lies in his work on the *Small Commentary* and in his *Large Commentary on Ptolemy's Handy Tables*, wherein Theon noted the 'astronomical conjunctions' of 377 CE and it is claimed that Theon was the inventor of the astrolabe,<sup>118</sup> which is an instrument that accurately measures the movements of stars and therefore, the astrolabe is invaluable to captains at sea, who navigate their ships across oceans by the stars:

Theon of Alexandria worked in the late fourth century CE; ...he was prolific both as an editor and as an author of commentaries...particularly relevant [is his work] on the astrolabe.

However, against Deakin's assumption that Theon invented the astrolabe we have Pollard and Reid submitting their findings as:

Hipparchus, the ancient mathematician was known for trigonometry, which were the measurements used in his astrophysics' research. The works of Hipparchus were examined by Claudius Ptolemy, who then proposed his theories in the *Almagest* and the astronomers *Handy Tables* as well as *The Tetrabiblos* based on Hipparchus. Whether we believe it or not, Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* contains a great deal of data drawn from Babylonian ancient Egyptian. ... astrology originated ...in Babylonia, where priestly watchmen studied the movements of the heavenly bodies ... their reputations as magi

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<sup>116</sup> Deakin 2007: 54

<sup>117</sup> Deakin 2007: 97

<sup>118</sup> Deakin 2007: 97 This claim by some scholars is generally regarded as arbitrary because it is considered that the astrolabe was invented well before the life-time of Theon.

were widespread and attracted the attention of Classical thinkers like Pythagoras (circa 580-500 B.C.E).<sup>119</sup>

*The Tetrabiblos* was, however, based on the earlier work of Hipparchus and his geographic and astrophysical trigonometry. Duke argues in favour of the work of Hipparchus in his journal article *Hipparchus' Coordinate System* where he points out that he supports Delambre's findings in his *Histoire de l' Astronomie Ancienne*, wherein Delambre concludes that: 'Hipparchus knew and used a definite system of celestial spherical coordinates, namely the right ascension and declination that we use today.'<sup>120</sup>

Hipparchus is assumed to have lived during the second century years of 190-120 CE, and his equations attracted the attention of the first century CE Claudius Ptolemy, who saved the mathematics of Hipparchus for the generations to come in his interpretation of the *Almagest*.

Deakin gives a lucid account of Platonism in the following paragraph:

[Platonism as interpreted from Plotinus] there was a central deity: Absolute Unity-in-Itself. From this emanates Intelligence, which is the Logos (or Word), which reveals the One (i.e., the Unity). Goodness is the One, but 'the Good' is to be identified with Intelligence. Ideas are contained in Intelligence. From Intelligence in its turn emanates the Soul – the Logos of Intelligence. Individual souls are contained in the Soul. The Unity, Intelligence and the Soul coexist eternally ... Together they form the Trinity.<sup>121</sup>

In summary, Deakin's publication on the mathematics of that period gives addenda, notes and primary sources for the reader to test the publication against the proof of evidence on what and how he has constructed his historical biography on the life and death of *Hypatia, Mathematician and Martyr*, the nature of the context is removed in style from that of Dzielska, but agrees in factual content.

### **Cameron 1990 and 2013**

Alan Cameron's article, *Isidore of Miletus and Hypatia: On the Editing of Mathematical Texts*<sup>122</sup> supports the tone of Deakin's methodological revue of Hypatia's mathematics in his forensic report into the remnants of what two thousand years of mankind's destructive history against knowledge has left to posterity. Cameron interestingly discusses how up to a hundred years after the

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<sup>119</sup> Pollard and Reid 2006: 2004

<sup>120</sup> Duke 2002 online at WEB5

<sup>121</sup> Deakin 2007: 37

<sup>122</sup> Cameron 1990: 103-127

deaths of Theon and Hypatia, scholars under Isidore plagiarised the commentaries of their teacher by falsely rewriting commentary and attaching their name thereto, to quote:

Eutocius evidently took (unacknowledged) all that was worth taking from earlier commentators on Archimedes and Apollonius, as Theon did (with acknowledgement) from Pappus for his *Almagest* commentary. What sense did it make for this anonymous to ascribe his alleged revisions to his teacher...?<sup>123</sup>

However, on the other hand, Cameron observes that in respect of Theon:

The exact opposite is the case. Hypatia was both qualified to help Theon and incontestably alive when he was writing. Though most famous as a philosopher Hypatia was no mean mathematician and astronomer: she wrote commentaries on Diophantus, Apollonius of Perga, and Ptolemy's *Handy Tables*.<sup>124</sup>

Then on turning to another piece of writing from Cameron, where he adopts a different style of writing from the above precise didactic article on mathematics, when he mentions Amenábar's film *Agorá* (Cannes Film Festival 2009). In his article *The Life, Work and Death of Hypatia*, Cameron observes:

A few seconds googling will produce countless eulogies of Hypatia as a uniquely gifted philosopher and mathematician, the second female scientist after Marie Curie, the only woman in antiquity appointed to a university chair, an original genius who anticipated Copernicus with the heliocentric hypothesis ... A millennium before Kepler Hypatia discovered that the earth and its sister planets not only go round the sun but do so in ellipses.<sup>125</sup>

The cited article is an example of Cameron's fluid and easy style adopted for the cinematic revue of *Agorá* where he convincingly writes of the fictitious 'sand-box' scene, in which Hypatia discovers through calculations and her sand-box experiment that the earth's seasonal changes are due to the earth's heliocentric and elliptic revolutions round the sun. The scene is fictional and Hypatia did not confirm the earlier theory proposed by Aristarchus and denounced by his generation. However, Cameron convincingly ascribes the confirmation of the heliocentric earth system to Hypatia.

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<sup>123</sup> Cameron 1990: 104-105

<sup>124</sup> Cameron 1990: 107

<sup>125</sup> Cameron 2013: 65-82 at 65

## SUMMARY

In conclusion it is evident from the above selection of writers from the fourth century CE to current times, that Hypatia has indeed had many faces, when some praise her as a Madame Curie of her time or condemn her as an ‘impertinent school teacher.’ In Hypatia’s epoch, virginity was a dedicated choice similar to the position of vestal virgins; this assumption is drawn from the descriptions of her dignity and confident deportment when advising the Alexandrian counsellors. Hypatia chose to dedicate her life to Neoplatonic philosophy, mathematics and sophrosyne ascendance towards the greater *Logos*. The twenty-first century world boasts gender parity, but that is not universal; different cultures and persuasions continue to give women different faces, and as in Hypatia’s time, some of these faces are not for public view and remain behind opaque black veils. On the other hand, gender parity in the western culture ensures that women astronauts man the International Space Stations orbiting earth in scientific research of the solar system. During the earth span of Hypatia’s limited life she could only read the heavens with her naked eye.

The selected writers chosen in this chapter follow some of those selected by Dzielska and their writings remain relevant not only in tracing Hypatia’s changing portrait but the changing moods and modes of the centuries also feature in their contexts and demonstrate the public biases and schisms of the times. The Literature Review shows progress towards gender parity and the turning point that came with the failure of the Oxford Movement and the rise of suppressed womanhood shortly after the demise of Kingsley. The literary review provides a reflection of particles of truth related to the life of Hypatia. As mentioned Reception Study is a complex and new addition to Classical Studies its purpose is to investigate how film producers, or other types of artistic publications, such a cartoon comic strips, or stories for children, (similar to mythological gods) present character types. Aristotle’s analysis, maintains that two thousand character prototypes are repeatable and recognisable in theatrical entertainment. The prototypes are drawn from ancient sources, only to be reshaped into fictitious forms with every passing age. The literary review commences with Synesius who knew Hypatia personally and once sat among Hypatia’s disciples to study Neoplatonic philosophy from the woman whose fame in the subject of astrophysics and mathematics was revered round the Mediterranean basin. In the film we hear her father refer to her qualities as exceptional and not to be subjected to patriarchal domination. Synesius became a renowned bishop, a philosopher and his countries ambassador. He little knew that his personal letters to his brother and close friends would survive time in the archives of Rome and resurrect the name of Hypatia. The appendix of his selected letters is intended to make available to a non-scholastic audience the real Synesius of Cyrene. The fictional Synesius of Cyrene is seen in the film *Agorá* The letters bear testimony to the fact that Synesius once breathed and lived, and although the letters are almost two millennia old the pen that inscribed them supports evidence of Hypatia’s remarkable soul The Literary Review presents perceptions of writers who colour Hypatia according to the general concepts of their time. Some are

limited to one bias such as Toland, whose religious instincts and worship of the Virgin Mary influenced his writing. By contrast he was opposed by Thomas Lewis who expresses contempt for Hypatia due to his own Protestant bias. Kingsley's work is fraught with the biases of the Victorian era; but he supported science and Charles Darwin's theories. Kingsley, as a writer maintains a voice for the underprivileged as a 'muscular Christian' Recent twenty-first century writers within this field write from a scholarly and researched practicality that matches the twenty-first century, but as the film *Agorá* shows the gulf between the wealthy and impoverished has left similar problems in our own UKZN community putting valuable libraries at risk.

This chapter concludes with Kingsley's words:<sup>126</sup>

And now, readers, farewell. I have shown you *New Foes* under *Old Faces* – your own likenesses in toga and tunic instead of coat and bonnet ... Their sins are yours, their errors yours, their doom yours, their deliverance yours. There is nothing new under the sun. The thing that has been it is the thing that shall be.

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<sup>126</sup> Kingsley 2010:438

## CHAPTER 3: CLASSICAL FILMS LEADING UP TO AGORÁ

### The Classical Age in Film

This chapter presents a challenging retrospective enquiry between what the western European democratic world has inherited from the Graeco-Roman Empires and what similarities are found in the moral ethics or corruptions of those august and powerful dominions. Are these strengths or failures measurable and if so, does the past influence the present? The tool that sifts through these ancient influences is filmmaking in the medium of twentieth and twenty-first century modern technology. Time itself has not erased the culture and philosophy of Greece nor the might of Rome, despite the fact that Gibbon wrote in April 1764 - May 1765 when he toured Europe arriving in Rome on 2 October 1764:

I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the eternal city... I trod with a lofty step the ruins of the Forum: each memorable spot where Romulus stood, or Tully spoke or Caesar fell... It was at Rome, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind.<sup>127</sup>

Gibbon's first view of Rome awakened the purpose of his life's mission. On 2 October 1764 he walked into the ruins of Rome that stretched before him like a sarcophagus of ghosts, yet his inner eye saw Julius Caesar, Tully and Romulus rising from the dust of ages; the temple of Jupiter with golden statues, and the catacombs of Christian saints. He was determined to redeem the ancient city from forgetfulness, and set down its epic history in print for generations to come. In film various directors have turned to Gibbon to recreate not only the vision of ancient Rome, but the details in architecture, garments, conduct, items in daily use range from the Senate to the battlefields. Film media has brought to the screen magnificent scenes of glamour, opulence, battle and gore, loss and victory, and triumphant parades to the Roman Forum before the Senators' rostrum. The nations of Europe trace foundations of their histories and learning from the Graeco-Roman civilization ages that expanded and expended influence for more than five hundred years. With the advent of the film theatre Rome's shared heritage becomes the metaphor against which modern power identifies its weaknesses and strengths. The collapse of the Roman Empire, with its fortifications, military ingenuity and legal administration drew down the nations of *Pax Romana* as corruption breached the bulwarks from within.

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<sup>127</sup> Murray 1897: 266-267.

When Amenábar was inspired with his view of the skies from Malta he commenced his research in order to produce a film on the theme of astronomy, the search led him into the Late Classical Alexandrian epoch. He then reviewed the great films based on Classical histories; these films amounted to the Oscar-winning accolades from 1954-1966, which gave him a benchmark of standards and quality from the film makers of the twentieth century.

Through modern film production history springs to life before living eyes and many of the films from 1950-1966 were enthusiastically received. These films include *Quo Vadis*, (1951) produced by Sam Zimbalist, for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) and directed by Mervyn Le Roy, *The Robe* (1953) produced by Frank Ross for 20<sup>th</sup>Century, and directed by Henry Koster, based on Lloyd C. Douglas' novel by that name. Then followed the *Ben Hur* production (1959) produced by Sam Zimbalist for MGM and directed by William Wyler, the film script was based on the novel by General Lew Wallace. Kirk Douglas of Bryna Productions claimed attention in 1960 with his spectacular production of *Spartacus* for Universal Studios. The film was directed by Stanley Kubrick with the screenplay based on the novel by Howard Fast. The geo-political climate that raged round American Affairs of State at that time caused much frustration and unhappiness to the creative and acting artists working on the sets of the *Spartacus* production, which this chapter will follow through in order to demonstrate the difficulties entailed in modern media and communication. *Spartacus* after two years in production debuted in May 1960 and was an immediate box office success that returned millions of dollars from its world-wide release. The film was reproduced in 1991 under restoration and reconstruction, when many of the previous scenes that had been edited out were restored. The restoration process was under the hands of Robert A. Harris and James C. Katz.

In the stable of films based on the sagas of antiquity the next to follow in was *Cleopatra* (1963) the beautiful Egyptian queen whose reign as Egypt's last Pharaoh was made spectacular by her romances and attachments to Rome's leading world military giants namely Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony. The historical narrative captured the public imagination with the active archaeological excavations that erupted during the nineteenth century with the discovery of ancient Troy by a German archaeologist, Heinrich Schliemann in 1874. Excavations in Egypt followed on the defeat of Napoleon and the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, which was deciphered and translated by French archaeologist Jean-Francois Champollion (1790-1832). The Stone was a stele of Pharaoh Ptolemy V and was written in Greek and Egyptian hieroglyphics. The public were eager to see and know how those ancient heroes lived. According to Nacho Garcia,<sup>128</sup> Cleopatra drew audiences to silent movies as early as 1899 with a two minute films *Le tombeau de Cléopâtre*, (The tomb of Cleopatra) by pioneer film maker Georges Méliès (Paris). Then in 1912 came Charles Gaskill's *Cleopatra*. However, Enrico Guazzoni was inspired by the texts of Pietro Cossa, Shakespeare and Plutarch. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox produced *Cleopatra* in 1917 under director Edwards with Theda Bara as Cleopatra.

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<sup>128</sup> Garcia 2015:113-134.

Garcia reminds us that immediately after WW II *Caesar and Cleopatra* based on the stage script by George Bernard Shaw was made into a movie directed by Gabriel Pascal and starred Claude Rains as Julius Caesar and Vivian Leigh as Cleopatra. The film was last produced by Walter Wanger for 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, and directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, the debut was 1963. It was a most expensive and extravagant production which was typical of Cleopatra's personal expenditure on triumphant parades. During her reign she commanded the reconstruction of the ancient burial sites of kings, buildings founded in previous ancient or Ptolemaic Pharaonic reigns.

Following after the film of Cleopatra (1963) the Spanish studios of Samuel Bronston of Madrid, produced *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, directed by Anthony Mann, who was one of the most expert film directors of the twentieth century.<sup>129</sup> However, by the time, that movie came to be released in (1964) it met with box office failure despite the dedicated care and investment that had been exerted into its production. The shock of its box-office failure put an end to film productions based on classical history genre for years to come. Many criticisms regarding the reasons for its failure to be a public success were mounted, but according to the latest finding of critical analysis in the film industry, a movie sells on its title and the title *The Fall of the Roman Empire* could only be associated with eighteenth century Edward Gibbon, who is not the common man's popular novelist like Howard Fast or Lloyd C. Douglas; the title of Gibbon's historical magnum opus remains strictly for the reading of scholarly historians and not for entertainment channels to viewers eager for lust and blood.

### **Alarm on Distant Frontiers Affects Media**

Modern western nations from 1950-1965, not unlike the Roman Empire, heard alarms from distant foreign frontiers, which alerted Washington's ruling authorities and placed stress on freedom of speech and expression, impeding the norms of media and communication in publications to maintain republican ideals in the democratic world order, as by analogy, were once cherished in Rome.

America founded the nation's stability in respect of its international affairs, on the better principles of *Pax Romana*. In Roman times domestic family stability was valued; the *pater familias* (father of the family) was the sole lawful authority. Patriarchy remains a fundamental principal of Roman law wherever it has been implemented.<sup>130</sup> However, Anthony Mann, the director of, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* observed that:

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<sup>129</sup> On this see the collection of articles edited by Winkler (2009).

<sup>130</sup> Modern gender parity turns to scientific analysis of sperm cells to define paternity in legal arguments. In order to prove fatherhood and thereby provide financial maintenance for the progeny. Fathers may carry weight in custody cases if his concerns over the maternal responsibility and care of his progeny are at risk of neglect.

Facts are the mere dross of history. It is from the abstract truth which interprets them, and lies latent among them like gold in the ore, that the mass [of facts] derives its whole value ... While our modern historians are practising all the arts of controversy, they miserably neglect the art of narration, the art of interesting the affections and presenting the pictures to the imagination.<sup>131</sup>

Amenábar converted facts to suit film art. Synesius died five years (410 CE) before Hypatia and could not have been in Alexandria at the time shown in the film of that epoch, *Agorá* by Amenábar. Neither does the film *Agorá* offend the sensitivities of audiences with the realities of Hypatia's violent death. The film shows Hypatia lecturing within the halls of Serapeion Museion (modern spelling Museum, meaning a place to muse, to compose music, philosophise and lecture) but women were not permitted in Alexandria's library or Museion; Hypatia taught from her residence. The ban perpetuated and centuries later in England's Oxford and Cambridge of Kingsley's day of 1860, institutionalised education for women remained taboo.

The fall of paganism and the rise of Christianity (391 CE) in cinematic art creates living history. Theophilus died in 412 CE, twenty years after the destruction of the Serapium. The film depicts Cyril's persecution of heretical interpretations of Christianity and the Jews.

Cinematic film art is both a technical science and an illusory work of artistic achievement. Einstein suggested that a movie 'is a succession of images juxtaposed so that the contrast between these images moves the story forward in the mind of the audience... The smallest unit is the shot, the largest unit is the film'<sup>132</sup> and Richard Lester said that a production is 'a highly collaborative art form' or 'making film is like having a hysterical pregnancy...'.<sup>133</sup>

In order to clarify the value of media and communication a review of its development in recent times is helpful. Firstly, to communicate means the ability to send thoughts, messages and meanings from the sender to the receiver. Over the centuries this developed from scratches on clay tablets into writing, copying, reading and printing skills, all of which were disseminated through sales of supply and demand. The common newspaper publications of the early twentieth century boomed until fairly recent times<sup>134</sup> and expressed the working man's fortunes or misfortunes.

The cinema theatre commenced its ascendance in the days of the black and white silent movies, when Enrico Guazzoni bought the rights of Polish author, Henryk Sienkiewics' (1846-1916) Nobel Prize (1905) winning novel *Quo Vadis*,<sup>135</sup> first published in 1896 for adaptation to the screen. Enrico Guazzoni's production of his silent black and white movie *Quo Vadis* was released in 1913 to an overnight box office success. The American population consisted of many immigrant families, who were either illiterate in English as the written word or foreign to its phrases in the spoken word, but

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<sup>131</sup> Winkler 2009: 186

<sup>132</sup> Mamet 1991: 2

<sup>133</sup> Mamet 1972:1-4

<sup>134</sup> Lord Beaverbrook, multimillion dollar magnate of the newspaper industry, early twentieth century. Recent communication is cyber space digital and instantly communicable.

<sup>135</sup> Cyrino 2006: 18

the silent black and white movie transcended those barriers and audiences crammed the seats. Further to a reference on film media Winkler's explanation is pertinent:<sup>136</sup>

Films are visual texts, like works of literature they tell stories, if predominantly in images and not in words. But as visual narratives films are capable of analysis, interpretation and criticism from literary points of view.

Then, within the next three decades the black and white preliminary film efforts expanded into the wide screen panorama of the twentieth century epic genre.

### **The Ten Commandments**

During the 1950s statistics proved that cinema sales had decreased as American citizens stayed home to watch the small screen television box, Alan Nadel explains Hollywood's reaction:

The wide-screen movie format developed in the 1950s as a response to the increased popularity of television, which by 1953 had entered two-thirds of American households. To recapture an audience that had declined by twenty-five percent during 1946-1953, the film industry attempted to provide grandeur unobtainable on small black and white television screens. But aside from offering larger images the wide screen signified a kind of truth inaccessible to television.<sup>137</sup>

Remarking on DeMille's production of *The Ten Commandments*, Nadel points out that DeMille conflated truth and religion in order to define the difference between the sacred and the secular.<sup>138</sup> It is the secular world that cannot be trusted and yet which is governed by the realities of daily life. The subversive elements of deceit and corruption lurk within the nation as a familiar 'nice-guy' only to be a masked alien intent on totalitarian force and empowered to enslave the free. It can only be by adherence and loyalty to the Word of God, as given in the Ten Commandments that the nation can travel the route in strength and truth to the Promised Land. The image of a righteous nation correlated with post-war political electoral themes and the symbolic image which was the adopted format for the American born-again Christian nation that would shape the future from the strength of the family hearth and home similar to the Roman *paterfamilias* that provided the post war happy baby boom. The imagery was panacea to the nation that in contrast had returned from the gruesome brutality of World

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<sup>136</sup> Winkler 2006: 9.

<sup>137</sup> Nadel 1993: 415-430

<sup>138</sup> Nadel 1993: 416

War II. Media likened America symbiotically to the Pilgrim Father's vision of a land of freedom and righteousness. DeMille explained his intention within the film:

The theme of this picture is whether men ought to be ruled by God's law or whether they are to be ruled by the whims of a dictator like Rameses. Are men the property of the state or are they free souls under God? This same battle continues throughout the world today. Our intention was not to create a story but to be worthy of the divinely inspired story created three thousand years ago: the five books of Moses.<sup>139</sup>

Nadel notes that film as a broadcast media during the period 1954-1966, fell under McCarthyism and severe censorship. DeMille's symbioses colonizes the Middle East by creating a discourse that makes the other familiar by claiming the Jewish homeland as a Judaeo-Christian heritage, (1953-56) at a time when Nasser was about to seize the Suez Canal on the expiry of the British lease agreement (1957 Anthony Eden crisis).

Nadel further recalls that the stakes included the Middle East oil supply, but in the movie the stakes are the freedom of soul and a return to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Four hundred years earlier the children of Israel had come down from Palestine stricken by famine in the land to Egypt, a kingdom ruled by their bother Joseph and plentiful in corn. Over the years they had served Pharaoh faithfully despite the change in policy to one of enslavement, and yet it was a system they did not question but had become inured to. Moses is a Prince of Egypt, being the adopted son of Princess Bithiah, and therefore raised in superior élite environment among Egypt's wise men and magicians of the Court. The film first distinguishes him as a young and successful military leader, who returns to Pharaoh with barques laden with cargo from victories over Ethiopia. In these frames the sexuality between the dark-skinned Ethiopians and light-skinned Egyptian Princesses hunger on the sexuality of the fair skinned and blue-eyed young Moses, (Charlton Heston), whose Jewish identity is disguised beneath the customary shaven face and clothing of an Egyptian Prince. In the scenes that contrast the gender sexuality, Nadel points out:

Just as his Jewishness is the dark secret beneath his white skin (and, from the film's perspective, beauty) of that white cover is the seductive appearance that colonizes Ethiopia. But Ethiopia's distinctly American accent of its black royalty makes it clear is a cover, a code name for black America, subordinated even in its sexual exoticism to Moses's white virility.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Nadel 1993: 417

<sup>140</sup> Nadel 1993:419

The film moves through scenes of Pharaoh's palace and the sexual eroticism of Egyptian princesses, whose objective is to acquire a man in order to be empowered by a consort. Moses murders an Egyptian and flees for his life. He is supported by his wife Sephora, mother of his children. When he returns to Egypt some forty years later he is a white-haired and bearded elder, who confronts Pharaoh with the words, 'Let my people go.'

Nadel equates this emergence of Moses the Elder in contrast to Moses the Younger who fled Egypt as the virile military captain in the following words:

The wide screen gaze [signifies] America's global designs and its theological mandate, is itself a commodity. The film ultimately makes Moses the possessor rather than the object of the gaze on the site that fulfils its theological mandate. This process identifies the gaze as divine male and Christian. The ultimate object of the gaze furthermore is the West as indicated by the suitability of western vistas for the wide screen. To the extent that the wide screen represents America's global vision, and thus signifies veracity, the various sites depicted in the film become more or less appropriate as objects of America's designs depending on their suitability for wide screen presentation.<sup>141</sup>

The mature image of Moses equates to the image of the Messiah, Jesus, when Moses moves through the assemblies and addresses the people. In this imagery DeMille unifies Judaeo-Christianity moving into the Promised Land as a multitude which numbered 603550, according to the twelve tribes taken on census on the second day of the second month after leaving Egypt and arriving at Sinai.<sup>142</sup>

Producing *The Ten Commandments*, between the years 1953-56 correlated with the return of the remnants of the children of Israel following after World War II and Hitler's holocaust that had annihilated the population of six million Jews, wherever they were to be found throughout every country in Europe. The film *The Ten Commandments* shows the return of the enslaved. Symbolically the film signifies that after more than two thousand years and the holocaust of Nazi Germany the remnants return to Israel, from every land where they had served foreign kings. Nadel qualifies DeMille's production with the words:

[DeMille] contributes to America's global economic policy by claiming the site of oil in the name of God. ... he justifies the foreign policy of the containment by uniting America's political, economic and theological interest in the West's claim on a Middle East site.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Nadel 1993 : 420

<sup>142</sup> The Holy Bible, The New International version: Numbers : p.147

<sup>143</sup> Nadel 1993: 427.

There is no doubt that DeMille was successful in using film production within the scope and difficulties of the period, when America was fraught with anxiety over numerous foreign communist threats to her security.

### **America's Fractured Republic**

However, within the nation of America itself the unmentioned issue of that era was not only discrimination against the Jewish population of America, (a Jew could not run for presidential election until the regulation changed recent history) but discrimination prevailed against the progeny of America's own slave population, supposedly born free since the end of the Abraham Lincoln's Civil War (1865) and yet although born on American soil, they had remained unacknowledged and discriminated against, along with others of Hispanic extraction. While DeMille's slaves marched out of Egypt on the wide vision panoramic screens numbering over six hundred thousand souls, the Black voices in American segregated black church gatherings welded together throughout the land and united under Martin Luther King to claim their rightful place and dignity in the land of the free. Ten years after DeMille's epic presentation, of *The Ten Commandments*, America's democratic Electoral College would be called to face the colour bar. The shining white marble pillars and buildings of mighty Rome and the exotic elegance of wealthy Egypt, which also signified the dignity of the White House Washington and Capitol Hill, served as historic reminders that glorious nations court disintegration from within the state through the vanities of stiff-necked social classification. To whom do the people belong, Pharaoh or God, asks DeMille, in *The Ten Commandments*. The words echo through the modern media global village and present to the twenty-first century a nightmare image of the world's *agorá* trembling at the feet of the god Mammon.

*The Ten Commandments*, in Technicolour, (1956) directed by Cecil DeMille produced by Paramount, is still in circulation through DVD video private viewing.

Another of DeMille's movies was *Samson and Delilah*, (1949) for the Paramount Studio's production of the year starring Victor Mature and Hedy Lamarr. The film emphasised Victor Mature's masculine physique that stood at over six feet tall, and pictured the hero defending, with drawn sword a fainting blonde Angela Lansbury. Hedy Lamarr was the glamorous and treacherous Philistine femme fatale. The composition of alluring sexual attraction riveted audiences' tense nervous attention and aroused sexual voyeurism which was stimulated through male and female interplay versus evil of the earlier wealthy Phoenician or Roman empires. This scenario established the blue print of Hollywood's box-office success. Investors, when assured of the expertise of the directors and production house, bought shares and invested in forthcoming productions.

### **Spartacus and Kirk Douglas**

The Classical movie *Spartacus* (1960) was the vision of the director, producer and star Kirk Douglas, who proposed the film to Universal Studios through Bryna Films, his own production company.<sup>144</sup> Douglas was in peak muscular form, and apart from being the producer he played the slave hero, Spartacus, who rebelled against Roman tyranny and defended the freedoms of Rome's enslaved multitudes in the year, 73-71 CE.<sup>145</sup> The film narrative is based on this history.

National and international politics of secular affairs intrude on the creative processes of film production. *Spartacus* had the misfortune to commence production when international political affairs threatened America and the political image of the White House.

### **Geopolitical Concerns that Affected Eisenhower's Post War America**

A review of the 1960s political events clarifies the circumstances that faced Kirk Douglas during his production of *Spartacus*.

America had emerged victorious from World War II, and rested in idyllic family life, based on new born Christianity and home reconstruction, by analogy the symbolism of Roman family strength. American entrepreneurship expanded from small business enterprises into large productive corporate concerns and boomed on the discovery of oil in Texas. The disturbing factor came from distant frontiers where America's democratic alliances were threatened by the deterioration in international relations between post-war Communist Russia and the divided sectors of Berlin. Russia enclosed her Eastern sector behind a four meter high wall, barbed wire and killer dog guards. The great wall that separated West Berlin from East Berlin was constructed on 13 August 1961 and deconstructed thirty years later on 9 November 1989. Apprehension increased with news from the Far East and the Pacific Ocean territories aligned to America. In review previously the Japanese forces had bombed Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941, resulting in President Roosevelt's declaration of war in collaboration with the Allied forces of Britain and the English speaking free world on 8 December 1941. The Allied forces had won victory in Europe in June 1945, but the Japanese struggle continued and caused much suffering and death to many allied prisoners and civilians in its grasp. A decision was taken and on 6 August 1945 the first atomic bomb shattered Nagasaki and Hiroshima; its populations disappeared into an atomic cloud that rained down in ashes. Japan surrendered; hostilities ceased and America embraced Japan as an ally and financially supported industrial re-growth.

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<sup>144</sup> Cyrino 2005: 95

<sup>145</sup> USA Internal Security Law 24. August 1954, 68. Stat.775.50.USC 841-844.

### **Mao Tze Tung as the Chinese Communist leader**

This charismatic revolutionary changed the balance of power on mainland China and in the South East Pacific, offering billions of impoverished Chinese people a plan of national reconstruction. He jeered at the USA and the atomic bomb, calling it the *Paper Tiger*, because the use of such a weapon in warfare would doom the world to devastation.<sup>146</sup> Communist revolutions and aspirations shook the South East Asian Pacific, the Philippines and Indonesian islands, while in Europe the Cold War syndrome versus Communist Russia caused America to initiate censorship over the media industry under what John Foster Dulles termed the Communist Containment Act; President Eisenhower signed the Act into law on 24 August 1954.

Undoubtedly the Cold War and the Communist conflicts that haunted the aftermath of World War II in Europe and the Far East such as the Korean War, over the 35<sup>th</sup> Parallel and the rise of Mao Tze Tung, who was the Communist leader of China 1946 that drove the former Chinese war leader Chiang Kai Shek out of China to Taiwan in 1949, shook the western powers. Then followed the Korean War 1950-1953; Korea was previously occupied by Japan but with the defeat of Japan in 1945 China resumed possession of Korea, particularly north of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. The conflict against the Communist Chinese forces was difficult and dehumanising for American G.I's and other allied combined forces. United Nations settled an agreement in 1953 to end the war on the terms that America retains the territory south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and China to the north of that line. These considerations need to be taken into account as the cause of the fear of Communist domination over freedom and democracy; in addition the American Government spurred to intervene in the disastrous Vietnamese conflict of the subsequent 1970s.

### **Espionage**

The Chief of the FBI, Edgar J. Hoover, is seen in retrospect as a notorious figure in the USA affairs of state security. Hoover kept an eagle eye on the Labour Unions and the media broadcasts, but it was later disclosed that his methods of control were secretive and ruthless. The Act was also known McCarthyism, or HUAC (House of Un-American Activities Committee) authorised to control all American Media and Communication channels, whether in printed publications, radio broadcasts or films. Hollywood became a crippled industry, and prominent celebrities, authors, playwrights, screen-script writers, irrespective of public renown, were held in suspicion, suspension, black listed, or jailed, Winkler explains the implications this act had on Hollywood:

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<sup>146</sup> The Holy Bible: New International Version Isaiah 66:25 'And they will go out and look on the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me, their worm will not die nor will their fire be quenched.' (Descriptive of a nuclear blast).

As a result the United States continued on a programme of enforcing ideological orthodoxy by playing on public fears and by suppressing or intimidating those who opposed them, no matter how highly placed ... By the late 1950s HUAC was running out of control under leadership of McCarthy ...<sup>147</sup>

The author of the novel *Spartacus* was American novelist Howard Fast, whose publications had been banned for thirteen years and who was blacklisted under HUAC. Fast at his own expense published *Spartacus* and it was an immediate success, not only in the USA but on international markets. Kirk Douglas optioned the novel for cinematic adaptation and Universal Studios invested in its production. Similarly and unfairly another blacklisted screen-script writer was Dalton Trumbo, who was a former war correspondent with the USA Army. Kirk Douglas appointed him as screen script writer of *Spartacus*. Douglas was suspiciously viewed by HUAC and that body persistently censored the production of *Spartacus* during shooting in progress,<sup>148</sup> and resulted in the change of directorship from Anthony Mann, to the highly experienced film director, Stanley Kubrick. The Producer (Douglas), director (Kubrick) and Universal Studios Management were subject to many hours of sometimes acrimonious debates on how to extract the essence of the story to film. Not only had the limitations of censorship to be considered but also Universal Studios, which held the final veto, as they struggled for control over the film's presentation and message. Cooper notes that:

Instead of Fast's visionary hero, who through the force of his charismatic personality and military genius, was able to weld an amorphous mass of 'slaves, deserters and riff-raff' which managed to defeat nine of Rome's best trained armies and nearly toppled the Republic, the film presents us with a good man and capable leader to whom everything seems to come easy...<sup>149</sup>

Further to this frustration:

Because of this difference between book and film, some admirers of the latter believed that cuts imposed by Universal Pictures and the Catholic Church's Legion of Decency had severely reduced its image from giant to midget.<sup>150</sup>

*Spartacus* presented spectacular scenes, some of which were filmed in the harsh desert of Libya, where slaves struggled under the agony of the Roman whip and inhuman oppression. (This is analogous to recent Hebrew persecution under Hitler's German super state regime.) The historical

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<sup>147</sup> Winkler 2006: 72

<sup>148</sup> Cooper 2006: 56-64

<sup>149</sup> Cooper 2006: 15

<sup>150</sup> Cooper 2006: 15

hero Spartacus was leader of a rebellion, which originally flared up in Sicily in 73 CE, (he was finally killed by sword in 71 CE) but in film artistic license he is taken captive and crucified. The film message implies that the legend of Spartacus opened the doors of freedom to mankind despite hardship and death. In contrast to the captive slaves of Rome, were the aristocrats of the Empire played by England's top professional theatre stars, among the names were, Sir Lawrence Olivier, as the Roman senator Crassus, Jean Simmons as Varinia, Charles Laughton as senator Gracchus, Peter Ustinov as the slave trader Lentulus Batiatus, Tony Curtis plays Antoninus, who escaped from his slave master Crassus' intention to reduce him as his homosexual ploy. John Gavin played Julius Caesar. The flawless English pronunciation and comportment of these stars contrasted sharply with the American élite.

Douglas' efforts in producing *Spartacus* meant that shooting was frequently suspended to satisfy many critical voices. The expenses rose above twelve million dollars and exceeded the cost and budget of Universal Studios. Stanley Kubrick, in retrospect disowned the film as the worst in his canon of films when he stated:

*Spartacus* ... was the only film that I did not have control over, and which I feel, was not enhanced by the fact. It all really just came down to the fact that there are thousands of decisions that have to be made, and that if you don't make them yourself, and if you are not on the same wavelength as the people who are making them, it becomes a very painful experience.<sup>151</sup>

The intimate film sequences were shot in controlled studio settings at Universal Studios, while the famous battle scene that involved 8,500 Spanish trained troops was shot outside Madrid; that is to say, the battle of Metapontum.<sup>152</sup>

Douglas as a creative actor, artist and businessman, reacted strongly against, what millions of Americans considered a denial of personal choice and, therefore, the loss of enshrined freedom of speech and expression. Douglas produced *Spartacus* at a cost of twelve million dollars and was frequently forced to cut or edit out scenes, which censors considered detrimentally critical of the Communist Containment Act.

Nevertheless, *Spartacus*, as a film on the slave rebellion on 171 CE spoke by association of ideas of the predicament that people across the globe felt that the Cold War had pushed them into a narrow space without freedom. *Spartacus* impacted on the American conscience and remains in DVD circulation to this day.

Cinema was and continues to be recognised as a powerful media tool to orchestrate political electoral changes that turn the tide of human societies over entire nations and affect the global village.

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<sup>151</sup> Winkler 2006: 4

<sup>152</sup> Duncan 2006:29

Douglas favoured *Spartacus* as an example of freedom from oppression based on his fundamental belief in the rights of democracy and the independence of the state of Israel as the hostage nation in an enemy camp recovering from the slaughter of the Nazi holocaust of 1939-1945. The Palestinian Brotherhood argued that the return of the Jews to Palestine funded by American money displaced the Palestinian people. The result was conflict in Palestine, which was a British-held territory until the final declaration of the State of Israel (1948). Such were the geo-political fears that fanned HUAC and its censorship of media, writers and film stars.

On the occasion of the debut of *Spartacus* in 1960 the public formed an Anti-Communist barricade round the theatre. But that night Jack Kennedy, as President Elect, overturned the communist cold war discrimination when he crossed that picket line and exercised his right to freedom of choice. Kubrick mounted the name of the blacklisted screen script writer Dalton Trumbo, and it is sad to read that Trumbo humbly said to Douglas 'Thank you for giving me my name back.'<sup>153</sup>

Apart from the anti-communist aspersions, Douglas was discriminated against as a Jew. Arthur Miller similarly was another famous author and playwright of the time, who exposed anti-Semitic discrimination in the USA in his novel, *Focus*. Douglas faced similar undercurrents against his integrity. To add to the criticism against *Spartacus* the American Committee for Decency and Christian standards objected to the homosexual seduction scene of 'snails' or 'oysters,' the dialogue of Crassus' seduction innuendo to Antoninus, as a 'matter of taste.' The scene was explicit in disclosing that the immorality in Roman politics with homosexuality was an accepted norm. Edgar J. Hoover, who was Head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and was known in USA government circles to be a cross-dresser and that he maintained a homosexual relationship with his assistant chief. The episode ('snails and oysters') was censored out of the film, when undoubtedly some secret eye saw this as a subversive threat to Hoover. The scene was neatly incised on behalf of the hidden homosexual voice by the American Committee for Decency.

On completion of shooting the film had to pass through the editing hands of the Universal Studios authority. Cooper relates that covert censorship damaged the historical content:

At the same time that almost all of *Spartacus's* historically significant actions were being eliminated, almost all the reactions to them were eliminated as well. These cuts not only reduced the film's dramatic impact but in some cases also seriously damaged its internal logic ...<sup>154</sup>

And with regard to the unique music score of ancient music composed of lost musical sounds of antiquity by composer Alex North, Cooper writes that North was still on the scene and protested against the damage the cuts were doing to his music cues in the following scathing telephone message:

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<sup>153</sup> Cf. Shakespeare *Othello* Act 3 Sc 3 155-161: Iago: Who steals my purse steals trash . . . / But he that filches from me my good name / Robs me of that which not enriches him, / And makes me poor indeed.

<sup>154</sup> Cooper 2006: 34

This complete disregard and disrespect for me and for my contribution by persons not qualified on any artistic level [are] an insult to my abilities. The illogical picayune cuts force me to suggest you hire a butcher and remove my name from screen credits.<sup>155</sup>

Despite these setbacks *Spartacus* won four Oscar awards for best cinematography, which was collected by Russel Metty, another for costume design and colour awarded to Arlington Valles and Bill Thomas, Best Supporting Actor, Peter Ustinov, and an Oscar to the team of four for décor and colour designs namely, Golitzen, Orbon, Gausman, and Julia Heron. Alex North was nominated for his musical score. On distribution and release *Spartacus* was the biggest box office success that Hollywood had ever had up to 1960. The restored version on DVD is currently rated five out of ten best films within the Classical genre.<sup>156</sup>

Following the slave rebellion under Spartacus in the last decade before Christianity, Octavianus Caesar Augustus rose to power on the defeat of Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra VII of Egypt in Alexandria in 30 BCE; he ruled Rome's vast empire and died in the first Christian century of 14 CE after an illustrious reign. The epic success of *Spartacus* was followed with the Hollywood epic film<sup>157</sup> *Ben-Hur*, a saga set in 26 CE at a time when Jerusalem was under Roman rule and jurisdiction. The family of the name Ben-Hur became victims to Roman authority, when the newly appointed Governor Gratus imprisoned Ben-Hur and his mother and sister who, as destitutes, are finally released from jail as wandering lepers. The film follows Ben-Hur's life as a galley slave and his final escape and return to defend his honour and redeem his mother and sister.

The last film in the genre of Late Classical Civilization within the epoch of 1959-1969 was based on the life of the Egyptian Pharaoh, Cleopatra VII, the last Ptolemy to rule Egypt as Queen, having secured Julius Caesar as her consort, and on his assassination, she seduced his General, Marcus Antonius, who she enthroned beside her as lord over all Egypt. *Cleopatra*, (1963) was a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox production and Joseph. L. Mankiewicz<sup>158</sup> was the director. Under the creative direction of Mankiewicz the film budget changed from its \$2 million dollar production to \$44 million dollar production, the most expensive film of the Classical genre. The romance between the two actual historical characters requires no retelling as the history of their tumultuous love life is legendary in its epic of battles, love, and passion, political intrigue complicated within an eternal triangle of Anthony's marriage to Octavia, the sister of the most powerful man in the Roman Empire, Octavius Caesar. The film starred the greatest ciné actors of the day in Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, and before production was over the actress Cleopatra was the 'beloved' of the actor Marcus Antonius and their

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<sup>155</sup> Cooper 2006: 34

<sup>156</sup> Note must be taken of the fact that the renewal and release of the 1990 version of *Spartacus* met many technical difficulties - according to IMDB the film quality used the 33 mm Super 70 Technirama format, had deteriorated and was unusable. Therefore the studio reverted to the black and white film and imposed the new coloration thereon. The actors' lines and voices had to be re-dubbed, but Sir Lawrence Olivier had died. Joan Plowright suggested his impersonator's voice for dubbing.

<sup>157</sup> Cyrino 2005: 59

<sup>158</sup> Cyrino 2005: 139

twentieth century love affair was, according to world newspaper media of the time, as tumultuous on and off the screen as that of Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt.

In the early 1950s, the American film industry faced a tough economic challenge, *as it was starting to lose viewers by the millions, who stayed home to watch television.*

Yet the movie studios refused to surrender to the little living room box, and resolved to lure audiences back with bigger wide-screen images, brighter Technicolour hues and louder stereophonic sound.<sup>159</sup>

Rome emerged from World War II as the home of the Italian film industry that released new films and beautiful young Italian stars. The centre of Rome's film production was Cinecittà, where entire films were produced, or alternatively, scenic spectacular was shot elsewhere retaining Cinecittà as a base. One of the greatest and unrepeatable movies of 1964 was *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, a remarkable film based on a portion of the history from Edward Gibbon's (1737-1794) *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; which featured the reign of Commodus,<sup>160</sup> who ascended as Emperor of Rome at nineteen years of age, (180 CE) with the temperament of a petulant egotistical adolescent, who squandered the reserves and power of Rome until he was assassinated. For this ambitious enterprise under the production of Samuel Bronston, the façade of the Roman Forum with the speakers Rostrum and Triumphant Causeway was reconstructed. Bronston queried his chief consultants:

Executive Associate producer Michael Waszynski, on the artistic and technical problems queried if they could re-create the Forum as it was at the height of its grandeur. When they said they could ... Bronston made one of the most dramatic decisions in film history – he authorised them to construct on the plains of Las Matas, sixteen miles from the Bronston Studios in Madrid, the Forum, as no living person had seen it since before Alaric swept over Rome 15 centuries ago. He made it clear that it was not to be merely another gigantic film set but a full scale reproduction that Commodus himself would recognise were he suddenly to come to life.<sup>161</sup>

The film set that re-created Rome remains standing as it was constructed under the direction of Anthony Mann. William Durant writes the following:

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<sup>159</sup> Cyrino 2005: 47 (Cyrino attributes this quotation to Solomon 2001: 13, 214)

<sup>160</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 4.97-112

<sup>161</sup> Durant 2009:141-143

Bronston was reluctant to order it to be demolished. It stands there, a Ninth Wonder of the Cinematic World, a place of pilgrimage ... [people] blink in awe at the Rome of Commodus shimmering in the sun of Spain to this day.<sup>162</sup>

*The Fall of the Roman Empire*, exceeded budget and the poor box-office returns bankrupted the Samuel Bronston Studios which were liquidated.

Classical movie attraction petered out after 1965 and productions ceased until recent years with extraordinary success in mythical movies like *Lord of the Rings* and *Titans* released in September 2000, then *Gladiator*, released in December 2000, which was produced by Ridley Scott, and world acclaim and a sold-out box office. The message was clear the audience hungered for the masculine super hero, who took up the challenge for the impoverished multitudes against overwhelming odds and corruption. The audience longed for the return of the muscular statuesque hero, who had vanished from the political arena of democratic western platforms over the last fifty years of the twentieth century,<sup>163</sup> drowned beneath a flood of apathetic voices in an emasculated world. An example of this negative syndrome was the epic film failure *The Good Shepherd* (2007) produced by Robert de Niro and starring Matt Damon and Angelina Jolie, based on the Central Intelligence Agency's conspiratorial efforts and failure to defend western democracy. In brief, the film aptly presented to the world the image of a lost champion (*Ulysses*) and the decline of western ideals.

### **Gladiator 2000**

Then Hollywood presented super heroes in the *Gladiator*, on super-sonic screen in mortal Roman combat.<sup>164</sup> The premise shows the wise and stoic Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180 CE by philosophy a stoic) the watchful ruler over *Pax Romana*, maintaining the norther borders against invasion by foreign barbarian Germanic tribes.<sup>165</sup> Marcus Aurelius is remembered as a wise councillor who held peace and improved the surplus of the Roman treasury. He fathered five daughters but only one son, Commodus. Their mother died and the children's home life had little attention from an Emperor occupied with affairs of state, with that the eldest girl Lucilla attempted to mother her siblings but Commodus demanded loving attention to the extent that he sought incestuous relationships with each of his five sisters that demonstrated signs of insanity. Fictitiously on screen Aurelius preferred Maximus his military general to be his successor to the imperial throne, but resentful Commodus embraced his father in a suffocating clasp of death. For Rome and the Empire the

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<sup>162</sup> Durant 2009: 143

<sup>163</sup> Pervasive USA administration was heralded by the assassination of President Kennedy on 22 November 1963 and came as a shock to the democratic western world.

<sup>164</sup> Winkler 2004.

<sup>165</sup> Marcus Aurelius ruled from 161-180 CE and followed the Stoic Philosophy which immured him in disciplined conduct toward duty to the Empire; the fiscal reserves of Rome flourished during his Praetorship and ultimately as Emperor

reign of Commodus is extravagant and profligate. He imprisoned and enslaved Maximus. The film is action packed as Maximus revenges himself on Commodus, who confiscates the property of Maximus and kills his wife and son. The statuesque physiques of masculinity in deadly combat in the arena of the Colosseum appealed to audiences world-wide; and replenished the famine of the lost hero image which, in semiotics symbolises the potency of the nation. Martin Winkler's edited compilation of writers on the film *Gladiator*, includes Cyrino, who in Chapter Nine enumerates various elements of the film that employ the images of symbolic values of democratic culture that communicate and reflect within the media of the period in which it is produced. In *Gladiator* she finds that the film echoes the national enthusiasm for *Athletics as Spectacle*.

Most superstar athletes are free agents, idolized by their admirers and celebrated by the media as individual icons separate from any team, further evidence of the trend from even super group or even corporate identities. These highly paid athletes are among the most influential figures in modern society, with the capacity to affect people in what they buy, eat and wear on the strength of their commercial endorsements.<sup>166</sup>

Peter Rose is another critic who writes on aspects of the film *Gladiator* edited by Winkler. In Chapter Ten Rose defines how the film communicates the new trends in American and world politics and that Ridley Scott lifted the narrative of the film *Gladiator* from Bronston's failed *Fall of the Roman Empire*,<sup>167</sup> but in 2000 *Gladiator* was a box office success and not a failure, because:

The specific appeal of ancient Rome is the widespread perception that it offers a well-documented model of the rise and fall of the most successful empire in history, and therefore carries the most useful lessons about contemporary empires.<sup>168</sup>

Further to the above quotation Rose states:

Not only had the people of Rome never held power, but the need to end corruption first opens a wide temporal and political gap between the people's empowerment and the process by which this unspecified corruption must be removed.<sup>169</sup>

*Cleopatra* was released in 1963, and projected a monarchical rule (in symbolism supreme power vested in one dictator). Disturbing geo-political influences were escalating in Vietnam and Americans were encouraged to volunteer, (1964-1966) the voluntary military service changed to the military draft, and the average age of the American G.I. was twenty-one years of age. By 1968 the

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<sup>166</sup> Cyrino 2004:137-8

<sup>167</sup> Bronston died in California in 1994.

<sup>168</sup> Rose 2004: 152

<sup>169</sup> Rose 2004:158.

Vietnam crisis had reached a peak with over 500,000 troops involved in the struggle and one in ten killed or wounded for life. The dissenters assembled in the streets of Chicago at the time of the Republican Convention in order to protest and voice dissent against American citizens serving on foreign soil.<sup>170</sup> Further to the assassination of John F. Kennedy, only four years later in 1968, his brother Robert Kennedy was likewise assassinated in Los Angeles, having just successfully won a Presidential round of California elections for the next presidency. He was mortally wounded on the 5 June 1968 and died twenty-four hours later. His assassin was a young Islamic Sirhan-Sirhan, who had access to the hotel lobby in Los Angeles. Events of this kind, during the 1960s in the USA pointed to the under-currents within the State. The protest against the war in Vietnam turned into street conflicts and running battles with police and security. Eight thousand draft dodgers were committed to jail for ten years and fined \$10,000 dollars for breach of peace. The Presidency fell under Nixon. Eventually Ford was elected President. The new policy granted clemency and freed the imprisoned conscientious and non-conforming objectors in 1974. The political climate of 1964-1976, was not conducive to films displaying Roman power and luxury. Scott Ridley's *Gladiator*, on the other hand, lifted its basic theme from Bronston's *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, at a time when the 1960s era was grandad's past and exposed skeletons in locked cupboards, which appealed to the young generation as rebels, who envisioned valour against authority, while simultaneously the film bridged the generation gap demonstrating combat against imperial injustice and totalitarian hegemony over human rights. Audience memory and nostalgia identified with the motives of the struggle.

## SUMMARY

Chapter Three discussed Hollywood's great film producers with the names of Cecil B. de Mille, Joseph Mankiewicz, Kirk Douglas and the superlative star of *The Ten Commandments*, Charlton Heston, who was one of the many names matched to those of the renowned producers and directors. Sparkling personalities played leading roles and drew crowds. Then suddenly the ephemeral magic on the supersonic screen disappeared only to re-emerge in epic genre films trends some forty years later (2006). Amenábar and his production team methodically prepared all aspects of the *Agorá* production and work commenced in Malta in March 2008.

Amenábar examined the above mentioned Classical movies and the type of content that could be useful to his proposed Late Classical genre production of *Agorá*. In contradiction to the above principles he ignored the successful ingredients of film narrative when he based his story on the female philosopher and astrophysicist Hypatia of Alexandria. The year was 2006, six years after *Gladiator*'s debut; the world's financial markets felt the autumn coming down on liberal investors. Amenábar had canvassed for a budget of \$70 million dollars centred on a heroine instead of a hero.

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<sup>170</sup> The political climate was tense as the J.F. Kennedy assassination was widely held to be a 'flawed Federal investigation.'

Spanish filmmaker Amenábar's reputation outweighed the risks of conventional popular box office returns as he proposed a modern script with a provocative narrative based on the courage of a woman, who possessed, if not man's muscular prototype, a keen intellectual equality and personal integrity that led to everyman's respect of her as a 'brother philosopher.'

By the year 2006 the universal wave of financial depression had become reality; Amenábar could not achieve the maximum funding he required, nevertheless, an amount of \$50 million dollars set the production into shooting mode in Malta in March of 2008.

The following Chapter Four discovers Amenábar in his production procedures, and the results of the last great epic film *Agorá* within the classical genre.

## CHAPTER 4: AMENÁBAR'S FILM *AGORÁ*

Keith Hatcher, the film critic, writes of Amenábar:

He differs from most other Spanish directors inasmuch as he does not ingratiate himself on pet themes...but ventures out into other spheres and has no fears about embarking into phantasmagorical, psychological or even the quasi-surrealist.<sup>171</sup>

The film *Agorá* is unique from Amenábar's other films produced in recent times, because his inspiration for this film did not come from the mysterious, psychological or phantasmagorical but from astronomy, when for the first time he viewed the starry skies of the Southern hemisphere and determined that astronomy would be the major theme of his next project. However, astronomical research led to the history of Late Classical Alexandria with its dramatic clashes of the pagan versus Christian conflicts.

Amenábar introduces his home audiences to *Agorá* on two different DVD discs specifically designed for the viewers, who cannot attend theatres and alternatively enjoy home entertainment through DVD private viewing. One of these discs is released from Amenábar's *Himenóptero Company* and *Focus Productions*, through his studio in Spain, where Amenábar speaks in Spanish with English subtitles for international markets. He gives a personal introduction and delivers a scene by scene commentary on the production of *Agorá*. He explains that the costs of the recordings were made possible through a gift of funds and recorded assistance from *Blu-ray* (BD) unique discs.<sup>172</sup> The Spanish recorded disc was released primarily for the audiences of Spain and Europe (and Spanish speaking countries as in South America), which were traditionally Roman Catholic, (prior to the Protestant 16<sup>th</sup> century reform) and stem from the former totalitarian Holy Roman Empire. The Catholic Empire was the root of Europe's family traditions that shared a closer association to the Roman Catholic cultural heritage in Europe than those of families dispersed throughout modern secular western societies.<sup>173</sup> The second disc release of *Agorá* is the *Paramount Production* DVD for

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<sup>171</sup> WEB3 (accessed 2015/01/18)

<sup>172</sup> *Blu-ray* (BD) The name is derived from the underlying technology, which utilizes a blue-violet laser to read and write data. The name is a combination of 'Blue' (blue-violet laser) and 'Ray' (optical ray). The format was developed in the USA to enable recording, rewriting and playback of high definition video (HD) as well as storing large amounts of data. The format offers more than five times the storage capacity of traditional DVDs and can hold up to 25GB on a single player disc and 50GB on a dual-player disc. See WEB6.

<sup>173</sup> The German-Italian alliance of WW II imposed limitations on the Vatican City and Pope Pius XII became a virtual prisoner within its walls, which were the centre of European Roman Catholic history; during the war family units were scarred and broken; Europe's western generations rejected failed religious norms in the aftermath of conflict. The Trumpet: article The Pope's War of October 2009 (Pope Benedict XVI) 'Not only is modern Europe politically fractious, but it also seems incurably secular.' WEB7. Further to this argument, post WW II Europe was split between two political camps, half of Europe, which included Germany, was under Marxist atheist Communism and Berlin was divided between democracy of the west and beyond the dividing wall of Check-point Charlie was the impoverished totalitarian state of Stalin's rule. Europe was indeed fractured.

home entertainment throughout the English-speaking western hemisphere and that disc does not give the producer's introduction or his commentary on the film production.

### **The Producer's Concept, Responsibilities and Treatment**

Amenábar, in his recorded commentary explains that his inspiration and concept in making *Agorá* occurred when he was on holiday in Malta,<sup>174</sup> from where he saw the southern hemisphere for the first time and became obsessed with the starry skies of the blazing Milky Way and the Southern Cross. The panorama of the night skies presented a view of the heavens that he had not previously seen from the northern hemisphere of Europe, thereafter, astrophysics became a passion. He consulted Carl Sagan as his advisor and mentor; Sagan's television series *Cosmos*, released in the 1980s, stirred his enthusiasm. According to Amenábar, further readings into the history of astrophysics led him and his partner, screen-script writer, Mateo Gil, to Egypt in order to research into the lives of the Classical and late Classical astronomers. The original first script he wrote included the great thinkers from the Greek Socrates of the fifth century CE to such men as Galileo of Italy, fifteenth century CE, Isaac Newton of England, seventeenth century CE, and Albert Einstein of Germany, twentieth century CE, who, being Jewish by birth and faith, fled the Nazi pogroms of Germany of 1935-1945 CE. Amenábar states that *Agorá* in a way contradicts itself because it commenced as a film on the cosmos, then changed to be about the great scientific thinkers as mentioned, and changed yet again to be an intimate reflection on the history of Hypatia, and finally became a film on her entire generation.

Amenábar further explains that finding the right title for the movie defeated him until the producer, Fernando Bovaira, suggested that they search for a familiar word in the script, and found the Greek word 'agorá' (the market). They were on holiday in the Adriatic Sea at the time and significantly the boat they had rented was named *Agorá*. Amenábar points out that shapes play an important part in the movie. The word *agorá* has the central vowel O, which is a circular shaped vowel and translated into the insignia of the fiery sun. Amenábar uses shapes and symmetry in the imagery of the film because the ancient philosophers believed that the 'perfect circle' forms the dominant equation of universal law throughout the infinitude of the cosmos.

According to Amenábar, the script was commenced in 2006, and required two years preparation and research, as well as canvassing investors for funding towards a budget estimated at seventy million dollars. The movie was made on location entirely in Malta during fifteen weeks from March to

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The current secular age promotes an existential life-style as posited by French philosopher, author and dramatist, Jean Paul Sartre: 'Without GOD everything is possible.' The 1930's decade of Sartre's existential 'possibilities' became World War II (1939-1945) in which millions lost their lives.

<sup>174</sup> Malta, an independent island, ally of the European Common Market, is situated in the Mediterranean north of Algeria and just south of Sicily. An island of pre-Classical and Classical history and Greek and Roman influence. During the twentieth century Malta became a popular summer holiday resort. The island retains a Roman Catholic heritage with splendid cathedrals and churches to be found on the twin islands of Malta and Gozo.

June of 2008. *Agorá* was presented at the Cannes Film Festival in 2009, after editing and dubbing at technical facilities in Egypt and Morocco.

Amenábar explains that his initial intention in *Agorá* was to focus audience reception on the magnificence of the cosmos as told through his reconstruction of the fictitious life of Hypatia, who, as an empirical astrophysicist in Alexandria of 391 CE, becomes alive on film screen and brings the late fourth century epoch to the audience in such a way as to lead them to an interest in astronomy.

Amenábar admits that in this movie he did not compose the music but called on Dario Marianelli to originate orchestration for the background sound of the starry heavens. Marianelli's composition introduces the film with haunting tones that are synonymous to the music of the spheres. The shades of music are augmented by the heavier beats of the Roman-like drums,<sup>175</sup> which are widely used in tense sequences, setting the rhythm of penultimate climax in sonorous dramatic depth. Solomon notes that ancient music and the sounds of ancient classical or late classical music had been lost in the course of time, but that recently some unearthed fragments of musical instruments and chords gave a clearer understanding of what used to be heard, Marianelli used these lost chords in his composition for the cosmos of *Agorá*. Drum sounds and percussion was used in the most ancient of biblical times to induce altered consciousness, illusion and frenzy. According to expert Layne Redmond scenes were etched on walls in a Neolithic shrine in Turkey from 5600 CE and in antique times as early as 3500 CE and women drummers, usually the high priestess, followed by her novitiates and worshippers, led the troupe into subterranean labyrinths:

The drum was the means our ancestors used to summon the goddess and also the instrument through which she spoke. The drumming priestess was the intermediary between divine and human realms. Aligning herself with sacred rhythms, she acted as a summoner and transformer, invoking divine energy and transmitting it to the community.<sup>176</sup>

Amenábar decided that, unlike his previous movies that commence with black screens and voice over, *Agorá* should locate the audience in the cosmos, from where the world is viewed as the blue and white orb that revolves in the darkness of infinitude. The original version shown at the Cannes Festival (2009) situated the audience in space for about three minutes and displayed the

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<sup>175</sup> The background of Roman drum music is heard in the film *Spartacus* starring Kirk Douglas and Peter Ustinov. And the Roman drum is extensively used in *Ben-Hur* starring Jack Hawkins and Charlton Heston. The unforgettable scene is where Jack Hawkins, as the Captain over the slave rowers on the war-ship, commands the playing of the drums to match the rhythm demanded of the rowers from slow to fast, to climax ram and attack, in sea combat. To the Romans drums were significant and practical for many uses and occasions and were part of the triumphal marches to the Roman Forum. WEB8.

<sup>176</sup> On drummers see WEB8. In this reference the renowned drum master Layne Desmond discusses how ancient priestesses achieved altered consciousness by adept advanced percussion as much as 37 beats cycles against a pulse of four. Pages 3/14 and 4/14.

cosmos in its gaseous irradiance along the Milky Way, as the film's credits roll across the screen and planet Earth moves into view and then angles off to the left; Amenábar further says that his intention in the establishing frame is to render 'homage to classical movies about Rome,' however, he states that the scene was edited down from three minutes, for a world where, 'poetic sensibilities are out of fashion.'<sup>177</sup>

In Egypt Amenábar found that the works and lives of the world's leading philosophers, scientists, and astrophysicists, are repetitively destroyed through ignorance and political elimination that silences opposition and empirical enquiry throughout the centuries. Amenábar and Mateo Gil then turned their attention to the life of Hypatia and her devotion to mathematics and scientific thought, which led to her final end in martyrdom as a 'witch.'

Apart from gathering authentic historical data on the ancient background of a proposed project for the script-writing of classical film genre, Amenábar had to liaise with the stars and actors he wished to acquire to play the historical characters of the past. Accordingly added to this were the pre-planning and choreography of crowd scenes and the number of persons to be hired in this respect; Amenábar states that on some days this figure amounted to between five hundred to just over a thousand extras. The wardrobe section of the film is another specialised area, as film-making opens many doors to careers, to mention but a few - the employment of builders and carpenters for set crafts, animation and art design, make-up and hairdressing, riggers, grips and cranes, technical and studio operations for cameras, lighting and microphones for sound, actual film producing and the post production, as well as the organization and cooperation between the producer and the municipal authorities of the place wherein the production is to take place. In Amenábar's instance his site of choice was Malta, as already mentioned. However, Malta has developed as a friendly film-making centre for twenty-five years.<sup>178</sup>

### **The Lecture Hall in the Serapeion complex: Scenes from the first structure**

*Agorá's* opening frame locates the audience in the stratosphere amid the stars, from where the camera zooms down into the lecture hall of the Serapeion. Amenábar's way of introducing a twenty-first century audience into the environment at the end of the fourth century in Alexandria Egypt 391 CE is typified in the Serapeion Lecture Hall, where Hypatia is the centre of attention as the mentor of her disciples; she demonstrates and questions them on the Ptolemaic astronomical geocentric theory. The Serapeion lecture halls usually held about twenty students, and the scene reveals the social echelons of Greco-Roman social order. The élite class includes Hypatia as the lecturer and authority

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<sup>177</sup> These are Amenábar's own words and he does not mention the titles of the films that he is referring to, but a many great movies were based on classical themes, to mention a few: *Ben-Hur*, *Spartacus*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *The Gladiators* (see attachment on Jack Hawkins in films based on Greek and Roman themes).

<sup>178</sup> The Malta Film Festivals and Industry, the information is published by the Maltese Film Commission.

on astrophysics. Amenábar's intention was to arouse the interest of the cinema audience to astronomy. The episode of the lecture also serves as an introduction to the key characters, when Hypatia calls on two of her students, namely Orestes, who was a Roman aristocrat, then on Synesius, who was an aristocrat from the province of Cyrene, and thirdly her slave attendant Davus, who obediently kneels down to retrieve her dropped handkerchief. Orestes (of Roman descent) and Synesius (of Greek descent) bear aristocratic and confident comportment in their replies to Hypatia's questions; in contrast, the actions of her slave Davus, are servile, when he bends down to retrieve the dropped article a second time, Hypatia addresses him in a peremptory manner saying, 'No leave it.'

Amenábar states that he gave much thought on how a geocentric lecture might be given in that epoch, however, it is understood that Aristotelian empirical scientific demonstrations practised observation of physical phenomenon and then questioned cause, action and result;<sup>179</sup> this is the method Hypatia demonstrates in her lecture on the geocentric universal system when she drops the handkerchief. The students, holding their wax note pads, are seated on stone steps that form benches facing Hypatia. Hypatia teaches from a small raised dais, where she sits on the steps, when discussing the subject content with her disciples.

The décor and scenery of *Agorá* were thoroughly researched and production designs were created by Guy Hendrix Dyas and his team of set-design specialists; Amenábar has immersed his audience into the late Classical Age of Egypt through the recreation of this Egyptian mural art; and on that premise the film captures its theatre audience in a unique re-creation of the classic style of Egyptian artisans of thousands of years past; the pillars and the walls are beautifully decorated in panels, with green, blue and gold florals, birds, Egyptian winged guardian spirits and the masks of pharaohs on tall pillars. The décor of this scene shows elegant artistic beauty from the set-designer Guy Dyas, whose reconstruction of the Serapeion lecture hall transports the viewer into the uniformity of Egyptian culture and civilization. The experts, who are familiar with ancient architecture, will notice that the pillars in the scene are Egyptian temple pillars and not Greek Dorian or other,<sup>180</sup> [The Temple of Karnak] Massive columns, 33 feet in circumference and 69 feet high, exemplify the awe-inspiring proportions of Ammon's temple at Karnak. This part was built by two New Kingdom pharaohs. The decorations show kings making offerings.

The décor of the Egyptian bulbous pillars, in verisimilitude of Karnak, are carried through in several scenes of the Serapeion drama, with the result that the Egyptian artistic detail complements Amenábar's intention to place the audience into an epoch one thousand six hundred years back in time

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<sup>179</sup> Recent research into Aristotle's earliest work on biology and botany can be found in a publication by Professor Armand Guy Leroi, *How Aristotle invented Science*, this fascinating discussion is produced by the BBC and returns Leroi to *Aristotle's Lagoon* on the Greek island of Lesbos where Aristotle joined a friend after leaving Athens in 347 CE. Biology and botany were one of Aristotle's many subjects of research; his works included examination into logic, mathematics and astrophysics, psychology, politics economics, ethics, rhetoric, poetics, metaphysics, and medicine as a physician.

<sup>180</sup> Casson 1995: 116. Architectural styles see the temple of Karnak where the pillars are similar to those in the Serapeion of Amenábar's film *Agorá*

through movie-set recreations. Amenábar also contrives to use realistic artefacts from the distant past in some instances. Assisting in this important concept were the Visual Effects Supervisor Félix Berges, and Special Effects Supervisor, Chris Reynolds.

Amenábar has moulded the characters of Orestes, Synesius and Hypatia on existing historical characters but in the film they are fictitious models of their ancient counterparts. A film cannot be made according to historical chronology and therefore, in this film the character of Orestes, who was the Alexandrian Roman Prefect in 415 CE, was not Hypatia's student in Alexandria in 391 CE, when hypothetically he may have been in Rome and already a baptised Christian, which was obligatory for those who were serving dignitaries of government. Nevertheless, for the purpose of the film script Amenábar has merged Orestes with another character, namely, Hypatia's young student admirer, who courted her with his unwanted attentions. Synesius did exist as already discussed in Chapter Two in the *Letters from Synesius*, however, in the *Agorá* context he is extended beyond his actual life time, which some claim to have been 365-413 CE, because 'he disappeared from history in about 413 CE.'

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### **The Temple of Serapis**

Amenábar's enthusiasm towards Hypatia's Neoplatonic philosophy delves into Greek and Egyptian mythology in order to interpret their gods and superstitious beliefs to a twenty-first century secular audience; he accordingly moves the scene forward to the Serapeion temple of the god Serapis. Amenábar recalls that:

In this scene shot at the Serapeion, I wanted to show a pagan ceremony, with the same seriousness as a Christian service would be shown nowadays. Sometimes when we hear stories of ancient gods, it seems like science fiction, but it was serious for them, and I wanted the audience to experience the same feeling you get when attending a mass. Serapis was somewhere between the Egyptian god Apis and the Greek god Zeus. That scene with Serapis was very exciting for me because about one thousand six hundred years later, a god that had been practically forgotten, of whom only a few busts remain in the museum, was brought back to life and worshipped once again.<sup>182</sup>

The scene reflects the close association of Judaeo-Christian religious ceremonies that draw from ancient mythological religious rites in terms of traditional mitres, robes and rods. The camera shows three unroofed circles within the Serapeion complex that expose the sky by day and night; one circular opening is over the entrance gates to the Serapeion, the other is above the centre library roof allowing

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<sup>181</sup> Peter Brown, introductory comments to Bregman 1982.

<sup>182</sup> Amenábar's commentary on the DVD Blu-Ray disc.

in light and air, the third is over the head of the statue of Serapis in the temple section of the scene.<sup>183</sup> Amenábar recalls that he was emotionally excited about the re-creation of the pagan temple of Serapis. A quotation from *The Later Roman Empire* (22.16.12) by Ammianus Marcellinus gives a description of the Alexandrian Serapeion:

There are besides in the city temples pompous with lofty roofs, conspicuous among them is the Serapeion, which though feeble words merely belittle it, yet is so adorned with extensive columns and halls, with almost breathing statues, and a great number of other works of art, that next to the Capitolium, with which revered Rome elevates herself to eternity, the whole world beholds nothing more magnificent.<sup>184</sup>

The shot of the Serapeion in *Agorá* shows magnificent large doors adorned with rows of guardian goddesses with aquamarine and golden wings. The bolts of the door are above the heads of the priests, who stretch their arms upwards to open them. Beyond the doors large, stately pillars can be seen.

The visual effect and the re-construction of how the Serapeion temple may have appeared is an achievement of art and film-set construction. The buildings within the Serapeion complex appear to have a solid substance as if of real marble with large pillars, façades and domes. The costumes and ceremony accorded to the mythical god Serapis is realistic. The Egyptian priests in white robes and white helmets circle round the enormous statue of Serapis, chanting and swinging incense burners in sacrosanct solemnity. The High Priest Olympius steps forward and great doors with their golden winged goddesses open to allow Theon and other dignified senior male congregants to enter.<sup>185</sup> (The High Priest Olympius did exist at that time, and he is played here by actor John Durden). Olympius addresses the statue as:

God our father, lord of the universe, origin of all things, eternal force of the cosmos where everything has its beginning and everything its end, Almighty Serapis, Isis, Horus

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<sup>183</sup> Pollard and Reid 2006: 175-190. The ancients had some temples open to the sky, as in the Athens' Pantheon, but it is understood that in inclement weather a canvas tent roof covering was drawn across and closed over the opening to protect the temple and idols beneath; for example the Acropolis in Athens, where the statue of the goddess Athene stood exposed to the light of day but protected roofing was drawn closed in the event of inclement weather. The reason for this type of open circular exposure was to capture light on the statue of the god or goddess, particularly resplendent in high crowns of pure beaten gold. Artificial and mechanical devices, such as hidden mirrors were used to enhance the magnificence of light so as to awe the beholder with the resplendence of the god personified in the life-like statue. In *Agora* the roof is noticeably open and circular above the statue of Serapis allowing the exposure of sunlight on the great statue. 'A small window allowed a ray of sunlight to fall on the lips of the statue in a kiss of renewal. Hidden magnets suspended the image in the air, and the walls were believed to be covered with plates of gold, overlaid with silver and then bronze'. WEB10.

<sup>184</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus 22.16.12 tr. Rolfe 1982.

<sup>185</sup> The gender issue regarding male and female attendance in the Serapeion temples is to be discussed in following paragraphs.

Anubis and all you gods who enshroud us with your protection both in heaven and on earth...

At this point the camera crosses over the courtyard and the Serapeion temple is in the background, while the camera follows a slave into the Alexandrian Library

### **Amenábar's Library of Alexandria**

Amenábar explains that he considered the library of Alexandria to be of paramount importance to both the historical setting of the film story and the intellectual environment in which Hypatia lived during her lifetime of research and discourse.

We wanted to show what the library may have looked like at that time. If you visit the library ruins now you will not find evidence of book shelves; down in the basement area there are holes in the stone walls, but we know that there were codices and rolled papyruses[in storage].<sup>186</sup>

The reconstruction of the library at Alexandria is exemplary in its classical circular design, with a circular marble floor, surrounded with pillars arranged in groups of four sets of pillars one behind the other throughout the hall; between the pillars are the wooden triangular storage alcoves to hold the round rolls of papyrus scrolls. Here again Amenábar's motif of shapes is emphasised, the Romanesque circular design with circular floor and pillared columns, with light from above plays with the shapes of the circle and ellipse.<sup>187</sup> Davus enters and refers to a list of scrolls he must find.

Amenábar mounts the importance of the library of Alexandria as both the centre of learning and pagan worship. The collection of books or scrolls in the library went back several hundred years and was recognized to be of intrinsic financial value as the property of Pharaoh, who since 30 CE was the Emperor of Rome. Amenábar's aim was to give back to Alexandria her lost library in a film image of the departed day. The library in context was essential to the life of Theon and Hypatia; therefore, Amenábar's camera shots show Hypatia, Davus and Orestes in the library. The inference is that Hypatia may have been searching the tag titles, when intercepted by Orestes, who pays his unwanted attentions to her and embarrasses her. Orestes is overheard by Hypatia's slave Davus, who peers through the scrolls on the opposite side of the shelving. The scene serves to show modern audiences the architectural beauty of the edifice that excited the deserved praise from ancient historians, (Ammianus Marcellinus) and secondly the scene pays respect to the work of Callimachus in regard to the good order and title and number tagging of the thousands of scrolls, and lastly the scene sets the foreground to the tragic sequences that follow in rejected love and the destruction of the library.

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<sup>186</sup> Amenábar 2009 in his commentary on Blu -Ray disc.

<sup>187</sup> The circular opening may also be seen in an elliptical shape depending on the angle of the vision. See Manguel, 2006: 83, for an example of the Herzog August Wolfenbüttel Library as well as p.153 on Michelangelo's design for the Laurentian Library, with light from circular skylights of 1523 when under commission from Pope Clement.

Callimachus set a precedent that from his time to the present became fundamental to library organization, to quote:

In the second century and as a result of the Alexandrian summaries and collations an epistemological rule for reading was firmly established decreeing that ‘the most recent text replaces all previous ones.’<sup>188</sup>

Davus reads the tag-ends of the titles of the scrolls, this indicates that he is a literate slave, by contrast Medorus, who is Theon’s slave and a vacuous illiterate youth, who sits outside the library, scratching idly in the sand.

Guy Dyas has attempted to restore to modern audiences the magnificence of Alexandria’s library. Public libraries are taken for granted both then and now, but libraries were (and are) valuable depositories of ancient knowledge rescued from wars and change. Alexandria’s Library was originally conceived as the Pharaonic collector’s treasury since it was envisioned by Alexander the Great and constructed by Ptolemy Soter I and by his successors. The reason for Alexander’s attachment to knowledge was due to the fact that his father, King Philip the Great of Macedon, appointed Aristotle to educate his son. Aristotle in turn opened the books of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to young Alexander, who thereafter treasured Homer’s works. Secondly, it was in keeping with great kingdoms to value scribes and knowledge. The great Assyrian king and conqueror Ashurbanipal ordered that:

For the sake of the [distant] days he collated [the tablet] and [placed] it in his palace. Ashurbanipal directed Shadanu with the assistance of three helpers and the learned men of Borsippa to obtain all the precious tablets which are known to you and are not in Assyria ... No one shall withhold tablets from you, and if you see any tablet or written texts about which I have not written to you, and they are suitable for my palace, select [them] collect them and send [them to me].<sup>189</sup>

This excerpt, by analogy, demonstrates the value attached to written knowledge either on clay tablets, parchments or papyrus that were stored in temples or palaces and revered for the progress of civilization, governance and religious ideology of kingdoms; for these reasons Alexander the Great and Ptolemy Soter issued similar instructions to their officials in preceding centuries and as Greece fell to barbarians Alexandria became the last important library and centre of learning of the late Classical age.

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<sup>188</sup> Manguel 2006: 29

<sup>189</sup> Dunlap 1972: 15 refers to the discovery of the shattered clay tablets from the Royal Library of Nineveh, now housed in the British Museum as the *Kouyunjik Collection* (Kouyunjik) after the name of the small mound that for more than twenty-five centuries concealed the remnants of the royal library of Nineveh.(668-626 CE) The fragments of cuneiform clay tablets were translated by Sir Henry Rawlinson in London in 1860.

Synesius, who we see in the lecture hall, later visited Athens as a centre of learning and wrote to his brother that:

They do not understand Aristotle and Plato more than we do, yet they go among us as demi-gods among mules, because they have seen the Academy, the Lyceum and the Poecile where Zeno gave his lectures on philosophy, however, the Poecile no longer deserves its name for the proconsul had taken away all the images, and has thus humiliated these men's pretensions to learning.<sup>190</sup>

This brief excerpt reminds us that similar censorship or silencing of knowledge repeats in cycles with every change of political regime.<sup>191</sup>

Julius Caesar, when under attack in Alexandria set the Egyptian navy ships alight in order to defend his position at harbourage. However, the strong Etesian trade wind that blows annually from August to mid-October from north to north-west came up. The Egyptian navy attacked Caesar's naval position. He retaliated by setting fire to their ships, but the fire blew from the ships to the quayside warehouses that stored books and spread to the Royal Bruchheim Library. Alexandria lost her library and thousands of scrolls blazed in the gale. Mark Anthony promised to restore Cleopatra's lost library with copies from other centres.

The city continued to experience many disruptive intervals during the Egyptian peasant's rebellion in 176 CE, put down by Marcus Aurelius, and later the slaves revolt of 275 CE.<sup>192</sup> History relates that although some Emperors did deliberate damage to the library yet other Emperors ordered the Roman guard to protect the library as a valuable asset; and scrolls were often replaced by copies obtained from centres like Pergamum and Syracuse. In *Agorá* Hesequius (actor Charles Thake) declares: 'We should take great care of this library.' The advice is important to the sequence of the film in the episodes that follow. Recent history has experienced more damage to the records of antiquity by modern warfare in Baghdad than by ancient wars and feuds.<sup>193</sup> A Classical historian wrote that the Library of Alexandria was so well-known that nothing needed to be written down describing its buildings or proportions.<sup>194</sup> By the end of the fourth century CE the new generation of Alexandrians had adopted new religious perspectives and destroyed, the 'sacred' wisdom inscribed in ancient scrolls on Pythagorean trigonometry, Galen and Hippocrates's medical discoveries of the human anatomy, as well as the invaluable works of Aristotle and Claudius Ptolemy, together with geography of Eratosthenes and the physics of Archimedes. Thereafter, the Serapeion complex was

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<sup>190</sup> Synesius *Ep.* 54: 125-126 tr. Fitzgerald 1926

<sup>191</sup> Manguel 2006: 120. Library destructions on religiously intolerant orders include the Ancient Aztec archives, Iceland archives and many others.

<sup>192</sup> The Slaves Revolt in Egypt 275 CE that wrecked Alexandria.

<sup>193</sup> Destruction of Libraries and Museums in recent times: Baghdad, South African Universities, etc. and to quote sources and authority.

<sup>194</sup> Diodorus Siculus #.# tr. Oldfather 1989.

pillaged for its stone works in order to build dwellings or churches. Gradually, over the course of sixteen hundred years no trace of the Serapeion complex or its library could be found, so that the story of its actual existence was thought to be an unfounded myth. However, between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the foundations of the walls of the Serapeion were rediscovered, and excavations slowly uncovered fire-damaged structure from the dust of the past. A lecture on this period by Steven Kreis remarks that:

It was a master stroke on the part of Constantine the Great to make Christianity the favoured religion within the Roman world...Constantine's adoption of Christianity signalled the bankruptcy of classical humanism as a political creed that secular characteristic of the Roman Republic and the Augustan Age Christianity therefore signalled the abandonment of the religion of culture for what I would like to suggest became a new culture of religion.<sup>195</sup>

Recent archaeological excavations of the lost Alexandrian library testify to the passions of Christianity 391 CE that demolished the old empire to replace the new Roman world.

The set design by Dyas is faithful to historical record and the passing classical elegance of Egypt is restructured on screen for modern audiences as testimony to the pride and riches of Egypt's bygone pharaohs.

### **The hundred steps of the Serapeion elevation.**

Ptolemy Soter 1 ordered an elevation to be made for the construction of the Serapeion temple. It was customary to construct temples on the highest hill of the town hence the Acropolis of Athens, as well as biblical references to high places which signify other pagan cults that spread across Israel. The Serapeion in Alexandria was built on a man-made elevation in order to raise the temple from the flat ground level for the conspicuous Necropolis of Alexandria. The Serapeion was noted for one hundred steps leading up to its entrance from the Brucheum and Rhakotis central suburbs of the city. The ascent is lined with horned ram sphinxes. Hypatia and Theon are seen leaving the Serapeion with their two slaves following behind them descending the hundred steps. Amenábar explains that:

For this scene I wanted to combine all possible ways of using a camera with a steady-cam and aerial shots...to allow production to be flexible and fresh.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Kreis 2001: Lecture 12. Pax Romana. <http://www.historyguide.org/ancient/lecture12b.html>

<sup>196</sup> Amenábar's commentary of Blue-Ray disc 2009

The result is a panoramic view of ancient Alexandria with vistas of the Pharos Lighthouse on the distant horizon. Amenábar explains that the visual scenic effect is the digital creation of Felix Berges and the temple ramparts are a 'blue screen.' The steps descend to the great wall, which is broken from the history of past conflicts; and at the entrance gateway sits a trader of goats and sheep beside his burning brazier; he is selling livestock for sacrifice. Theon and Hypatia descend the steps as a litter containing a prone figure of a man is carried up the ramp by four slaves and two other attendants; this provides an example of the traffic to and from the temple. Hypatia and Theon make an elegant frame as she tells him about her day and the student suitor, Orestes, whose attentions embarrass her; she tells her father that she advises him to attend the muse of music instead. Hypatia is a figure of grace and dignity dressed in her white robes, flowing toga, with the veil wafting softly from the crown of her rich raven black hair, styled in Grecian hair order.

The audience are now aware who Hypatia is; Amenábar has shown her enjoying the love and confidence of her father Theon, the director of the Museum of Alexandria, and also as the respected lecturer of the Ptolemaic cosmic system, the astrophysicist mathematician, accepted in 'brotherhood' among men.

Amenábar recalls that when projecting the first few detailed frames, he wanted the audience to step into the past. For example, the clothing and faces were just as important as the sets, and the social life of the aristocrats is seen at every level. The contrast between the wealthy élite and working slaves was the socially accepted order of daily life. Amenábar found that the faces on the island of Malta particularly resemble the faces of the late Classical period as seen depicted on the Fayoum death portraits, which he studied as an 'obsession' for the film sequences and crowd scenes. In this respect Amenábar's research would contradict Lumpkin, who in her article *Hypatia and Women's Rights in Ancient Antiquity* claims that:

The highly public nature of Hypatia's career was consistent with the African tradition of Egyptian women, a tradition of equal rights and very different from the oppressed position in classical Greek society. For example, Greek women in Alexandria were not permitted to move about in public without a '*kourios*' or male escort.<sup>197</sup>

The above assumption of Lumpkin fails to recognise Hypatia's unique position as the daughter of the last director of the Alexandria museum and trained and educated in mathematics and philosophies from an early age; further to this she was officially appointed under the law of Marcus Aurelius to the Chair of Neoplatonic Philosophy of the late classical period through the historical Greek linkage to Athens. The appointment to the Chair did not equate the Museum of Alexandria to a University status, as is rightly argued by other academics, but the Chair meant the leadership in an

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<sup>197</sup> Lumpkin 1990: 151-161

officially recognised school of thought, pursuant on the vision of its founders Alexander the Great and Ptolemy Soter I, and later established by Marcus Aurelius,<sup>198</sup> Rome's Philosopher Emperor in 176 CE. (The Royal library was a place for the collecting of all ancient wisdom known at that time). Although the Chair of Philosophy did not equate to a university status as we know it today, neither did it equate Hypatia's independent attitude as a learned philosopher and mathematician to the independence of the married Egyptian women, who went about their marketing and business in Alexandria either independently or together with their husbands. The comparisons do not agree.

Amenábar shows a scene in Theon's home, where he sits with Hypatia calculating mathematics; this scene is followed by Hypatia in her bath, around which are arranged various artistic artefacts such as a Venus like statue, mosaic floors, jars of oils and perfumes, oil lamps; when Hypatia steps out of the bath, back view nude to camera, two slaves towel her dry, one of them is Davus, whose eyes betray his hidden longing for possession of her loveliness. The suggestive sexuality of bathing is not new in film treatment<sup>199</sup> on either the male or female body, immersed in liquid luminous water that conjures a cinematic innuendo of seductive desire:

Varinia's natural bath scene where she reveals her nude body in a forest pool before announcing her pregnancy, associates her fertility with the life-giving properties of water. Spartacus, like the audience, is overcome by her exotic allure: I want to make love to you, he growls.<sup>200</sup>

However, in *Agorá* the frame indicates Hypatia's superior aristocratic status in Theon's household that could afford to own slaves for personal duties, while she remains impervious and disassociated from desire of any kind. Further to this Rowlandson explains, that it was not an unusual male slave duty in those times of Roman public baths.<sup>201</sup> The Roman slave was treated as an object without feelings or sensibilities; a slave could work on close personal duties but was not considered to feel sensual attachment, or affection to his owner:

It is striking that the women's bath employed a male attendant, which one might think incongruent with the Greek concern for the protection of women's modesty. The ancients

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<sup>198</sup> Marcus Aurelius visited North Africa and Egypt in the year 176 CE and then founded the five chairs of philosophy in Athens; as Alexandria represented Athens away from Greece the Chair was likewise linked and respected as such by the authorities of Rome. The Emperors and administration of Rome was responsible for the costs incurred in the maintenance of these Chairs of Philosophy.

<sup>199</sup> Symbolically used by the films of Leni Riefenstahl in *Olympia* Berlin 1936, athletes in training, rivers, streams and showers, rippling over perfect muscular Greek-like form.

<sup>200</sup> Cyrino 2006: 120

<sup>201</sup> Rowlandson 1998: 172-173

assumed that servants and slaves did not count as people for purposes of modesty ...  
Several examples of Greek *tholos*-baths have been discovered in the Fayum.<sup>202</sup>

The *agorá* (market place) of Alexandria is seen in the following frame. Amenábar states that it was important to him to show ‘realistic content,’ and the market scene is typical of the Italian traditions of holding open market from the earliest centuries to the present. This large film set of the *agorá* is an important feature and comprises a glimpse into the city of Alexandria of 391 CE. Theon and his slave are found assessing produce on sale, the crowd mills around, interspersed with camels, mounted Roman soldiers, burdened donkeys and statues of gods. The open square shows official buildings such as the temple, the library and the theatre and beyond a view of the sea. A voice is heard rising above the crowd, mocking the gods, accusing them of fornication and human behaviour instead of a higher godly example. The pagan retorts that it is good to know that their gods can behave like humans.<sup>203</sup> The *mis-en-scene* of the *agorá* shows the temples, the idols and sacred emblems of the pagan world to the audience; in the colourful splendour of this scene Amenábar emulates the classical film productions that are mentioned above and which he too studied as a means of discerning what would be required. The market place scene is one of the most important aspects of Amenábar’s recreation of daily life in ancient Alexandria.

It is Ammonius who mocks the gods in the crowded market place. Amenábar explains that the scene is a historical reproduction of the period as paganism weakened and Christianity increased. Ammonius shouts back that Serapis is a laughing stock as a god with a flower-pot on his head. The pagan priest reminds the crowd of Christians that they have only recently been tolerated as their fathers were fed to the lions in Rome; the leniency of Constantine’s Christian rule has merely allowed Christians to exist. This remark is a critical comment and also refers to the laws of Theodosius I, who enforced the edicts of Constantine with the Edict of Thessalonica 380 CE,<sup>204</sup> which banned all pagan rites. Ammonius then challenges the pagans by demonstrating his faith in the miraculous power of Jesus and he walks across the ritual altar of fire as he proclaims ‘Enough! Enough! Watch. Watch, I shall now walk across the fire. If my god is the true god I shall suffer no harm. If, however, your gods exist they will roast me like a pig.’ The pagan reaction is ‘You’re mad! You’ll get burnt! You’ll get what you deserve!’

Of this daring act Amenábar explains that the actor, Ashraf Barhom is a fervent Christian, a spontaneous, impulsive and passionate individual and he actually did walk across that altar of fire. The pagan priest was played by a stunt-man, who wore a face mask against the flames. Felix Berges

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<sup>202</sup> Rowlandson 1998:172

<sup>203</sup> This statement mirrors ancient imagery of gods as represented as animals, humans, humans with animal bodies, and the pagan retort to Christians ‘Where is that carpenter God of yours now?’ The retort: ‘Making coffins for you scum.’

<sup>204</sup> The Edict of Thessalonica was jointly issued by Theodosius I, Gratian and Valentine II on 27 February 380 CE. The purpose of the edict was to support the Creed of Nicaea against Arianism and alternative interpretations and cults of Christianity.

touched up the shot to insert the actor's real face, but incidentally the fire on the face mask was still burning although they thought it was extinguished. This is noticeable as the bystanders rush to the actor to smother the flames. The *Agorá* scene depicts the deepening rift between Paganism and Christianity. The pagans are dressed in light coloured clothing and rich turbans, the Christians are shabby and dressed in grey and black garments. The clothing in those times was hand woven on looms and the quality of cloth depended on the background of the one who made the cloth, whether a peasant from the country, or a skilled hand in a wealthy master's villa. The coarse weaves are a dirty grey, the expensive white and fine linen garments are worn by the pagan priestly followers and philosophers; the black garments (Christian *clerici*) indicate the colour of holiness and religious dedication and are worn by Christians. The contrasts are noticeable round the fire altar in the *agorá*, where some spectators wear jewelled turbans and coloured cloaks. At this point the film has run through four sequences that have shown how the élite live in luxury despite being surrounded by the general impoverishment of the latter half of the fourth century CE. The wealth and élitist gap fuels antagonism between pagan and Christian groups. The film's running time across the four scenes amounts to more than eight minutes (08:16), in which time the audience has experienced a recreation of the fourth century CE and its confrontational religious ideologies of paganism and Christianity. The anger, greed and intolerance within the film narrative seen to this point, are about to demolish the defunct Roman Empire.

### **Transitions in Social Ideology**

Amenábar's *Agorá* has shown modern audiences scenes of slaves serving masters, and this points out that Hypatia has been accustomed to slaves in servitude all her life, in fact slavery had existed within that culture throughout the entire Mediterranean world for millenniums prior to Late Classical Egypt.<sup>205</sup> The film opens on the second set of four episodes and is situated in the atrium of Theon's house. The space is repeatedly used in the movie as the social area and shows the central water pool, a common feature of Roman houses, where its parameters are decorated with plants, and objects of art, and noticeably the large black and terracotta vase in the background. Dyas has adorned the walls of this area with unique facsimiles of interior hand painted decorations, the roof above is open and Amenábar refers to it as an open patio. Theon's five household slaves are lined up for questioning, they comprise two females, one elderly and the other younger and three males. Theon holds up a cross and questions 'Whose is this?' He is angry that the Christians in the *agorá* threw the pagan into the burning flames and refuses to have such items in his house. He throws the cross down. The youngest slave girl falls weeping over the cross. Amenábar states that in this scene his intention is

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<sup>205</sup> Joseph in Egypt was sold into slavery; famine in Egypt, when the people had no money left they sold themselves into slavery to the state, that is to say, Pharaoh, in order to labour for rations and survive. The Holy Bible New International Version *Genesis* 47:20.

to show the conservative class resentment to Christianity that intimidated the philosophical concepts of paganism by such intolerant actions as throwing the man in the *agora* onto a burning fire.<sup>206</sup>

Davus pleads for the girl and offers to be punished in her stead; he confesses to Christianity (although he is not a Christian). Hypatia begs her father not punish him in the heat of anger, but she is ignored. Theon whips Davus. The whips<sup>207</sup> were made of various types and sizes and one of the worst was the scorpion, the barred whip that tore the flesh; by such means the Roman Empire kept control over slaves. The following scene shows the slaves' sleeping quarters. Amenábar remarks that this was one of Guy Dyas' solutions when he found the old wine cellar in Fort Ricasoli, which was then reserved as a 'cover set,' they had very few cover sets in this production. A cover set is reserved to shoot chapters that cannot be shot in the open because of inclement weather, and just at that time in Malta the weather was unpredictable with rain in the morning and clearing in the afternoon, when they would recommence shooting in the open. It was difficult to have the main set ready on time (March 2008) despite the effort put into the construction. Amenábar shows Hypatia's compassion in this frame as she brings salve to heal the whelps from the whipping. Hypatia then notices an apparatus, and recognises it as Ptolemy's system. Davus admits that he had hand-made the model.

The next day Hypatia and the students are gathered in the lecture hall of the Serapeion, where Hypatia calls on Davus to demonstrate his model of Ptolemy's system and explain the geocentric circle together with the epicycles of the five planets, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn and Mercury to the students. In this scene there is a reflection of the discourses of Plato (circa 428 CE- 347 CE) with Meno. This scene in *Agorá* is not the age of Socrates, which was some eight hundred years previous to this in Athens, but Socrates is revered among the Neoplatonic philosophers of the Alexandria Museum, where the slave Davus is modelled on the earlier prototype of Plato's dialogues in memory of Socrates, his former master in philosophical thought, and the development of the enquiring mind. Amenábar's dramatic film reflects on Socrates as in *Plato: Meno and other Dialogues*, and therefore, this film episode is another worthy example of Reception Studies, in that Amenábar adroitly recreates Hypatia's lecture to her class of two thousand years ago, based on the ancient classical epoch of

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<sup>206</sup> Resentment against Christianity in Roman times and in Egypt by the upper class and slave owners is widely recorded within the annals of Christian persecution from Nero through to the relief under Emperor Constantine. Under the Edict of Thessalonica when Christianity was the state religion freeing of slaves was encouraged. Nevertheless slave traffic remained active in various parts of the world and later in the British Empire and it was not until freedom from slavery was won by William Wilberforce in England 1835 and Abraham Lincoln's Civil War in the United States of America in 1860. In the film *Agorá* the aristocracy felt intimidated by Christian slaves versus Neoplatonic philosophy. See Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 2.62-64, esp. 62: 'In the free states of antiquity the domestic slaves were exposed to wanton despotism ...The slaves consisted by most part of barbarian captives taken in thousands by chance of war, purchased at a vile price.' Cf. Plutarch *Life of Lucullus* 14.1: 'In the camp of Lucullus an ox sold for a drachma and a slave for four drachma, or about three shillings.' See also the film *Spartacus* released 1960 which re-enacts the saga of the slave revolt led by Spartacus.

<sup>207</sup> Whips in Roman times and were commonly known as the *ferula*, the *scutica*, and the *flagrum*. The Romans employed three levels of physical punishment. These levels are *fustigatio*, *flagellatio*, and *verberatio*. See WEB11. Jesus suffered the *flagrum* whip which tore the flesh from the skin of its victim with barbed hooks within the lashes.

Socrates. Amenábar maintains that he gave considerable thought on how to reproduce this scene for modern audience entertainment and interest.

Davus concludes his demonstration based on the Claudius Ptolemy geocentric theory of the earth being the centre of the cosmos and the five planets revolving within their own orbits in epicycles. Orestes comments that he disagrees with the Ptolemaic theory and believes in a simpler cosmic system. Synesius confronts Orestes and is angered at his criticism, which he considers to be against God's plan of creation. Hypatia intervenes and asks Synesius to repeat the first law of Euclid, 'If two things are similar to a third thing, then they are all equal to each other.' Hypatia asks the question, 'Now am I not similar to you Synesius? And you, Orestes?'

Amenábar explains that he was keen to show this chapter for two reasons, firstly, it returns the movie to the subject of astronomy and he wanted the audience to enjoy that journey of discovery as the film could not stand on history alone, but needed argument of astrology. Secondly he considered Hypatia to be a great teacher and one who could open her mind to students of various religions and unite them in 'brotherhood' and tolerance. Amenábar further explains that in this scene he introduced the religious confrontations that historically took place in Alexandria at that period. Synesius, who is mentioned in Chapter Two, was a Christian, who was later appointed to the bishopric of Cyrene. He wrote letters to Hypatia in later following years (see above, Chapter Two); it is these letters that testify to the 'divine' intelligence and teaching he received from Hypatia. Orestes is a Roman aristocrat, but a pagan by culture in the first frames of the film. Orestes was an historical character but for artistic licence he is merged as two persons into one, namely the student who fell in love with Hypatia, and later, Orestes the Roman prefect. Amenábar uses artistic license to place Orestes in Alexandria in 391 CE. The historical student, who loved Hypatia, is mentioned in some data as a musician. Hypatia ends the morning with a warning that the students should remember not to behave like 'slaves and riffraff.' Davus flinches at this remark. The point of the remark stems from an ancient law among the 'wise men,' priesthood and magi, who did not open learned debate with the unlettered population, but held knowledge and truth to be sacred and only discussed among those of the aristocratic and learned circles. In Christianity the same principle was pronounced by Jesus of Nazareth:

'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.'<sup>208</sup>

The biblical example here serves to point out the ancient code held that 'learning' was a prerogative of kings, princes, prelates and aristocrats, therefore, Hypatia reminds Synesius and Orestes that 'brawling' is a breach of the codes of 'brotherhood' and self-control and dignity is expected to be exercised by privileged and enlightened persons according to Euclid's law. Synesius' youthful days

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<sup>208</sup> The Holy Bible, King James Version *Matthew* 7:6

under Hypatia as a ‘privileged person’ are mentioned in Fitzgerald’s introduction to the *Letters of Synesius* when his former education set him in good stead as the envoy-extraordinary and Synesius declared before the young Emperor Arcadius:

Cyrene has sent me to crown your head with gold and your soul with philosophy; Cyrene, a Greek town, an old and noble name, was erstwhile sung in a thousand odes by the wise men of the past; to-day she is poor and desolate, a heap of ruins and needs the help of a king if she is to recover a tithe of her ancient glory.<sup>209</sup>

This presentation of ‘gift giving’ was customary in order to gain access to the powerful patron, ruler or king for an audience of a cause to be favourably considered; this respectful obeisance is again mentioned in a future chapter of this dissertation with an example from Westman (2011) who explains how and why Hypatia was misunderstood in her day and age when Galileo and Kepler (eight hundred years later) in pursuance of establishing modernised astronomical truths, likewise incurred great debt in order to entreat ‘privileged patrons’ with gifts that demonstrated that they the patrons, who had the ear of the Pope, were held in high regard. This point is not understood in modern society which accepts that education is compulsory for all strata of society and the expense is borne by the popular government of the day. Gift giving nowadays, is treated as bribery and corruption.

### **The Roman Theatre of Alexandria and Hypatia’s gender stance.**

Amenábar had to overcome moral and religious codes pertaining to virginity in the Late Classical epoch, in that despite her virginal conduct, Hypatia needed to win the audiences’ understanding and sympathy; modernity being accustomed to gender parity with contraceptive articles and permissive sexuality are thousands of years removed from the laws, gender, ethics, and religious values of 391-415 CE. Mythical gods, incarnated into horses, cows, bulls and reptiles strongly supported by sorcery and superstition permeated Hypatia’s world and Christianity was considered by many to be just another philosophy against the ‘evil eye.’ Amenábar discussed the argument of Hypatia’s virginal stance with his partner Mateo Gil and they concluded that Hypatia had remained single-minded, scientific and virginal during her life time. Amenábar, however, thought it important to demonstrate Hypatia’s virginal conviction, similar to the avowed vestal virgins in order to devote her life to philosophy.

### **Vestal Virgins**<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Fitzgerald 1926: 19. Further to this point of learning as the domain of ‘privileged persons.’ Note that the privileged persons were the invaluable patrons of the arts and philosophies.

<sup>210</sup> Kroppenber 2010:418-439

During Theon's lifetime Hypatia was at liberty to teach and attend public functions in his company, or that of another family male or slave, as women did not walk abroad alone. Further to this Hypatia's attitude is similar to that of a Vestal Virgin, who in ancient Rome were given to Vesta the mythical goddess of home and hearth; the child was a *captiva* (traditional term for captured girl) the six-year-old girl, who was willingly given by her parents, had to be nominated and selected for the honor of training from a limited number of candidates. The Emperor lead the child away by the hand indicating that patriarchal authority fell away as the girl was then received traditionally by the Emperor himself, and thereafter, was educated and trained in the College of Vestals of Rome, and were required to take vows of chastity. The implication being:

With their virgin bodies they represented the separation of the legal, religious and political spheres of Roman life, of raw power through division. As sovereign figures the Vestals would wander freely among the religious world of the *aedes Vestae* in which they were subject to sacral jurisdiction of the *pontifex*, the legal world, and the political Rome, in which magistrates would honour them as symbols of the state, lowering their fasces before the Vestals' 'public virginity.' As a 'living constitution' or 'totem' of the republic, the Vestals stood as guardians at the borders of civilization and chaos.<sup>211</sup>

The Vestals acted as *personae sui iuris maximus*, representing domestication of raw power. They were free of both patriarchal law and *patria potestas*, which meant they could acquire and keep their own property, the social obligations of child bearing and marriage fell away. The *Virgo Vestalis Maxima* was seen as sacred Rome itself, and her important duty was to keep Rome's sacred fire burning, which was finally extinguished in the fourth century 394, only three years after the destruction of the Alexandrian Serapeion. Note that the title *Vestalis Maximus* seems to have transferred in Christian times to convents with Mother Superior. The Vestalis were pensioned off from this sacred duty after serving for thirty years, when a pension and marriage was arranged by the state. In *Agorá* Hypatia maintains virginity as one devoted to her father and intellectual enquiry, therefore, the natural instincts of a woman's mature life were strictly under her higher intellectual control and if she behaved as a Cynic she also behaved with the solemn dignity of a Vestal Virgin, who, likewise took part in the administrative counsels and was respected as *virgo incorrupta et intacta*. The other important point of law and erudition, not to be overlooked in modern times, is that Marcus Aurelius visited North Africa, Egypt and Athens as Emperor of Rome in 176 CE, when he instituted, at the expense of the state coffers, the four chairs of philosophy in Athens, these being, Platonic., Stoic, Peripatetic and Epicurean. Hypatia was officially appointed to the Chair of Neoplatonic Philosophy,

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<sup>211</sup> Kroppenber 2010: 418

and was therefore, correctly addressed by Synesius as ‘holy lady, sister, mother, brother and friend’; the interpretation for ‘holy’ means that which is set apart for divine purpose, in this sense Hypatia had specific duties within Neoplatonic philosophy which concentrated on the development of intellect and spiritual union with the Logos, or greater harmony of universal creation. And was accordingly visited by state and parastatal officials at her residence, as part of the Roman perception of *Virgo incorrupta et intacta*; a lady to be received on a par with men of the highest offices within state or city administration. Dzielska mentions the evidence of Damascius that according to the high respect the chief citizens of Alexandria held of her high officials, *archontes*, paid early calls on Hypatia for advice on state matters.<sup>212</sup> Although Damascius likens this to fifth century CE Athens, where politicians sought the advice of philosophers, the convention is no different from the duty of the *Virgo Vestalis*, who likewise was called upon to add her wisdom to the affairs of the state counsellors.

The attendance of Theon and Hypatia at the theatre is the event that exemplifies Hypatia’s virginal attitude. In the film Amenábar creates an opportunity to show Hypatia’s subdued indignation when Orestes woos her in public with his music.<sup>213</sup> The theatre is well-attended with the influential citizens attired in expensive garments, and turbans. In contrast to the wealthy elite seated within, the slaves and poor hang close to the wrought iron gates and peer through the bars. Davus clings to his place with both hands at the grill and is jealous when Orestes declares his love for Hypatia.

Amenábar’s research into theatre of the period found the clapper instrument that the élite audiences used for applause, and which he revived for the theatre scene. Amenábar also re-discovered the ancient flutes called the *aulos*, which are two flutes played simultaneously. The music played on the *aulos* was composed by Lucio Godoy and in the film Orestes honours Hypatia with the *aulos* music as homage of his love. Amenábar states:

We don’t know how the *aulos* was played. Maybe the two flutes played the same theme at the same time. I disagree, I think one would play tones and the other the melody and Lucio Godoy did that.<sup>214</sup>

When the *aulos* is played within the open air theatre, the camera pans upwards and transcends earth and locates the audience in the stratosphere inducing a sense of surrealist flight. He further instructed the sound technicians to blend earth sounds with the musical ascent; the sound of a dog barking, a man shouting and children playing; as the haunting tones of the *aulos* ascend above the cloud peaks.

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<sup>212</sup> Dzielska 1995: 38 quoting the text of a fragment of Damascius

<sup>213</sup> Archaeologists have excavated one of these theatres, of which there were four hundred in Alexandria alone in Hypatia’s lifetime.

<sup>214</sup> Refer to Amenábar in his commentary.

Orestes completes his homage of love to Hypatia, then boldly walks towards her and presents his flutes as a gift. Although she feels indignant, nevertheless, before the public eye she accepts Orestes gift with gracious composure.

Amenábar's theatre frame recreates the trappings of the theatrical world of that time and remains a memorable shot of ancient theatre and the devices of late classical entertainment. This again is unique work in the recreation of ancient Roman and Greek amphitheatres and places the audience in the history of that time.

Theon is found thereafter, at home with a group of his associates, who congratulate him on the prospects of a distinguished suitor for his daughter. Theon disagrees and lets it be known that Hypatia is too intelligent a mathematician and philosopher to be placed under the burden of matrimony,<sup>215</sup> which will deprive her of free will. This scene reminds the audience that marriages in those ancient times were under patriarchal law and negotiated by the father. Daughters were protected by their fathers until a marriage was arranged, and thereafter, if the husband proved unsuitable the father could arrange a divorce and the divorced husband would have to return the dowry to the father as his property. During Theon's lifetime Hypatia was at liberty to teach and attend public functions in his company, or that of another family male or slave, women did not walk abroad alone.

Hypatia was not to be trifled with, hence her displeasure, when against all her teachings a student embarrasses her with his affections and receives her sharp rebuke. Amenábar's film sequence depicts this historical anecdote of Hypatia's disciplinary reaction to the young suitor. The set is again the lecture room of the Serapeion, where the students eye Hypatia and Orestes with inquisitive interest. Hypatia addresses Orestes and tells him that in return for his musical gift to her she has a gift for him. She gives him a rolled up handkerchief that is besmirched with her menstrual blood, and remarks, 'You say you find harmony in me? There is little harmony in that!' Amenábar included this scene in the film as a way of emphasising that Hypatia was insisting on being treated as a philosopher on equal terms with her professional male colleagues and that she renounced emotional attentions and held to singular chastity. Dzielska points out:

Hypatia was leading her disciples to that which they called union with the divine, requiring both vast cognitive effort and ethical perfection ... Hypatia taught them that to gain this insight, which is located on the fringes of knowledge, which recognizes only beauty, they must be beautiful themselves; they must be perfect. Our sources reveal that she did not hesitate to apply harsh pedagogical measures to students who did not want to comprehend this basic truth.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> See Corinthians 7: 34 St. Paul advice is similar to Theon's, that an 'unmarried virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs' and is free from divided interests. Vestal virginity was a concept from Classical to Late Classical Civilization, whether practised by pagans to mythological gods, or by Jews to their One God or by Christians under the One God in Three Persons of the Nicene Creed

<sup>216</sup> Dzielska 1995: 50

Shanzer refers to this scene as the ‘Not merely a Cynic gesture’:

The most obvious feature of the story related of Hypatia is that it shows the Neoplatonic philosopher acting in a way that would have far better befitted the Cynic. It has long been noted that the freedom of Hypatia’s bold and outrageous gesture has much in common with such behaviour as the ... Greek attested for the famous Hipparchia.<sup>217</sup>

At that period many of the elite were either stoics or cynics in philosophical attitudes.

Orestes is shocked, his expression hovers between insult and tears; he throws the napkin at her feet and walks out. At that point a messenger announces that the High Priest calls for the immediate attendance of all present. Davus, who the audience know is secretly in love with his mistress, retrieves and cherishes the dropped menstrual napkin. Dzielska<sup>218</sup> further explains that the sign of menstruation was also a sign of chastity, as most women in that epoch were married in early teens and fell pregnant regularly thereafter they were lactating, when menstruation does not naturally recur, therefore, the sign of blood was also a sign of virginity. Davus’s hasty retrieval of the item implies his superstitious beliefs, wherein witchcraft requires such personal items in order to cast a binding spell for the enamoured patron and thereby to invoke a reciprocal passion in the object of his desire, and in order to deflect other suitors; more of this attitude is seen in the frame of Davus’s feverish and possessive prayer which follows in a another chapter.

### **Ammonius: the *Parabalani* convert Davus**

Amenábar’s moulds dramatic development when Davus becomes enticed by the *parabalani* and finds Ammonius in the *agorá*, deriding the pagans as bleating sheep void of discernment. ‘Are you the man who performs miracles?’ Davus asks hesitantly. ‘I’ll show you a miracle,’ Ammonius replies, losing no time to convince a pliable young man, and leads him to Saint Alexander’s Christian Church, where Archbishop Theophilus reads to a large congregation from the beatitudes. Theophilus is costumed in richly embroidered and mitred archbishop’s garments, which are worn throughout the scenes centred on his ministry and public appearances. In these robes he makes an impressionable figure of authority that holds the public in awe.

Amenábar says that Dyas found an old warehouse at Fort Ricasoli and converted it into St Alexander’s Church, in order to reduce costs and keep within the budget of fifty million euros. The site served two purposes - it converted into an early church in some frames and in others it was utilised as the street scene of beggars. Apart from the great wealth of the mercantile trade Alexandria

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<sup>217</sup> Shanzer 1985: 62-3

<sup>218</sup> Dzielska 1995:50

was overwhelmed with the impoverished and homeless masses, as the result of the disintegration of the Roman Empire, and the manumission of slavery under Christianity that led to greater social inequalities, financial depression and social squalor. In the city the streets Ammonius leads Davus through starving beggars who gaze apathetically for a crust of bread. Ammonius takes the bread from Davus' shopping bag. He protests that is his master's bread, nevertheless, Ammonius continues and tells Davus to do the same, meaning that feeding the famished is miraculous

### **The Pagan and Christian Conflict Erupts**

Olympius has summoned a meeting and orders the students to attack the Christians in the *agorá*, where they mock the pagan gods and idols. Hypatia is against this instruction but her father, as the director of the Museum replies: 'The insult must be answered.'

The crowd in the *agorá* under the instigation of Theophilus the Archbishop pelt the idols with rotten tomatoes while the patriarch mocks the deaf and dumb gods. The pagans move in behind the crowd. Amenábar's camera technique uses a long shot from a distance as the first Christian is stabbed and killed in order to signify a sneak murder assault.

Amenábar recalls that for the first time in his life his knees were shaking because of the enormity of the scene with a thousand extras on rampage performance, with sword fights and bloodshed; his intention was to demonstrate the sudden explosion of mob violence, as the clash of protagonists became a mob revolution as well as the Christian thrust for dominance. According to Amenábar close-up shots were avoided once the violence was unleashed:

There are three levels of filming the violence; the first was at ground level. The second was from the air like a bird. To me it would be like God's perspective, looking down on us in silence, or an alien analysing us with a microscope, looking like a lot of ants.<sup>219</sup>

Amenábar relies on choreography to film the sequences of the Christian versus Pagan clash. Choreography is the term used for planned physical human movements, which were arranged by a team of twenty or thirty specialists, who remain stationary, for example, Theon remains stationary. The pagans are overwhelmed and Orestes defends the pagan retreat up the steps into the Serapeion behind the great gates. Amenábar recalls that this piece of filming was difficult as it took place in two different locations that had to be technically treated to appear to be one and the same space. One shot of the retreat shows the pagans ascending the steps of the Serapeion, which was at Fort Ricasoli, and the other shot of the Christian up-hill run was taken on the Marsaxlokk Hill. Amenábar used a long shot in order to capture the fury of the Christian onslaught, and then a ground shot of their feet rushing

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<sup>219</sup> Amenábar's commentary on Blu-Ray disc.

over uneven stone paving (effective camera work). Guy Dyas created the scenery up to the Serapeion's great doors and behind the doors is a blue screen that reproduced the scenery of Fort Ricasoli. There follow dramatic scenes of conflict, where Theon is attacked by his own slave Medorus and Orestes rushes in and kills the slave, and then supports Theon to Hypatia's arms; he returns to the conflict with blooded sword. In the Christian rush and the pagan retreat Orestes protects Hypatia and the student group of mixed pagans and Christians by declaring that if a finger is laid on any of his 'brothers' they will answer to him.<sup>220</sup> Amenábar points out that this is the moment when Orestes understands the implications of brotherhood expounded by Hypatia.

However, the two High Priests of both pagan and Christian groups agree to a truce and to 'Appeal' to the Emperor, who at that time was Theophilus 1 in Byzantium. The judgement took some months, during which time the Christians ran short of supplies and Hypatia nursed Theon under difficulties. In this sequence Hypatia attends her father who regrets that he discouraged her marriage proposals as he wanted her to be free. Amenábar remarks that Rachel Weisz, as Hypatia, reacted with a natural tear and whispered 'I am free.' Amenábar mentions that when filming he gives actors freedom to express themselves according to their intuitive emotions; he describes these moments as 'hitting gold.'

Davus's sublimated love for Hypatia is a tender scene, when at night the pagans settle around the pillars of the temple to sleep on reed mats.<sup>221</sup> Rachel admitted to being so tired on that day that she did actually fall asleep. Synesius, the Christian comes over her and blesses her and then disappears with other Christians over the wall into the night. The breeze ruffles the coverlet off Hypatia's feet; Davus watches over her sleeping form and his fingers move involuntarily to touch her toes, which are sacred to him. Amenábar's interpretation of this frame is that he directed the sound technician to reproduce one of David Lean's moments, wherein the music and the wind play synonymously with the night.<sup>222</sup>

### **The Waiting Game in the Serapeion**

Amenábar was fascinated by the fact that the ancient people used to play games similar to modern youths; games such as hand ball, dice and draft-like games, and the movie shows various distractions of youthful vitality during the period of waiting on the Emperor's response while under siege.

Amenábar returns his audience's attention to astrology. It is night, the wind is blowing strongly and Amenábar remarks that the climate was freezing in the strong wind, nevertheless, work had to be

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<sup>220</sup> Historical account claims that the fury of the two opposing groups was so embittered that Christians were tortured when imprisoned in the dungeons of the Serapeion in 391 CE.

<sup>221</sup> The pillars are the Karnak type of bulbous pillar ornately inscribed with hieroglyphs, see Casson 1962:116.

<sup>222</sup> David Lean was the renowned film director of *Lawrence of Arabia*, starring Peter O'Toole, an award winning movie of the 1962 era, nominated for ten academy awards and won seven. Filmed in Panavision. See WEB12.

done. In this frame Amenábar approaches astronomy with Hypatia and her associates gazing intently upwards to track the stars with their naked eyes, without the telescopic developments of later centuries, the difficulties of observation and theoretical conclusions depended on abstract mathematical calculations; the scene relates to Deakin's explanation of Hypatia's method:

The breadth of her interests is most impressive. Within mathematics, she wrote or lectured on astronomy (including its observational aspect – astrolabe), geometry (and for its day advanced geometry at that), and algebra (again for its time difficult algebra), and made an advance in computational technique – all this as well as engaging in religious philosophy and aspiring to a good writing style.<sup>223</sup>

Amenábar's focus in this scene is on an exchange of free ideas as Hypatia, her disciples and the elder Hesequius watch a night of solitary quiet starlight, and hypothesise. The camera angles catch the strength of the wind as the flags blow in the dark, cold night. The stars shine and the humans below consider the universal plan. Orestes looks disconsolately at the great statue of Serapis and comes to a decision, his remark is: 'So tell me where are all the gods now?' 'Might as well look for others.' A student replies: 'Others? Which others, the God of the Christians perhaps? Such boldness!' Orestes asks Hypatia: What do you think, lady? Am I bold? Hypatia is absorbed watching the stars. She orders the fire to be doused and finally replies: 'You are indeed bold, very bold.' Hypatia refers back to Orestes' remark in the Serapeion lecture hall that he disagreed with the Ptolemaic system as he thought the movements of the heavens were less complicated than Ptolemy's theory. The group are discussing and thinking aloud, and Hypatia agrees with Orestes' remark that the heavens should be simple, and that perhaps they have been working on the wrong premise of the perfect circle that centralises earth as geocentric. At this remark the elderly philosopher Hesequius explains that there is another hypothesis 'It is so absurd, so old, that no one gives it any credit.' He continues to explain the Aristarchus theory, which contradicts the geo-centric theory as an 'optical illusion' due to the fact that the central force was the sun, around which the earth and planets of the universe revolved as far as the limits of infinitude.

The statement opens debate, when Davus adds his voice, and negates the hypothesis by supposing that the wind would always blow against humans, and dropped objects would fall backwards and birds would lose their way in flight. In these contradictions of physical science, Amenábar brings the erroneous thoughts of the past to the present audience in order to show that Hypatia's thinking was two thousand years ahead of her generation. In contrast to this debate, Amenábar shoots a later scene, where the same scenario places the *parabalani* on the same steps of the Serapeion as masters of the site. They debate their own ideas on cosmology and in ignorance

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<sup>223</sup> Deakin, 2007: 112

conclude the earth is flat; this means that the audience may understand how Davus's unqualified argument becomes the erroneously accepted answer for the next thousand years.

### **The Edict of Thessalonica and the Judgement of Theophilus**

Day breaks with the camera's focus on ants, 'Go to the ant thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise'.<sup>224</sup> Amenábar likens man's empires to that of ants organized in nests and colonies of separate varieties. The irony is explicit as the camera rises to show man's empire with uniformed Roman guards, helmeted, standing to attention with weapons. Trumpets blast and shouts of command; the pompous ceremony announces the arrival of the prefect of Alexandria, Evragius. This scene is historical fact.<sup>225</sup> Evragius arrives mounted on a groomed chestnut horse, and he is flanked by attendant officers, one mounted on a white horse and the other on a bay. The camera shows the gathering of the crowds on both sides of the doors. Among the Christians the robed and mitred Archbishop Theophilus is seen mounted on a white horse, and from his seat in the saddle<sup>226</sup> he controls the Christian masses. Evragius reads the proclamation from Emperor Theodosius 1, in Byzantium 391 CE and his pronouncement that the pagan insurgents are to abandon the Serapeion and library immediately and that, thereafter, the Christians who take control of the building may do whatsoever they think fit and expropriate the pagan Serapeion estate in the name of the Church.<sup>227</sup>

### **The Destruction of the Serapeion**

Amenábar's commentary recalls that filming the destruction of the library was one of the most complicated sequences of the production. Although destruction looks simple, the producer had to give a one week notice of his intention to destroy the parts of the film set, because the statutes were made

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<sup>224</sup> King James Bible, Proverbs.6.6

<sup>225</sup> Edict of Thessalonica: Whether or not Evragius arrived mounted on horse-back may be arbitrary as he may have arrived in a chariot, and the film is noticeably short of chariots, but Alexandrian citizens did commute by chariot. The side ramp incline beside the hundred steps was made for chariots, horses and mules, or litter carry chairs. The historical fact remains that Evragius proclaimed the Emperor's decision.

<sup>226</sup> It is interesting to note that in the film *Spartacus* Sir Lawrence Olivier, who played Crassus, the Roman Emperor 71 CE, refused to saddle his mount because according to his research of historical data Romans did not use saddles.

<sup>227</sup> The context of historical fact is that Archbishop Theophilus, (384-412CE) acted upon Roman State Law that proscribed the abolition of pagan cults by the Edict of Thessalonica (27 February 380 CE), when Roman Catholic Christianity, as expressed in the Nicene Creed, was re-enforced by Emperor Theodosius I, as the State religion of the Roman Empire seated in Byzantium. The Emperor Theodosius Flavius Augustus I (378-408 CE), re-established the anti-pagan laws of his predecessor Constantine the Great, (324-337 CE). Theodosius I was at that time, the supreme authority of the disintegrating eastern half of the Roman Empire, which was transforming into the Roman Catholic Empire under the authority of the Imperial Rule of Rome (391 CE). The Roman Emperor was represented in Alexandria by Roman Prefect Evragius, who performed state functions on the secular level of civil state administration, as depicted in this episode.

of wood and precautions had to be arranged. Amenábar visited the set every day during that week to point out what had to be destroyed and prepare the item for easy destruction. The cameras used in these scenes were a steady-cam, a still camera and a crane camera, which remain focused on Max Minghella, while the actor is surrounded by screaming mayhem. Minghella, as Davus, gives a concentrated performance of internal psychological and emotional turmoil as he struggles against his previous learning and changes sides. Amenábar recalls that this was one of the most complicated parts of filming as the reaction of Davus had to look unexpected when, in response to Ammonius, he rushes in and destroys a statue. (Amenábar threw in the statue's broken arm). Davus reaches down, grabs the broken arm and holds up the prop in triumph as the mob chant 'Hallelujah!' Amenábar claims that Minghella's acting was intensely expressive so that they were able to accomplish this scene in one take. The director of photography, Xavi Gimenez, played with the backlight of the sun shining against the camera lens and behind the camera.

In the film sequence the pagans had no alternative but to abandon the Serapeion and salvage scrolls and temple treasures to place in secreted hiding places, so that some contents of the sacred library were variously hidden throughout Alexandria.<sup>228</sup> On the other hand, the historical account according to Parsons points out that Alexandria was one of the great Jewish cities of the Mediterranean world, and he notes that the Jewish collection of books:

Must have been numerous and valuable, among the great population occupying the third section of the city, indeed a second Jerusalem ... The libraries of the Christians must have been vast and important and we have the particular account of George, Arian Bishop of Alexandria, who was literally torn to pieces by a city mob (December 24, 361 CE) and the extant letters of Emperor Julian denouncing the outrage and commanding that the Bishop's fine library of philosophy, rhetoric, history, and theology be sought and sent to him. Within a generation another Alexandrian mob (this time Christian) destroyed the idol and temple of Serapis (391 CE). Now the library of the Serapeion was not in the temple but in one of the numerous porticos or buildings of the temple area. There is not the slightest evidence that the library was then destroyed.<sup>229</sup>

Furthermore, Parsons asserts that although the laws of Theodosius I ordered the destruction of idols and temples, he permitted schools of theology, philosophy and rhetoric to continue. Parsons reminds us that Alexandria was essentially a city of books, where the schools of philosophy were practised until the reign of Justinian in 529 CE, when they were abolished.

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<sup>228</sup>The secreted pagan scrolls later held consequences when under Cyril's instructions citizens were tortured to death to reveal the hiding places of the scrolls.

<sup>229</sup> Parsons 1967:208

Amenábar, however, was advised by Carl Sagan on this episode as recent arguments of late classical historians maintain that the library was destroyed in 391 CE, nevertheless, due consideration should be given to the presence of Archbishop Theophilus, who would have known of the theological and philosophical value of the scrolls within the sacred library, which was indeed a separate building (as seen in the film) from the pagan Temple of Serapis, which was the main target of anti-pagan Christianity. Parsons concludes:

Alexandria, we repeat, was essentially a city of books. After the fall of paganism, the greater mass of book accumulation in public and private libraries must have been biblical and patristic literature with much theological polemics.<sup>230</sup>

In the scene showing the destruction of the library the camera turned three hundred and sixty degrees, upside down on its own axis. Amenábar then had to delete the camera rails and the views of the crew from this exercise by digital erasure, so that the camera shot of the destruction within the library commences and ends on the same shot. This was innovative camera direction and symbolised the turning of the world up-side down.<sup>231</sup>

The scenes that show the temple's destruction simultaneously signify the emancipation of slavery, which infers that Christianity propagated the notion of freedom, and that slavery was an institution of the conqueror as the elite ruling class. The character Davus depicts the feelings and reactions of the slave class, who turned to Christianity as an expression of ideological revolt. In the burning of scrolls, as well as the destruction of temple effects, Amenábar's shots show Davus as a *parabalani*, smashing his own model of the Ptolemaic system against glass windows. Amenábar remarks that he was surprised to learn that the Romans used glass in their windows. Parsons confirms that Firmus,<sup>232</sup> the wealthiest man in the Middle East Roman Empire, seized Alexandria 272 CE and was briefly ruler of the city. He was known to have a palatial mansion with glass windows. Glass signified wealth, prestige and luxury.

In addition, synonymous with the library's destruction was civilized thought and administrative control, which signified that the Roman Empire had finally sunk into its overwhelming populations and burden of slaves, made freemen, who found themselves homeless, hungry and unemployed.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Parsons 1967: 407

<sup>231</sup> The King James Version of the Holy Bible Acts.17: 6. [Some Jews wanted to harm Paul and Silas but they had already left Thessalonica] And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying 'These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also'

<sup>232</sup> Parsons 1967: 335, Book 4 (Firmus the wealthy merchant who was promoted to Prefect (Ruler of Egypt) by public popularity but he was a victim of his own excesses and lacked a ruler's potential. He met his death when Rome re-asserted authority over Egypt.

<sup>233</sup> Kreis, 2001. Lecture 12. WEB13.

Christianity signified renewed hope to the hopeless by its gospel of a sharing community that pooled all wealth within the fellowship of its believers towards the Church's apostolic administration.<sup>234</sup>

### **Ravishment**

Amenábar discusses the scene of Davus' attempted ravishment of Hypatia. Note this is not an historical fact but a fictitious piece of dramatic cinema art and denotes that rape and mayhem are not unusual occurrences when one regime is overthrown and the new order is not yet in place. In this frame Gimenez used more than one camera and a steady-cam in a weak light so as not to distinguish the actor's feelings. Davus enters seemingly dazed with the day's revolutionary exploits; in the excess of freedom and equality he intends to rape Hypatia. Davus is armed with a sharp sword when he overpowers her and prevents her screaming. Amenábar chose to shoot this episode without dialogue; with Hypatia helpless in the hold of Davus' rapacious grasp. Then inexplicably Davus relinquishes his grip and surrenders to his deeper instincts of respectful regard (an acknowledgement that revolution does not equate to equality of persons). Davus at that point judges himself worthy of death and presents his sword to Hypatia so that she may avenge her honour. According to ethical traditions revenge was justifiably based on ancient traditions of honour, for example, the rape of Lucrece by Prince Sextus Tarquin of Rome which overthrew the monarchy.<sup>235</sup> However, she drops the sword and unties his slave collar and sets Davus free. 'You are free. Go!' She walks away without looking back at his kneeling remorseful figure at the base of the pillar. The events of that day had brought both characters to the cross-roads of history and its impact on their personal lives. The two would, hereafter, travel separate routes.

Amenábar's use of Davus' attempted rape can be compared on two levels. Firstly, as dramatic art that builds tensions towards action as found in Shakespeare's plot in the poem *Rape of Lucrece*, when Tarquin hesitates only a moment and then overpowers Lucrece at drawn sword point and smothers her cries. In *Agorá* Davus is drunk with liberation (not liquor) but at his moment of hesitation he relinquishes his drawn sword and surrenders to Hypatia's vengeance. However, Hypatia's reaction in 415 CE is in contrast to the reaction of Lucrece in 567 CE, when her own suicide attested to her virtue and condemned her rapist; instead, Hypatia forgives and sets Davus free.

Secondly, Hypatia may be considered in terms of Graeco-Roman history, in that her position, as established by Aurelius Caesar, appointed her to The Chair of Neoplatonic Philosophy in Alexandria, and that she distinguished this position in similar virtue and dignity to that of a *Virgo Vestalis* in Rome, whereby:

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<sup>234</sup> The Holy Bible, New International Version, Acts 2:42

<sup>235</sup> Shakespeare's poem 'The Rape of Lucrece' harks back to Rome 567CE when Sextus Tarquinius raped his cousin's wife, the beautiful and virtuous Lady Lucrece.

Both life and death of a *Virgo Vestalis* represented the precarious state of the *res publica*, even of Roman civilization as a whole. The separation of law, religion and politics guaranteed the lasting success of the Roman political system. However, inherent components were also the constant threat of collapse of the constitutional order and the backward slide into the tyrannical past. *Vestal Virgins* stood at the boundary between chaos and order.<sup>236</sup>

Symbolically this is precisely where Hypatia's virtue and public position had placed her, on the frontier between Christian fanatical chaos and the receding humanities of Neoplatonic philosophy.

If Davus thought he had found freedom in the destruction of the Serapeion and the brotherhood of the *parabalani*, such freedom did not allow his deeper nature to transgress his finer feelings. He had been forgiven and relinquished of slavery. Davus's freedom, thereafter, associated him with Ammonius and the *parabalani*, whose codes of 'brotherhood' fell under the control of Cyril the Patriarch and his sycophant, Peter the Reader. The *parabalani* performed duties like slaves but inspired by Christian self-sacrifice towards sainthood.

Amenábar explains that his intention was to conclude the film *Agorá* at this point. However, the script had already covered 200 pages and if it was too much for the first part it was insufficient for two films; consequently much of the script was cut and the film reduced to one epic historical movie of two hours.

Thereafter, following the destruction of the Serapeion, a Roman officer goes through the streets of Alexandria and reads aloud the proscription banning all forms of pagan cults and philosophies, this proscription was meant to affect the last enclaves and private groups of pagans, wherever they may have been practising. The street scene in this set includes Pompey's Pillar, which was actually Diocletian's pillar and is situated to the present time at the top of the elevated entrance, which was just beyond the true entrance gate to the Serapeion complex, as seen in the reconstruction of the Serapeion in *Agorá*. Once again we have the advantage of a magnificent view of ancient Alexandria, which is entirely due to the digital work of Xavier Giménez.

The proscription against any form of paganism or any interpretation of Christianity that did not comply with the Nicene Creed was rooted out of Alexandria.

## SUMMARY

This concludes chapter three, wherein Amenábar explained his own methods of the production of *Agorá* and the work of the actors, set-builders, camera crews, and other complicated aspects which

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<sup>236</sup> Kroppenberg 2010: 432

require skilful management and cooperation from all the divisions of personnel, who contribute professional techniques and knowledge to a day of film production in a schedule of many days.

## CHAPTER 5: ARCHBISHOP CYRIL'S ALEXANDRIA 412-415 CE

Amenábar's camera moves away from the earth and again into the stratosphere, from where planet earth is seen like a small blue and white marble against a backdrop of dark night alive with the twinkling of myriads of stars. The interlude marks a passage of time as the camera pans down on Alexandria in 412 CE, some twenty-three years after 391.CE and shows the funeral of Theophilus, the general tone of sorrow is set with paid weeping mourners.<sup>237</sup> The people of Alexandria laud the ascension of Cyril as the heir of his uncle Theophilus and acclaim him the new patriarch of Alexandria. About three years after the death of Theophilus and the historical context moves towards 415 CE; Cyril's ascension is distinguished with a scene of the *parabalani* creeping into secret attack on the Jew's Sabbath theatre performance of musical entertainment. The audience are injured in a rain of stones and verbal abuse by an unprovoked attack from the *parabalani*. In retaliation an enclave of Alexandrian Jews ambush the *parabalani* at night by shouting that Saint Alexander's Church is on fire;<sup>238</sup> the *parabalani* rush out to extinguish the flames only to fall into an ambush in the church, where they are stoned to death. Ammonius and Davus survive, having crept to shelter beneath the altar. (The presence of Ammonius and Davus embroiled in the slaughter is fictitious dramatic action, but the actual onslaught itself is a fact of history, when the Jews of Alexandria retaliated against their persecutors).

In the light of dawn the corpses of the *parabalani* are strewn across the floor around the altar. The patriarch Cyril addresses the mourning congregants from the dais. Amenábar's directive in the scene was centred on light, where the camera shows the light from the two windows within the Church shining above Cyril's head to indicate his sainthood. Cyril's address to the shocked congregation curses the Jews for generations to the end of time, as he uses the context of the scene around them in Saint Alexander's Church as condemnation against the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus, Son of God, in Jerusalem (33 CE).

The streets of Alexandria run with blood from the violence enacted against the Jewish citizens, who are persecuted, ransacked, looted, ravaged and killed in thousands.

Hypatia is seen moving through the mayhem accompanied by her slave Aspasius.<sup>239</sup> Amenábar explains that the character of Aspasius was expanded on as a foil to Hypatia through whom she might converse and debate her astronomical scientific thinking. Hypatia arrives in the Prefect's palace and council chamber and expresses objections against the murder and mayhem of the Jewish population, which criminal action, Orestes the Prefect, appears to allow in Alexandria. The Indian Prince and prelate explains that the Prefect as a Christian, dare not send the Praetorian guards to protect Jews as

<sup>237</sup> The ancients demonstrated bereavement by a chorus of paid weeping mourners at funeral occasions.

<sup>238</sup> This stoning of Christians in retaliation to the Jewish Sabbath attack accords with historical data.

<sup>239</sup> See Rowlandson 2000:##. Aristocratic women were accompanied either by a male of their family or by slaves, as women of quality did not walk alone through the streets without protective escort.

that would turn the entire city against Rome. Hypatia warns the assembly that if the patriarch Cyril is permitted to continue in this vein then Alexandria will be emptied of citizens.

Slaughter and hatred at sword point brought death and corpses putrefied in the streets into an obnoxious stink and threatened plague. The *parabalani* are seen cleansing Alexandria, hand carts are loaded with massacred Jewish dead and are trundled round the great walls of the sea-fronted fortress to where, buttressed against the rocks of the lashing ocean, a large funeral pyre incinerates the dead. Davus has qualms of conscience and says ‘Jesus forgave them on the cross, I was forgiven once and now I can’t forgive.’ Ammonius attempts to comfort Davus with the certainty that they are doing God’s work, which is why they escaped alive from the stoning in St Alexander’s Church. Peter the Reader is also in this scene as he scolds Davus saying, ‘How dare you compare yourself with God?’ In this exchange of views it is evident that the *parabalani* have no freedom of thought and are monitored in self-expression, in fact no qualms of conscience were tolerated.

### **Synesius Bishop of Cyrene**

The scene changes to another part of the city where Synesius, Bishop of Cyrene, arrives on horseback accompanied by several important canons and prelates. This is Synesius some twenty-five years older than the student he was when attending Hypatia’s lectures at the Serapeion on the day of the ultimate revolt in 391 CE. In this episode he and his followers are dressed in their ecclesiastical robes, and he wears his Bishop’s mitre. His train moves through streets of death where the *parabalani* collect the murdered, Jews while the people from the heights of pedestrian bridges heap curses down on living Jews, who are seen departing into exile. Synesius’s arrival is noticed by Ammonius and Peter the Reader and the audience is given the impression that the information will reach Cyril within minutes, implying<sup>240</sup> that nothing happens in Alexandria that escapes Cyril’s control.

### **Cyril Welcomes Synesius as ‘Beloved’**

The following scene shows Synesius arriving at the palatial residence of Cyril the patriarch. It is a known historical fact that Synesius had no quarrel with Cyril and was on obedient and compatible terms with the Patriarch. This is the scene that Amenábar directed to be likened to a chess board, with Cyril in his elaborate black garments and Archbishop’s mitre and Synesius arriving with his small enclave in white robes and his bishop’s mitre. The camera angles down from a great height at the top of Egyptian pillars adorned with the ancient masks of pharaohs; here, where the paving beneath their feet looks like squares on a chess board, the archbishop in black embraces the obedient bishop of Cyrene in white as his ‘*Beloved*’ which is regarded as a Christian greeting. Thereafter Synesius pays a

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<sup>240</sup> Cyril’s patriarchal office was similar to the KGB or CIA - he received information within minutes and spied into correspondences out of Alexandria

visit to Hypatia; however, it is assumed that Theon has died of the wounds he suffered when his own slave, Medorus, turned viciously on him in 391 CE. Theon's house has devolved to Hypatia's use as her studio and school, where a private library of scrolls is maintained and Hypatia uses various pieces of mathematical equipment for her theories, such as the cone of Apollonius. In this scene Amenábar's directive to the actor Rupert Evans was to play the part of Synesius in an amiable and reconciling manner, a person of humane approach. Synesius is content to be once again in Hypatia's company and takes up the cone naming the different shapes of the conic circle. Orestes arrives and the three friends are united despite the passage of the years. However, Synesius soon explains the purpose of his arranged meeting through the channels of Hypatia's connections; the reason is to deliver a message to Orestes from Cyril in the presence of Hypatia as he is acting as the emissary sent to persuade Orestes to meet with Cyril. The subterfuge is that Cyril wants Orestes the Prefect to come to him, whereas, according to protocol the Church waited on the pleasure of the state (the state did not wait on the patriarch of Alexandria), but if Orestes agrees to meet with Cyril it has to be at the Sunday ceremony of the Christian Church, converted from what was once the library of the Serapeion.

### **In Invitation to Cyril's Alexandrian Address Debated in the Praetorian Palace**

In the interests of Rome and the good administration of the people the invitation to meet Cyril is debated in the council chamber of the Prefect's palace, where Orestes is seated on the imperial Roman-Egyptian throne.<sup>241</sup> The leading councillors are the aristocrats of Alexandria, and men of the pagan or ancient Roman philosophies and, therefore, members of Hypatia's Neoplatonic school of thought. Hypatia is also present at the praetorian palace meeting, although Amenábar admits that in reality she was not included in the council chamber at this level, but advised from her own establishment, where the leading citizens came to her, but for the purpose of the film, she is seen as an advisor in the council chamber, where she reminds them that she is not a member of the governing council. The Prince of India, as an ecclesiastic represents Cyril and persuades the councillors to accept the patriarch's invitation to attend the Christian ceremony as a meeting place on Sunday. A councillor immediately responds that the 'invitation' is a threat in itself as none but Christians have been permitted to enter the church converted from the Serapeion library, since its establishment in 391 CE. The reply from the Indian Prince is that, 'Should you consider your presence of such importance then why should you not become a baptised Christian like your Prefect,<sup>242</sup> it's only a matter of time.' This statement draws a response from Hypatia, who objects to the inference that a change of persuasion is merely 'a matter of time,' to follow 'a god who has not proved himself more just than his

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<sup>241</sup> Such a throne was once ordered by Cleopatra for the inauguration and crowning of as Pharaoh of Egypt and her husband. Reference: Pollard and Reid 2006 158-159

<sup>242</sup> Deakin 2007: 146.

predecessors.’ The Prince of India questions her faith. Hypatia responds that she believes in ‘philosophy.’ The Prince dismisses this reply, with ‘Philosophy? Just what we need in times like these;’ the councillors laugh at Hypatia and she leaves the chamber as a belittled woman. Synesius is present and he regards Hypatia with dark concern as she exits.

### **Amenábar’s Scene based on Virgil’s *Aeneid***

In terms of Reception Studies, Amenábar reconstructs sailing with Hypatia, Orestes and Aspasius on the Mediterranean Sea at sunset, ostensibly in order for Hypatia to conduct an empirical experiment to see if what Davus declared against the Aristarchus theory might be proved right or wrong. The cinematic *mise-en-scene* appears to be based on a verse from Virgil (70 CE) a Roman poet during the glorious reign of Octavianus Augustus Caesar. He celebrated the rise of Rome in twelve books from the legend of its founder, Aeneas (circa 1200 CE) and is quoted by Copernicus according to Westman (2011), it was not until sixteenth century thinkers such as Copernicus (1543), and about thirty years later two scientific astronomers Galileo and Kepler (1570), argued before royal and influential patrons towards the solar system of the universe. Galileo and Kepler were contemporaries, but while they both pursued the revolutionary argument of Copernicus’s book *De Revolutionibus* presenting his theory of illusionary ‘*imago*’ [as first proposed by Aristarchus and expanded on by Amenábar for his heroine Hypatia in film] in reality it was Galileo, who built the first telescope with magnifying lens and by this means he successfully proved to his influential patrons that astronomy was not the devil’s practice but the divine *verbatem* of universal creation. Modernization of astrophysics as a science was open to address and debate in Florence under the patronage of the Royal Court of the Medici.

Amenábar uses the *imago* of Copernicus in this episode, where the antique barque with red sails is calmly wafted on a blue sea in the sunset of the day. The Alexandrian skyline evokes an historical reality with the lighthouse of Pharos in cinematic detail. Copernicus wrote on the ancient philosopher’s theories:

It makes no difference that what they [the ancients] explain by a Resting Earth and a universe whirling round, we take up in the opposite way so that together with them we might rush to the same goal. For in such matters these things are thus mutually related agree, in turn one with the other, the same applies to the earth’s motion(s) as the source of visual illusion. Why should we not admit that the appearance of daily revolution is in the heavens but the truth [*veritatem*], in the [motion of the] earth?<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Hypatia’s Neoplatonic philosophy that incorporated late Aristotle and Plato to the following paragraph, from Virgil’s *Aeneid* arising from the heroes escape from Troy circa 1200 CE.

This situation closely resembles what Virgil's Aeneas observes (*Aen.* 3.72): 'Forth from the harbour we sail, and the land and the cities slip backward.'

The mathematical theories and astrophysics of Hypatia's epoch were perceived by the theological authorities as dangerous sorcery that could predict and retrodict past and future events through the devil's numeracy.<sup>244</sup> In the film *Amenábar* weaves his plot together to anti-climax in Hypatia's discovery of the heliocentric ellipse; this episode is, however, cinematic fiction and not a historical fact, like the warp and weft on which film scripts are designed for emotional content and sensory affect.

As already mentioned the mission of Synesius was to invite Hypatia and her circle of influential elite city counsellors and pagan philosopher to the service at St Stephan's Church. The fateful Sunday dawns; the entire city of Alexandria appears to be attempting to enter the doors of the Church. This was for *Amenábar* another challenging crowd scene, having to employ between five hundred to a thousand extras, who composed the congregants, made up of Roman soldiers, citizens, in grey or black, and according to historical statistics as many as five hundred *parabalani* were present; numerous leading women, who were wearing high veiled head fashions, and foremost in the hall nearest the altar stood Orestes, together with his Roman senators.

Cyril the Patriarch reads to the congregants from, 1 Timothy 2 v 9-14.<sup>245</sup> (Sammy Sameer acting as Cyril the Patriarch gives a superlative rendition in terms of rhetoric delivery), 'I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, and not with braided hair or gold, or pearls ... I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, she must be silent' The reading is immediately seen by Orestes as a manoeuvre against his Roman administration and as a public threat to Hypatia, who the Archbishop does not hesitate to denounce as a 'witch,' an accusation which implies deathly consequences.

The Patriarch then descends from the dais of the altar with the large bible in his hands. He declares, 'this is the Word of God' and all congregants, including the pagan senators, who are with the Prefect Orestes, must 'kneel to the Holy Bible and embrace its truths.' The entire company gradually kneel in obedience, with the exception of Orestes, who understands that his position representing Rome in Egypt and the East is manipulated into a politically compromising position. Cyril, in his patriarch's robes, deceptively enforces biblical scripture to subdue the congregation of Alexandria by an act of grace in order to impose the authority of the Church above that of the state and by so doing break the Prefect's authority in Alexandria. Orestes turns and moves out of the Church only to be met with a hail of stones from the *parabalani*, Ammonius aims a stone that strikes Orestes on the temple. (The assault by Ammonius on Orestes is a historical fact). Deakin's translation from Socrates Scholasticus reads:

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<sup>244</sup> Westman 2011: 15

<sup>245</sup> The Holy Bible, the New International Version. 1 Timothy 2, vv 9-14: 248. Also see Rowlandson 1998: 328-329

Some of the monks inhabiting the mountains of Nitria ... about five hundred of them quitting their monasteries, came into the city; and meeting the prefect in his chariot, they called him a pagan idolater. ... He supposing this to be a snare laid for him by Cyril, exclaimed that he was a Christian, and had been baptised by Atticus the bishop of Constantinople. .... A certain one of them named Ammonius threw a stone at Orestes, which struck him in the head, and covered him with blood that flowed from the wound, all the guards with a few exceptions fled ... Meanwhile the populace of Alexandria ran to the rescue of the governor, and put the rest of the monks to flight; but having secured Ammonius they delivered him up to the prefect.<sup>246</sup>

In the following scene Orestes is attended by physicians, who crudely attempt to sew the wound together, but without the aid of anaesthetics it is painful and Orestes is angry. Synesius is announced as a visitor. Orestes orders all to leave and once alone with Synesius the bishop, Orestes gives vent to his dilemma over the proceedings of the day. Orestes exclaims that he had no choice but to refuse to kneel or see Hypatia condemned under witch-craft. Orestes sues for the denunciation of Cyril as patriarch of Alexandria. Amenábar's camera directives focus on Synesius and Orestes against a backdrop of an ascending staircase that leads nowhere. Synesius argues that Orestes has 'insulted God' before the congregation of Alexandria; the analogy reduces the distraught Prefect to his knees, weeping between the choices of Christianity in the Nicene Creed as weighed against his high regard for Hypatia and her safety from death under impending condemnation of witchcraft.

According to the translation of Socrates Scholasticus' account, Orestes suspected Cyril of setting a trap for him, as the Patriarch now vied for total control of the disintegrating eastern half of the Roman Empire from Alexandria to Byzantium that would leave the Emperor in Rome, as Pontifex Maximus of the western half of converted Europe, including the British Isles. Ammonius died under torture, and Cyril called a large public funeral honouring the corpse with beatification of sainthood. The Alexandrian public disagreed with this procedure and Cyril dropped further mention of it, and turned his attention to other strategies:

Politically, Cyril, in his canonization of Ammonius, publicly implicated himself ... The rift between the two leaders deepened and widened, and in the process claimed Hypatia's life ... The target became Hypatia. She was close to Orestes without being Orestes; she was genuinely a pagan and not a Christian.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Deakin 2007: 146

<sup>247</sup> Deakin 2007: 73

## Dénouement

The scenes that follow are sequences that move in tragic depth of farewell to life as Hypatia receives the news from two Roman guards, who are emissaries of Orestes; they warn her to remain indoors, because she is under condemnation. Hypatia wants to know of what wrong-doing she has been charged. ‘Witchcraft’ is the reply. The second Roman officer regards her suspiciously, expecting her to become a witch before his eyes.

Davus, during the night, overhears his *parabalani* brethren plotting Hypatia’s death. He rises early and walks away from the group down the steps of the Serapeion, throwing away his satchel of stones and his stabbing dagger. He is resolute and refuses to heed the call of Peter the Reader. Davus runs through the streets of early morning Alexandria to Hypatia’s residence, where he is confronted by the Roman guards and kept at bay. Aspasius comes to the gates of the villa and tells Davus that Hypatia has gone to the Prefect’s palace. He rushes off in that direction.

Hypatia is in the palace, after working at her mathematics all night she is keen to relate that she has discovered that the earth moves round the sun in a heliocentric ellipse. However, there are only three of them present: Orestes, Synesius and Hypatia. They are there to persuade Hypatia to become baptised and escape the condemnation of witchcraft, as Orestes explains that unless she agrees to this he can no longer protect her. Synesius then reminds her of Euclid’s law: ‘If two things are similar to a third thing, then they are all equal to each other.’ This law is now repeated to remind Hypatia of her own teachings to them. Hypatia replies to Synesius ‘You do not question your faith, I must.’

This episode aptly fits the known characteristics of Hypatia, who Amenábar portrays as the independent scientist. Dzielska writes:

The American J.W Draper, described [her] as ‘a valiant defender of science against religion,’ considered Hypatia a heroic figure in the contest between two powers in European history: the free mind searching for truth in the material world versus superstitious religion (represented by the church) enslaving reason.<sup>248</sup>

Amenábar symbolises Hypatia’s disciplined and strong character when he directs her walking away from the Praetorium palace towards her ultimate death.

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<sup>248</sup> Dzielska 1995:11

## Finalé

Hypatia rises from her seat in the praetorian council chamber, firmly resolved that she must be free to question faith and not peddle religion. Synesius replies, ‘Well, that’s a pity’ and as she walks away he sneers at Hypatia’s heliocentric conclusions.

Orestes follows closely beside her and for a brief moment they stand together before the symbol of the dying empire seen in the statue of the Roman wolf feeding Remus and Romulus, framed by a great Roman window, interlaced in wrought iron, Orestes pleads:

Wait, I beg of you, if you go I won’t be able to protect you any longer, I won’t be able to have dealings with you or even greet you. Hypatia don’t you see I won’t be able to go on without you. Without you I can’t defeat Cyril.

Hypatia replies: ‘Oh Orestes, don’t you see Cyril has already won?’ These words are said in a depth of love that wells up in tear-brimmed eyes, as Hypatia tenderly places the palm of her hand on his cheek by way of farewell and walks out of the Praetorium palace to meet death. She walks away into what appears to be a normal early morning in Alexandria, where a chariot passes by and pedestrians walk in various directions, and mounted soldiers are seen on horses; Hypatia is soon seized on by the *parabalani* and maltreated as they abduct her to the Caesarium Church; Davus follows. She is abused as a witch and a whore, thrown down before the altar and stripped naked, they decide to flay her alive. Davus intervenes; ‘No, don’t stain your hands with impure blood.’ The *parabalani* move out to gather stones intent to stone her to death and Davus is told to guard the ‘witch.’ Davus enfolds Hypatia in his arms and on her nod of assent, in mercy, he suffocates her to death. In life he could not embrace her, but in death she surrenders to his final *coup de grace* that sets her free from pain and indignity into the eternity of history.<sup>249</sup>

‘She’s fainted,’ he tells the returning *parabalani*, who commence to stone the prostrate form of Hypatia dead before the altar. Davus strides away from the Serapeion; his figure is captured in the oculus circle of the roof of the gate, which moves with the camera on Davus’s departing figure into the shape of the Apollodorus conic ellipse.

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<sup>249</sup> Amenábar in deference to modern audiences’ sensibilities fictionalises her death for cinematic theatre art, but the historical fact is explained by the contemporary historians of the time to be brutally callous and barbaric in which the *parabalani* flayed her alive. The manner of her murder is described in the Suda and is also seen as *misogynist* and *orgiastic* (Dzielska and Deakin)

## Epilogue

However, the struggle for power was ruthless between both the old pagan and new Christian ideology and no quarter was given by either side. Haas explains the pagan position:

The rioting at the Caesaron may have taken a form familiar to students of early modern history, that of Church and king, that is, a violent demonstration in support of traditional political and religious usages that are perceived as being threatened. Far from revolutionary, these riots are often carried out in the name of a traditional political authority and with the tacit backing of local administrators. ... The Caesaron had been the focus of the Pagan Cult for centuries before Christianity. The pagans reacted against the desecration of their revered shrine and the overturning of traditional notions of divine rulership.<sup>250</sup>

It is a bitter ironical twist of historical cruelty that most religious victims were dragged to the Caesarium, which had been sanctified as a Christian Church and on what once was a pagan sacrificial altar, were slaughtered and dismembered in an orgiastic demonstration of demonic violence which was supposedly cleansing the city of evil forces; their bloodied remains were shuffled in victorious rejoicing to the Cinaron funeral pyre, where the fragments of flesh and bone were consumed in flames. To recall Amenábar's dialogue written for Hypatia's question: 'Is it a matter of time,' to follow 'a god who has not proved himself more just than his predecessors?'

The sub-text herein denounces not the Divine Lord Almighty, but those who profess to represent His Holy Word. Therefore the organization that characterised early Christianity was similar to the pagan sacrificial cruelties, which deprived Hypatia of the last vestige of her mortal life.

What should not be forgotten is that whether the territory is Egypt on the northern coastline of Africa or south of the equator, the continent of Africa demonstrates strong adherence to traditional cults and sacrifices for most occasions, whether sad or joyous, an animal sacrifice marks the occasion and some interpret this as 'witchcraft.' On the other hand, Christianity as an organized religious power controlling Europe was no better served by dogmatism and totalitarian control in condemning all forms of argument that opened new roads to scientific discovery and validated truths. Among such narrow and confined religious conventions rumour, calumny and superstition inflame ignorant minds to the excesses of brutality as perpetrated on Hypatia. Edward Watts in his article *The Murder of Hypatia* concludes:

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<sup>250</sup> Haas 1997: 285

Socrates [Scholasticus] agreed that Hypatia was a wise and able philosopher but he confessed that she was not wholly disinterested either in the problems Orestes faced or in the particulars of his conflict with Cyril. All the same, Socrates implied that Hypatia was killed unjustly because her frequent conversations with Orestes were neither provocative actions nor sufficient justification for violence.<sup>251</sup>

Hypatia, her being and her works demolished from historical records, but never forgotten as the legendary memory lingers round the neck of the benighted Saint Cyril like a putrefied albatross.

## SUMMARY

Chapter five has reviewed the film's sequences of the dramatic events that demolished the Serapeion such as the library, and decimated the Jewish population of Alexandria when under the Patriarch's zeal he abolished debate and opposition to church supremacy over the state. The scenes and photographic scope within this section of filming of *Agorá* leave an indelible imprint on the memory. The buttressed ancient walls of the Fort of Valletta lashed with the sea, as if to douse the Cinaron; the antique bark sailing in the sun-set passing through the points of the Pharos lighthouse, are some of the memorable shots of cinematography that deserve applause.

The scenes also show how Christianity under Patriarch Cyril became a fearful religion and lost the essence of the Royal Commandment and Christian kindness. Christianity of the fifth century closed populations behind imprisoning dogmas and traditions when, through the example of Hypatia's horrendous murder womanhood accepted subjection for hundreds of centuries to come. The black garments worn as austere Christianity are, to this day, the preferred garb to mark holy equality and patriarchal dominance and remain in vogue in those regions from that century to the present time. The divisions that the epoch caused have become world wide gaps in Christian unity and remain a challenge to twenty-first century ecclesiastics.

In the following Chapter Six focus returns to the Roman system of slavery which is presented in *Agorá* in the character of Davus and forms the final study of the dissertation.

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<sup>251</sup> Watts, 2006: 333-342.

## CHAPTER 6: SLAVERY AND DAVUS

In regard to slavery and punishment Gibbon remarks:

In the states of antiquity the domestic slaves were exposed to the wanton rigour of despotism ... The slaves consisted for the most part of barbarian captives, taken in thousands by the chance of war, purchased at a vile price, accustomed to a life of independence and impatient to break and revenge their fetters.<sup>252</sup>

Slavery was an ancient system for centuries prior to the Roman Empire, when like many conquering nations before them the dominant victor simply enslaved thousands whose city or nation had fallen to their spoils. Alexandria was no different, where, as a province of Rome its population composed three intrinsic strata. The lowest rank comprised the Egyptian peasants who tilled, sowed and harvested the annual crops all of which belonged, firstly to the Pharaoh, and later to the Roman provincial administration; thereafter to the bureaucrats and land owners. The élite were those serving nearest to the ruler and the wealthy merchants, who could afford to maintain large estates and slaves to labour on the land. As previously mentioned,<sup>253</sup> by the first century CE of Octavianus Augustus Caesar many slaves enjoyed manumission and had been set free by their owners so that Rome, which was involved in administration of its vast territories and in defending the far boundaries from invading tribes, was hard pressed for manual labour. The liberated social structures became heavier with an illiterate and impoverished population, such as those who composed the *parabalani* (poor men who in the name of Christian charity laboured, seized vendors' goods as rights of Church charity). Amenábar, as already mentioned, depicts five slaves in Theon's household. The slave Davus, exclusively serves Hypatia; Theon's slave Medorus seems to be a general factotum, while his secretarial slave, Aspasius, assumes a higher rank in household management as a learned man. Amenábar admits that Aspasius was created as a fictitious foil to Hypatia in her reflections especially in scenes where Hypatia tests her conclusions and seeks confirmation from Aspasius' reasoning. Nevertheless, Aspasius is a slave who follows her instructions when on the barque he climbs the rungs of the rope ladder to drop a weight from the mast. His attitude remains constantly distant and respectful towards her.

Recalling the scene where Theon whips Davus for insolence, when Davus intervenes to save the slave girl discovered to be a Christian. Theon declares 'Now they presume to teach us mercy?' This indicates how the new order of Christianity affected individual perceptions of personal liberty. The

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<sup>252</sup> Gibbon 1986 [1776-1788] 2.62

<sup>253</sup> Kreis 2001. Lecture 12, WEB13

namesake Davus is found in the *Satires of Horace and Persius*<sup>254</sup> and the notion of a slave having innate knowledge can be found in Plato's *Meno*.<sup>255</sup>

Plato dedicated his dialogues to his former master Socrates (470-399 CE), whose life was ended by an order of self-execution when condemned to drinking a goblet of hemlock. Socrates was accused by the Athenian administrators of corrupting youth by advancing his ideas of man's double nature of eternal soul in mortal flesh. In this dialogue the host Meno calls over his slave, who is questioned on the proportions of a square. The slave, who is illiterate and has no previous instruction, yet answers correctly to Socrates' questions, and thereby, Socrates proves that even a slave has an eternal soul, which he proposes has been inherited from the slave's pre-existence. Socrates teaches that man has mortal flesh but an indestructible spirit and he subscribes to the oriental philosophy of pre-existence also termed reincarnation. (This part of Socrates' teaching, would in future years offend the Christian creed, which teaches that each individual has one lifetime and is not a creature of pre-existence; however, modern medicine argues that cells have a genetic memory). The period was the Glorious Age of Pericles, when Athens was supposedly booming with industry, wealth and the young citizens were encouraged to train athletically and partake in running events in order to be super heroes in the Peloponnesian War 431-04 CE. These competitions were performed in the nude and the art of the period demonstrates the tendency in superlatively proportioned marble statues. Aristotle was opposed to such semiotics of masculine strength and stature, as well as he was opposed to the additional adornments and comforts that military wealth brought to Athens. Socrates denounced the exterior luxuries but espoused mankind's neglected intellectual and inner life. He was a Sophist<sup>256</sup> in his teaching, and according to Socrates:

Decorous and patriotic speeches to falsify reality by giving those who listen to them an inflated sense of self-worth ... weak and poorly developed individuals can hide their deficiencies behind the façade of some majestic social body. They are swayed by emotions incited by manipulative speakers ...<sup>257</sup>

Accordingly Socrates was accused of corrupting the minds of the young and lecturing freely.<sup>258</sup> He refused to recant and was condemned to death; he expired in the firm belief of man's immortal soul.

In the *Satires of Horace and Persius*, the slave is called Davus, and is found in chapter seven of *The Saturnalia*, of Horace satires, wherein Horace uses the slave character as a buffoon and the slave

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<sup>254</sup> Rudd, 1976: 106-109

<sup>255</sup> Waterfield, 2009:115-122

<sup>256</sup> *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*: In ancient Greece: a scholar, a teacher; spec. a paid teacher of philosophy and rhetoric.

<sup>257</sup> WEB14.

<sup>258</sup> Socrates did not ask fees and taught free of charge mixing well in social functions. He refused to be silenced.

responds with criticism of his master.<sup>259</sup> The occasion is the *Roman Saturnalia* dated from the 17-19 December (Horace 70 CE); during that festival a slave was free to speak whatever was on his mind without receiving punishment for impudence. This satire commences in dialogue between Horace and his slave Davus:

Horace: Is it Davus?

Yes, Davus

A servant who is fond of his master, and reasonably good – though not so good I hope, as to die young.

Come on, it's December; enjoy the freedom our father's decreed and say what you like.

At this invitation Davus regales his master Horace with all his personal vices commencing: Some people love their faults and follow them unswervingly...

The faults mentioned include gluttony at the dinner parties given by Maecenas. Then a fancy for another man's wife: 'You walk nervously in and your whole body trembles as fear struggles with lust.' Davus continues to recall that his master has to hide and cower in a box, but when he escapes he deliberately looks for another occasion to endanger himself. Davus adds that although Horace is a slave owner and owns him (Davus), yet Horace must submit to other men's orders and he is constantly under the pressure of affairs. Davus points out that a man who takes orders from a slave may be called a *sub-slave*, or a *fellow-slave*: 'For although you lord it over me; ... you are jerked like a wooden puppet by strings in someone else's hand.' The Satire of Saturnalia's free speech from the slave Davus to his master concludes with Horace shouting: 'If you don't get to hell out of here you'll end up as drudge number nine on my Sabine farm!'

The dialogue exemplifies that, Horace, (who as a friend of Maecenas, and who was a close and favoured confidante of Octavianus Augustus Caesar), amusingly but scathingly criticises the privileged social circles he enjoys, but which are over-indulged and have caused Rome to lose strength of character in the accumulation of wealth. Horace's friend and contemporary, Persius, in the following piece relents that the Romans of the first century CE had lost their masculine virility. Secondly, but not least, the *Satire of the Saturnalia* indicates that no superior authority is free of criticism from the lower orders; although a man may exonerate himself and consider his own position inviolable, nevertheless closely related servants, slaves, juniors or sycophants do harbour unspoken criticism against authority, especially where familiarity breeds contempt, and which can turn to hatred when excited by the laying aside of superior control such as Davus shows when granted the liberty to speak freely during the three days of the Saturnalia Festival.

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<sup>259</sup> Horace *Satires* Book 2: 106-109

Davus in *Agorá* is an idea that Amenábar appears to have lifted from the contexts of Classical philosophies. In the film *Agorá* Davus was not depicted as illiterate as he listened to Hypatia's classes, but his attention was based on a misguided personal emotional passion to possess his impervious teacher, Hypatia. Amenábar's shows Davus's unsolicited infatuation in a scene where as a pagan in a superstitious pagan manner Davus prays.

### **Davus' Pagan Prayer**

Amenábar in his commentary explains that the scene of Davus offering a prayer; is an analogy of how some adults fall on their knees to a Supreme Creative force to plead feverishly about a futile emotional condition, 'If I can't have her don't let anyone else have her.' Amenábar shows in this scene the unstable passion that Davus harbours for his mistress. However, within the historical artefacts of the epoch evidence has been found of a rejected suitor's passion and jealousy, when in that era a lover could summon a priestess to cast a spell on the woman he desired; in an excavation a little clay figurine was found stuck with needles together with a clay tablet bearing his prayer, a small extract of which begs:

I adjure all the demons in this place...Rouse yourselves for me and go off into every place, into every quarter, into every house, and bind Ptolemais whom Aias bore, the daughter of Origenes, so that she is not fucked or buggered and does nothing for the pleasure of another man..<sup>260</sup>

In this respect Davus' impassioned plea, which he offered up to whatever gods he believed listened to him is another reality of historical account that Amenábar used to show the ignorance of superstitious minds of that Egyptian period, and why certain enlightened philosophers were chary of explaining advanced astrophysics and mathematics to unreceptive minds. The prayer acted as a soliloquy (Shakespeare's soliloquys that reveal inner psychology). In *Agorá* this episode is for the confidential reception of the audience and further reflects the sexual inhibitions in the social groups of the Late Classical age.

The Ravishment scene, previously described, also demonstrates the depth of hidden tension between servitude, passion, criticism and hatred, but which rapacious action is not ultimately committed in the case of Amenábar's slave Davus, due to the producer's treatment of having created Davus as an example of slavery in the economically recessional Roman Empire in the midst of pagan Christian conflict. In this instance pagan compassion may be shown by the master, Hypatia.

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<sup>260</sup> Rowlandson 1998:70

Davus was forgiven and set free. In his freedom Davus becomes entrapped within the *parabalani* group through his earlier association with Ammonius. The codes of conduct, within the *parabalani* brotherhood fell indirectly through Cyril the Patriarch and his sycophant, Peter the Reader. The *parabalani* brotherhood was strictly controlled and was not allowed to murmur or to doubt by the slightest murmur. Freedom from 'slavery' was laid aside under the ostensible 'hard labour' of Christian charity, where duties were performed in an enslaved manner within the sacrifice of service towards Christian sainthood. As seen in the film they lived off the citizens they supposedly served, or 'policed' in the name of keeping Alexandria under good Christian order.

In the scenes showing Davus Amenábar reveals his inner disquietude, which is promptly discouraged by Peter the Reader, and if Davus had persisted with declaring his thoughts, that would lead him to severe punishment and even stoning as a heretic. Davus thereafter refrains from airing his inner qualms of conscience and maintains silence. The silence isolates him from the group as the audience may notice that he sits apart and alone from his *parabalani* comrades when in the neglected and farm-like remains of what was once the lecture hall, while the *parabalani* argue irrationally on the geophysical structure of the earth, as a flat piece of land from which mankind could fall off when reaching the boundaries. Of this type of social strata Samons draws attention to Socrates' idea of innate human virtue:

Where *arete* (Greek virtue) seen as an innate quality, was far more likely to be found among the *gnorimoi*, *chrestoi* or *aristoi* (noble, useful, good or best men) than among the *poneroi* (wicked, frequently with the connotation of 'poor').<sup>261</sup>

Plato's writes his dialogue in the voice of Socrates, who demonstrates that an illiterate slave has a recall of knowledge and intelligence from within the gifts of his soul and previous life. Socrates seeks to prove this by hailing the slave to assess the measurements of a square. He divides the square in half and in four quarters and at each process questions if the slave assents to the measurements of the square feet. Samons finds weaknesses in this example of Socratic empiricism because the slave simply assents to Socrates' suggestions. Plato the writer recalling Socrates' discourse, believes the 'virtues (Latin), *arete* (Greek truth) is arrived at through calculative reasoning. The *Agorá* film shows Hypatia following this method in Neoplatonic discourse with her disciples but it is some seven to eight hundred years after the efforts of Socrates and Plato when mathematics had advanced especially in astrophysics and geographic sciences; nevertheless, after the death of Theon, and although holding the Chair of Neoplatonic philosophy, her gender and profession perceived her intellectual gifts as witchcraft. Although western society of modern times may find this piece of history ludicrous, nevertheless, superstition and Afro-cults, similar to those found in ancient Egypt, remain an

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<sup>261</sup> Samons 2000: 19--27

acknowledged and legalised African medicinal alternative profession, psychologically and physically, to this day. Without expanding further on that comment, history reminds us that the great free continent of the United States of America cannot deny the fact that the slaves from Africa that were sold into the early southern colonies from the west coastlines of Africa held fast to the voodoo traditions of their African ancestors in many secret cells and feasts. Whether we are in the ancient times of Hypatia's unfortunate day or advanced science of astrophysics that have reached the outer limits of our solar system, enlightenment remains the choice of enlightened minds.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Amenábar, in his comments, declared that he was amazed at his first view of the magnificence of the Milky Way, when he saw the skies above Malta. From that moment he was inspired to make his next movie on astronomy so that world audiences might follow the glory of the stars and mystery of the planets.<sup>262</sup> On that premise Amenábar commenced the pre-planning and script writing, which required informed research into the development of the idea. The course he set out on included referrals to Sagan's DVD *Cosmos* made in 1985. For historical content Amenábar and his partner Mateo Gil, undertook an interesting and difficult research. He relates that what commenced as astronomy turned towards the renowned scientists of antiquity and to modern scientists such as Albert Einstein, whose young days in Germany were threatened by Nazi anti-Semitism; he, however, escaped to the USA. When Amenábar delved into Egyptian archives he discovered the legend of Hypatia. It was the beginning of the quest on how to visualise Hypatia and substantiate the facts of her life. The few details are well known; that she was the daughter of Theon, the last Director of the famous library in Alexandria during the fourth century CE. That she assisted her father in commentaries on the *Almagest*, which preserved the ancient mathematics of Ptolemy based on the work of Hipparchus' 145-125 CE astrophysical calculations, and also Euclid's *Elements*. Hypatia was known to have developed long multiplication in the algebraic arithmetic of Diophantus<sup>263</sup> and that a *parabalani* group assassinated her in March 415 CE on the allegation of witchcraft.

The overview of the early decades of the fourth century had seen the rise of Christianity when Emperor Constantine the Great founded Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire, ratified in the precepts of the Nicene Creed.<sup>264</sup>

Alexandria, in the Roman Province of Egypt was the last seat of pagan philosophy, as inherited from Socrates (470-399 CE),<sup>265</sup> who was condemned to death in Athens on consumption of hemlock. He was followed by his disciple Plato, who professed that mankind were not creatures of reasonable argument and the control of humanity by sets of laws was preferable to depending on the reasoning of men when acting as an inflamed majority. Plato wrote a number of tracts on politics and arithmetic, and favoured logical reasoning; the last of this group of disciples was Aristotle, who spent a number of years in Athens learning from Plato, and who is regarded as the first empirical scientist of modern medicine, botany, physical science and many other schools of thought, which he studied and observed and assiduously wrote down his findings and conclusions.

Amenábar found that although Hypatia lived some seven hundred years later than the great philosophers mentioned above, regrettably by the fourth century Rome's power and fiscal assets had

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<sup>262</sup> DVD disc Blu-Ray, copyright: FOCUS Features International 2010 Mod. Producciones Himenóptero Telecinco Cinema SAFACT 2 PAL fpb 13 v No.10215818 SK Ster-Kinekor entertainment.

<sup>263</sup> Deakin 2007: 87

<sup>264</sup> Dungan 2007

<sup>265</sup> Waterfield (tr.) Plato: *Meno and other Dialogues*.

deteriorated along with the disintegration of the Graeco-Roman culture; respect for ancient mythological gods was replaced by Christianity. Hypatia's Alexandria remained a pagan centre where ancient philosophies were paramount, irrespective of the decree that denounced them as heireses. Amenábar found the name of Hypatia of Alexandria was legendary and steeped in the mystery of assassination. But he further discovered that her name was revered in the *Letters of Synesius*,<sup>266</sup> private letters almost two thousand years old but which are as lively and entertaining today as at the time of writing. Some letters reflect sorrow and hardship. Synesius's letters lament that he can no longer be with Hypatia exercising in quiet sanctuary the meditations that led to metaphysical development into transcendental incorporation with the *Logia*, (the spirit and power of Creator in creation)

The archives of history disclosed to Amenábar a range of historical personalities who had influenced Hypatia's life. These included her father Theon, who in the film is seen standing beside Olympius the pagan High Priest in the temple of Serapis the Alexandrian patron god. The High Priest Olympius, with the tacit consent of Theon, opposed Archbishop Theophilus, the Christian Patriarch of Alexandria. Orestes was the Roman Praetor and Governor of the Province of Egypt<sup>267</sup> in the name of the Emperor. Amenábar created two slaves<sup>268</sup> Davus the youth, and Aspasius the senior secretary. These characters are not part of historical data but because slavery was a social aspect of Graeco-Roman life in Alexandria, Amenábar used his artistic licence and created them. Amenábar's research opened a depth of political conspiracy in Church politics, which, in the film, he likens to a game of chess through which the Archbishop demolishes the queen Hypatia and overcomes her king, Orestes, then captures her knights and pawns, which symbolical signified the élite counsellors of Alexandria.

The historical data convinced Amenábar that the elements of history could shape an epic film; especially as the narrative surrounding astrophysical science, to which Hypatia dedicated her life, and the martyrs within the cause of science, are scarcely known to the modern world.

Amenábar's film depicts the actions of destruction and mayhem driven by the force of crowd fury to cut the centuries away from the old order of antiquity that had ceased to care for the concerns of the impoverished population. The rage is exemplified in the actor Max Minghella as Davus the slave.

The film moves forward by some twenty five years and Amenábar then depicts Hypatia as mistress of her own home, (undoubtedly inherited from her father Theon). She continued to work on her mathematical theories and amongst the items in the room is a Cone indicating the conical mathematics of Apollonius and the algebraic of Diophantus. After the destruction of the Serapeion nothing further is heard of Theon and it is assumed he died.

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<sup>266</sup> Fitzgerald (tr.) 1926

<sup>267</sup> Pollard and Reid 2006: 161-163. Egypt as a Province of Rome.

<sup>268</sup> Niall Rudd (tr.) 1973: 106-109

Synesius died of heartbreak and disease entrapped in a besieged Cyrene, where he had courageously defended his church against the tide of Ausurian barbarian invaders. In the film *Amenábar* departs from this historical fact and instead presents an older Synesius, as the appointed and avowed Christian Bishop, who is alive in (415 CE) and on a visit to Alexandria during Hypatia's last earthly days. In the scene of Synesius' arrival on horseback with a cohort of his evangelical staff, the streets of Alexandria are running with blood as the infuriated citizenry, instigated by Cyril's anti-Semitic eloquence have set about killing the Jews in Alexandria. (The scenes are so real, that a little girl burst into tears on set, which was an unscripted and unexpected shot, and, on the part of camera directive, gives an example of quick thinking in photographic skills that captured that unexpected incident).

Dzielska's publication of 1995, *Hypatia of Alexandria*, resurrected Hypatia, who was described by those of her day as beautiful, gracious, dignified and virginal for the sake of her devotion to science and mathematics. The impression given by contemporary historians adjures that in an age of patriarchy, when women were treated as minors with 'nothing to say' except within their own households, Hypatia on the contrary carried out her work as counsellor and philosopher amongst the highest of the land.<sup>269</sup> She moved as a respected figure in terms of 'brotherhood' which denoted that Hypatia was accepted according to her divine *sophrosyne* and exceptional duties which she performed wrapped in her masculine robe of office. Synesius in Epistle 39 asserts that only the good and noble qualify for the company of the blessed lady. In discussing Hypatia's sexuality Dzielska notes: 'Her moral mission ... and spectacular public gestures raised her high above her sex.'<sup>270</sup>

Hypatia's virginal gender stance presented a production difficulty for *Amenábar* who had to find ways to make her character acceptable to a modern audience, and win their sympathetic understanding of Hypatia's conservative attitude. The recreation of the many faces of Hypatia (see Chapter Two) was about to receive a twenty-first century portrait in addition to the many masks of bygone centuries. How would *Amenábar* present her in modern film media was an overwhelming challenge. The part could not be played by an actress of Angelina Jolie's type, nor could she be matched with a Sharon Stone demonstration, neither a Charlize Theron, all well-known for popular portraits of seductive sexuality. *Amenábar*'s selection of star casting was unusual and brought to the screen superb artists whose thespian accomplishments were little known by western standards. Rachel Weisz, however, a British star was contracted for the lead role as Hypatia. She performed in controlled dignity, yet showed tender sympathy towards her wounded father, cried copiously when Aspasius informed her of her father's near death. Despite the drama and conflicts that shook Alexandria, the character of Hypatia showed her as a woman remaining in cognitive control even in dangerous situations.

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<sup>269</sup> Dzielska 1995: 60

<sup>270</sup> Dzielska 1995: 60.

Orestes, as the last embattled Roman praetor, who remained firmly against Cyril's manipulative machinations, was finally brought to his knees by Synesius, who engineered a guilt complex over his logic in that he persuaded Orestes that he had offended the Lord God Almighty by refusing to kneel to the truth of the Holy Bible. Orestes was a Christian man, and in the production of *Agorá*, Amenábar has not given him the desultory character as found in Kingsley's depiction of *Hypatia, New Foes with Old Faces*, on the contrary, Amenábar's Orestes is noble and brave, with a hint of deeper love for Hypatia that touches the fringes of Platonic friendship. In a quiet scene, where Hypatia is lying on her couch with Orestes sitting beside her, he gently kisses her hand as she wonders about the revolutions of the earth. The set designs and wardrobe costumes of the period are exact reproductions, a memorable scene is the Roman style costuming of the praetorship, and the flow of Orestes' royal scarlet cloak from broad shoulders as he rises and walks proudly away from Hypatia, who has risen from her couch and her close tête-a-tête with him, and without noticing his departure she attends again to the drawing board of her mathematics in her lonely studio. This brief scene is one of the outstanding moments in the film, where Hypatia hovers on the brink of her discovery of the solar ellipse, while Orestes hovers in deep and respectful loving regard for the woman, whose mind and spirit travel the stratosphere; there is nothing left for him but to walk away into the night.

Some squeamish women who were selected to act as audience specimens criticised *Agorá's* trial runs as 'too bloody.' But transitional and powerful events that shake social changes are not exactly the harmless trading floors of the stock exchange, where on paper trading values change hands in bloodless coups. Dynamic events that reconstruct the balance of power involve the lives of millions in the power struggle, which is usually heralded by a financial depression, as was the case in the Roman Empire.

Hypatia pursued her mathematics and Neoplatonic philosophies irrespective of the political conditions affecting her world. When she did respond, as the film shows, it was to appear involuntarily at the Praetor's Palace and object to the brutal killing and persecution of Jews and also to refuse baptism and comply to such inhumanity as the Christians then demonstrated. Hypatia's gender and confident deportment did not accord with the normal conventions of the time, where women were dismissed as minors and without voice unless represented by a masculine family member. However, Amenábar shows Hypatia's brave stance that places Hypatia's gender portrait in keeping with modern emancipated womanhood. The firm decision Hypatia makes to walk away and meet her death, rather than to convert to what she could not question, is a climax of filmmaking and does not correspond to the historical record where Hypatia's seems to have been abducted, unawares of her danger, and killed.

Amenábar (according to his records prior to the release of the film), presented a preview to the artistic and cultural assessors of the Vatican in Rome in order to gather from them whether or not they found any content in the film adverse to Christianity. From his point of view, as an aesthetic atheist he does not subscribe to any religious institution, and on his own admittance attempted to remain free

from bias and ‘make *Agorá* a film that asks questions but does not give answers.’ His objective was to interest the audience in astrology as the film shows, and the story of Hypatia’s life as an historical fact, relates that she was torn to pieces on the altar of Christian ignorance in the Caesarium. The Edict of Thessalonica that condemned any form of heresy over the centuries became a misogynist witch hunt against great thinkers even up to the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Those scholars who dared to look again at the question of the earth’s position in the infinitude of the solar system did so at the risk of life itself.

To Amenábar’s surprise the film received an anti-Christian critical rating in Italy, but did well in Spain and failed to gather wide distribution across the USA. The reason for its limited success in the States is due to the type of media image that western audiences pay to see, namely the masculine super hero, which has already been discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation. Joanna Paul points out that the film lost heavily at the box office and managed to gain only seventeen distribution cinema theatres throughout America. Hollywood holds the world’s film distribution monopoly; further to this, religious issues are discouraged as entertainment in this secular age of gender parity and a return to polytheism, some ideologies are inherited the sacred bull Horus. Also, as noticed within the historical records of the Age of Enlightenment, Roman Catholicism in eighteenth century Europe was held suspect in England as adverse to the Crown; similarly, despite modern times that declare freedom of conscious, the faith emanating from Rome is likewise held suspect in the USA.<sup>271</sup> Therefore, Hollywood filmmakers avoid specific themes that may involve religious issues. Amenábar, however, is known to take risks and ignore the rules; in his efforts to present astrology he became fascinated with the legend of Hypatia and her whole generation of benighted early Christians, who believed that they were the chosen flock at the end of time, whose specific holy duty was to destroy the devil woman Hypatia, and all similar heretic followers, in order to establish the Christian Kingdom. While, on the other hand, the Vatican City in Rome is overwhelmed at seasonal festivals with millions of followers, who come to gaze at the centuries of treasures stored within its great halls since the days of Constantine the Great. To all those millions from north, south, east and west of the world, the conflict of Christianity versus paganism is a simple matter of Christian rights and hope in the resurrected life.

Cyril became a Doctor of the Church and a beatified Saint for his noble work of destroying the Serapeion and its sacred library together with the many scrolls his agents could ferret out across the empire from Alexandria to Byzantium. The film *Agorá*<sup>272</sup> depicts some of this activity, which was an indiscriminate destruction of the early physics and historical accounts valued by kings. But then again, that is revolution and change, which is testified to by Socrates Scholasticus, Philostorgius,

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<sup>271</sup> See Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel *The Scarlet Letter*, set in protestant seventeenth century USA which describes public bigotry concerning religious moral codes arising from the USA founded by Protestants, The Pilgrim Fathers.

<sup>272</sup> Dungan 2007 explains the destruction of pagan scrolls, irrespective of their monetary and intrinsic value.

Thucydides, Damascius (Suda), Herodotus, Plutarch and Livy, who all concur that mankind's historical progress is a narrative of irrational cycles of destructive behaviour.

The message in the film *Agorá* is lost on those who seek to be entertained. Nevertheless, the work of the ancient philosophers bears fruit, when in awe the world observed the satellite *New Horizons* travelling at unimaginable speed across 3.6 billion miles of space, commencing in January 2006 and nine years later passing over the furthest planet of our solar system, Pluto in mid-July 2015.<sup>273</sup> Some, like Orestes, will walk silently and proudly away, for what has that got to do with the actuality of daily life? While others, like Hypatia, who returned to her drawing board, sit in their high towers at NASA and Cape Kennedy and analyse every detail of shadow and crack on the icy surface of the hidden planet that revolves on the frozen rim of deep, dark space, as seen on the images brought to their vision by an highly technical camera that transmits the geographic landscape back across millions of miles of void. Imagine bringing knowledge like that to Cyril and his *parabalani*?

We must allow for ignorance and progress as we are prisoners in epochs of time and environment. The truism is that the higher you go the more you see, and the more you see the more you understand. For some that is peace and satisfaction, adding fullness and wonderment to one's own entity as a living individual within this great creation, if only for a fraction of timeless eternity.

The journey that set off this dissertation following the footsteps of Spanish film producer and director Amenábar is now concluded in the words of the greatest of all Spanish film producers, the late Samuel Bronston:

I consider myself a twentieth-century artist whose medium consists of the most complicated elements; armies of talented people, huge financial capital, awesome communications and technologies and a collective of creative peers whose brilliance and discipline set a standard of quality that is still a global source of inspiration. Over the years my companies have worked to produce a sense of national and international pride through the epic images of heroism, telling the most passionate of stories of all time.<sup>274</sup>

In Malta, March 2008, Amenábar raised his director's clapperboard<sup>275</sup> and shouted 'Action' and the cameras of the Spanish film industry rolled into production on *Agorá*; rich in past values, conflicts and personalities, resurrected and re-enacted before our eyes in the City of Alexandria, created from Amenábar's imagination to show once again the fabled Serapeion with its gigantic idol and the wonder of the Ancient World, the Pharos lighthouse. Alexandria was cradle to modern scientific

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<sup>273</sup> WEB15.

<sup>274</sup> Winkler 2009: 8

<sup>275</sup> *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*: A pair of boards clapped together during film shooting in order to aid sound synchronization. Further to this its purpose is that at the moment of shooting a set-up of a scene, the Clapperboard is held before the lens of the camera, marked with the name of the director, cameraman, scene number, the shot number, the clapperboard clacks, the sound establishes synchronization of all recorded background sounds pertinent to the scene of action.

heritage; without philosophers like Hypatia the world would be the poorer in astrophysics, medicine, media and communication and deep space satellite probes. Hypatia's legacy may yet advance civilization to the uncivilized elements of our global world.

Finally, along with Synesius (*Ep.* 124) we salute Hypatia: 'Even though there shall be utter forgetfulness of the dead in Hades, even there shall I remember thee, my dear Hypatia.'

## APPENDIX: PRIMARY SOURCES FOR HYPATIA

### Synesius of Cyrene: Letters (c. 394-413). Tr. A. Fitzgerald 1926.

#### Letter 10: To the Philosopher

I salute you, and I beg of you to salute your most happy comrades for me, august Mistress. I have long been reproaching you that I am not deemed worthy of a letter, but now I know that I am despised by all of you for no wrongdoing on my part, but because I am unfortunate in many things, in as many as a man can be.

If I could only have had letters from you and learnt how you were all faring – I am sure you are happy and enjoying good fortune – I should have been relieved, in that case, of half of my own trouble, in rejoicing at your happiness. But now your silence has been added to the sum of my sorrows.

I have lost my children, my friends, and the goodwill of everyone. The greatest loss of all, however, is the absence of your divine spirit. I had hoped that this would always remain to me, to conquer both the caprices of fortune and the evil turns of fate.

#### Letter 15: To the Philosopher (Hypatia)

I am in such evil fortune that I need a hydroscope. See that one is cast in brass for me and put together. The instrument in question is a cylindrical tube, which has the shape of a flute and is about the same size. It has notches in a perpendicular line, by means of which we are able to test the weight of the waters. A cone forms a lid at one of the extremities, closely fitted to the tube. The cone and the tube have one base only. This is called the beryllium. Whenever you place the tube in water, it remains erect. you can then count the notches at your ease, and in this way ascertain the weight of the water.

#### Letter 16: To the Philosopher (Hypatia)

I am dictating this letter to you from my bed, but may you receive it in good health, mother, sister, teacher, and withal benefactress, and whatsoever is honored in name and deed. [2] For me bodily weakness has followed in the wake of mental sufferings. The remembrance of my departed children is consuming my forces, little by little. Only so long should Synesius have lived as he was still without experience of the evils of life. It is as if a torrent long pent up had burst upon me in full volume, and as if the sweetness of life had vanished. May I either cease to live, or cease to think of the tomb of my sons! [3] But may you preserve your health and give my salutations to your happy comrades in turn, beginning with father Theotecnus and brother Athanasius, and so to all! And if anyone has been added to these, so long as he is dear to you, I must owe him gratitude because he is dear to you, and to that man give my greetings as to my own dearest friend. If any of my affairs interests you, you do well, and if any of them does not so interest you, neither does it me.

#### Letter 81: To the philosopher (Hypatia)

Even if Fortune is unable to take everything away from me, as least she wants to take away everything that she can, she who has ‘bereft me of many excellent sons.’ (*Iliad* 22.44) But she can never take away from me the choice of the best, and the power to come to the help of the

oppressed, for never may she prevail to change my heart ! I abhor iniquity: for one may, and I would fain prevent it, but this also is one of those things which were taken from me; this went even before my children.

'Aforetime the Milesians were men of might.' (Aristophanes *Plutus* 1002) There was a time when I, too, was of some use to my friends. You yourself called me the providence of others. All respect which was accorded to me by the might of this earth I employed solely to help others. The great were merely my instruments. But now, alas, I am deserted and abandoned by all, unless you have some power to help. I account you as the only good thing that remains inviolate, along with virtue. You always have power, and long may you have it and make a good use of that power. I recommend to your care Nicaeus and Philolaus, two excellent young men united by the bond of relationship. In order that they may come again into possession of their own property, try to get support for them from all your friends, whether private individuals or magistrates.

Letter 124: To the Philosopher (Hypatia)

'Even though there shall be utter forgetfulness of the dead in Hades' (*Iliad* 22.389), even there shall I remember thee,' my dear Hypatia. I am encompassed by the sufferings of my city, and disgusted with her, for I daily see the enemy forces, and men slaughtered like victims on an altar. I am breathing an air tainted by the decay of dead bodies. I am waiting to undergo myself the same lot that has befallen so many others, for how can one keep any hope, when the sky is obscured by the shadow of birds of prey? Yet even under these conditions I love the country. Why then do I suffer? Because I am a Libyan, because I was born here, and it is here that I see the honoured tombs of my ancestors. On your account alone I think I should be capable of overlooking my city, and changing my abode, if ever I had the chance of doing so.

Letter 154: To the Philosopher (Hypatia)

[1] I have brought out two books this year. One of them as I was moved thereto by God Himself, the other because of the slander of men. [2] Some of those who wear the white or dark mantle have maintained that I am faithless to philosophy, apparently because I profess grace and harmony of style, and because I venture to say something concerning Homer and concerning the figures of the rhetoricians. In the eyes of such persons one must hate literature in order to be a philosopher, and must occupy himself with divine matters only. No doubt these men alone have become spectators of the knowable. This privilege is unlawful for me, for I spend some of my leisure in purifying my tongue and sweetening my wit. [3] The thing which urged them to condemn me, on the charge that I am fit only for trifling, is the fact that my *Cynegetics* disappeared from my house, how I know not, and has been received with great enthusiasm by certain young men who make a cult of atticisms and graceful periods. Moreover, some poetical attempts of mine seemed to them the work of an artist who reproduces the antique, as we are wont to say in speaking of statues. [4]

There are certain men among my critics whose effrontery is only surpassed by their ignorance, and these are the readiest of all to spin out discussions concerning God. Whenever you meet them, you have to listen to their babble about inconclusive syllogisms. They pour a torrent of phrases over those who stand in no need of them, in which I suppose they find their own profit. The public teachers that one sees in our cities, come from this class. It is a very Horn of Amalthea which they think themselves entitled to use. You will, I think, recognize

this easy-going tribe, which miscalls nobility of purpose. They wish me to become their pupil; they say that in a short time they will make me all-daring in questions of divinity, and that I shall be able to declaim day and night without stopping. [5] The rest, who have more taste, are sophists, much more unfortunate than these. They would like to be famous in the same way, but unfortunately for them they are incapable even of this. You know some who, despoiled by the office of the tax-collector, or urged thereto by some one calamity, have become philosophers in the middle of their lives. Their philosophy consists in a very simple formula, that of calling God to witness, as Plato did, whenever they deny anything or whenever they assert anything. A shadow would surpass these men in uttering anything to the point; but their pretensions are extraordinary. Oh, what proudly arched brows! They support their beards with the hand. They assume a more solemn countenance than the statues of Xenocrates. They are even resolved to shackle us with a law which is altogether to their advantage; to wit, that no one shall be in open possession of any knowledge of the good. They esteem it an exposure of themselves if any one, deemed a philosopher, knows how to speak, for as they think to hide behind a veil of simulation and to appear to be quite full of wisdom within. [6]

These are the two types of men who have falsely accused me with occupying myself in trivial pursuits, one of them because I do not talk the same sort of nonsense as they do, the other because I do not keep my mouth shut, and do not keep the 'bull on my tongue', as they do. Against these was my treatise composed, and it deals with the loquacity of the one school and the silence of the other. Although it is the latter in particular that it is addressed, namely to the speechless and envious men in question (do you not think with some comeliness of from?), none the less it has found means of dragging in those other men also, and it aims at being not less an exhibition than an encomium of great learning. Nor did I abjure their charges, but for their still great discomfiture I have often courted them. [7] Next, passing as to the choice of a life, the work of praises that of philosophy as being the most philosophic of choices; and what sort of choice it must be regarded, learn from the book itself. Finally, it defends my library, also, which the same men accused, on the ground that it conceals unrevised copies. These spiteful fellows have not kept their hands even off things like these. If each thing is in its proper place; and all things have been handled in season; if the motives behind each part of the undertaking are just; if it has been divided into a number of chapters in the manner of the divine work the *Phaedrus*, in which Plato discusses the various types of the beautiful; if all the arguments have been devised to converge on the one end proposed; if, moreover, conviction has anywhere quietly come to the support of the flatness of the narrative, and if out of conviction demonstration has resulted, as happens in such cases, and if one thing follows another logically, these results must be gifts of nature and art. [8]

He who is not undisciplined to discover even a certain divine countenance hidden under a coarser model, like that Aphrodite, those Graces, and such charming divinities as the Athenian artists concealed within the sculpted figures of a Silenus or a Satyr, that man, at all events, will apprehend all that my book has unveiled of the mystic dogmas. But the meanings of those will easily escape others because of their semblance to redundancy, and their appearance as being thrown into the narrative too much by chance, and as it might seem roughly. Epileptics are the only people who feel the cold influences of the moon. On the other hand only those receive the flashes of the emanations of the intellect, for whom in the full health of the mind's eye God kindles a light akin to his own, that light which is the cause of knowledge to the intellectual, and to knowable things the cause of their being known. In the same way, ordinary light connects sight with color. But remove this light, and its power to discern is ineffective. [9] Concerning all of this I shall await your decision. If you decree that

I ought to publish my book, I will dedicate it to orators and philosophers together. The first it will please, and to the others it will be useful, provided of course that it is not rejected by you, who are really able to pass judgment. If it does not seem to you worthy of Greek ears, if, like Aristotle, you prize truth more than friendship, a close and profound darkness will overshadow it, and mankind will never hear it mentioned. So much for this matter.

[10] The other work [*On dreams*] God ordained and He gave His sanction to it, and it has been set up as a thank-offering to the imaginative faculties. It contains an inquiry into the whole imaginative soul, and into some other points which have not yet been handled by any Greek philosopher. But why should one dilate on this? This work was completed, the whole of it, in a single night, or rather, at the end of a night, one which also brought the vision enjoining me to write it. There are two or three passages in the book in which it seemed to me that I was some other person, and that I was one listening to myself amongst others who were present. [11] Even now this work, as often as I go over it, produces a marvelous effect upon me, and a certain divine voice envelops me as in poetry. Whether this my experience is not unique, or may happen to another, on all this you will enlighten me, for after myself you will be the first of the Greeks to have access to the work. [12] The books that I sending to you have not yet been published, and in order that the number may be complete, I am sending you also my essay concerning the Gift. This was produced long ago in my ambassadorial period. It was addressed to a man who had been great influence with the emperor and Pentapolis profited somewhat from the essay, and also from the gift.

**Socrates Scholasticus (c. 440) *Ecclesiastical History* 7.15 tr. Schaff and Wace 1979 [1883]**

#### Of Hypatia the Female Philosopher.

THERE was a woman at Alexandria named Hypatia, daughter of the philosopher Theon, who made such attainments in literature and science, as to far surpass all the philosophers of her own time. Having succeeded to the school of Plato and Plotinus, she explained the principles of philosophy to her auditors, many of whom came from a distance to receive her instructions.

On account of the self-possession and ease of manner, which she had acquired in consequence of the cultivation of her mind, she not unfrequently appeared in public in presence of the magistrates. Neither did she feel abashed in coming to an assembly of men. For all men on account of her extraordinary dignity and virtue admired her the more. Yet even she fell a victim to the political jealousy which at that time prevailed. For as she had frequent interviews with Orestes, it was calumniously reported among the Christian populace, that it was she who prevented Orestes from being reconciled to the bishop. Some of them therefore, hurried away by a fierce and bigoted zeal, whose ringleader was a reader named Peter, waylaid her returning home, and dragging her from her carriage, they took her to the church called Caesareum, where they completely stripped her, and then murdered her with tiles. After tearing her body in pieces, they took her mangled limbs to a place called Cinaron, and there burnt them. This affair brought not the least opprobrium, not only upon Cyril, but also upon the whole Alexandrian church. And surely nothing can be farther from the spirit of Christianity than the allowance of massacres, fights, and transactions of that sort. This happened in the month of March during Lent, in the fourth year of Cyril's episcopate, under the tenth consulate of Honorius, and the sixth of Theodosius.

**Damascius *Life of Isidore* c. 530 = Suda s.v. 'Hypatia' Translated in the Suda Online s.v. Hypatia (Upsilon 166). <http://www.stoa.org/sol>**

The daughter of Theon the geometer, the Alexandrian philosopher, she was herself a philosopher and well-known to many. [She was] the wife of Isidore the philosopher. She flourished in the reign of Arcadius. She wrote a commentary on Diophantos, the *Astronomical Canon*, and a commentary on the *Conics* of Apollonios. She was torn to pieces by the Alexandrians, and her body was violated and scattered over the whole city. She suffered this because of envy and her exceptional wisdom, especially in regard to astronomy. According to some, [this was the fault of] Cyril, but according to others, [it resulted] from the inveterate insolence and rebelliousness of the Alexandrians. For they did this also to many of their own bishops: consider George and Proterios.

Concerning Hypatia the philosopher, proof that the Alexandrians [were] rebellious. She was born and raised and educated in Alexandria. Having a nobler nature than her father's, she was not satisfied with his mathematical instruction, but she also embraced the rest of philosophy with diligence. Putting on the philosopher's cloak although a woman and advancing through the middle of the city, she explained publicly to those who wished to hear either Plato or Aristotle or any other of the philosophers. In addition to her teaching, attaining the height of practical virtue, becoming just and prudent, she remained a virgin. She was so very beautiful and attractive that one of those who attended her lectures fell in love with her. He was not able to contain his desire, but he informed her of his condition. Ignorant reports say that Hypatia relieved him of his disease by music; but truth proclaims that music failed to have any effect. She brought some of her female rags and threw them before him, showing him the signs of her unclean origin, and said, 'You love this, o youth, and there is nothing beautiful about it.' His soul was turned away by shame and surprise at the unpleasant sight, and he was brought to his right mind. Such was Hypatia, both skilful and eloquent in words and prudent and civil in deeds.

The rest of the city loved and honoured her exceptionally, and those who were appointed at each time as rulers of the city at first attended her lectures, as also it used to happen at Athens. For if the reality had perished, yet the name of philosophy still seemed magnificent and admirable to those who held the highest offices in the community. So then once it happened that Cyril who was bishop of the opposing faction, passing by the house of Hypatia, saw that there was a great pushing and shoving against the doors, 'of men and horses together,' (*Il.* 21.16) some approaching, some departing, and some standing by. When he asked what crowd this was and what the tumult at the house was, he heard from those who followed that the philosopher Hypatia was now speaking and that it was her house. When he learned this, his soul was bitten with envy, so that he immediately plotted her death, a most unholy of all deaths. For as she came out as usual many close-packed ferocious men, truly despicable, fearing neither the eye of the gods nor the vengeance of men, killed the philosopher, inflicting this very great pollution and shame on their homeland. And the emperor would have been angry at this, if Aidesios had not been bribed. He remitted the penalty for the murders, but drew this on himself and his family, and his offspring paid the price.

The memory of these [events] still preserved among the Alexandrians considerably reduced the honor and zeal of the Alexandrians for Isidore: and although such a threat was impending, nevertheless each strove to keep company with him frequently and to hear the words which came from his wise mouth. As many as excelled in rhetorical or poetic pursuits also welcomed regular association with the philosopher. For even if he was ill-trained in such

matters, yet through his philosophical acumen he contributed to these men some greater diligence in their own skills. For he discussed everything with precision and he criticized more judiciously than others the speeches and poems presented. Therefore also in the performance of some literary show he praised sparingly what was presented. His praise was very modest, nevertheless timely and appropriate. Hence all the audience, so to speak, used his judgment as a guide for who spoke better or worse. I know three critics of my time who are able to judge what is said [both with] and without meter. The same man's judgment is recognized for both poems and prose compositions. But I judge the same man to be a creator of both only if equal practice is devoted to both and equal eagerness. I do not say that Isidore was one of these, but was even far inferior to the three. The judges [were] Agapios, Severianus, and Nomos. Nomos [is] a contemporary of ours.

**John of Nikiu (c. 690) *Chronicle* 84.87-103 (tr. Charles 1916).**

And in those days there appeared in Alexandria a female philosopher, a pagan named Hypatia, and she was devoted at all times to magic, astrolabes and instruments of music, and she beguiled many people through (her) Satanic wiles. And the governor of the city honored her exceedingly; for she had beguiled him through her magic. And he ceased attending church as had been his custom .... And thereafter a multitude of believers in God arose under the guidance of Peter the magistrate – now this Peter was a perfect believer in all respects in Jesus Christ – and they proceeded to seek for the pagan woman who had beguiled the people of the city and the prefect through her enchantments...and they dragged her along till they brought her to the great church, named Caesarion ... And they tore off her clothing and dragged her [till they brought her] through the streets of the city till she died. And they carried her to a place named Cinaron, and they burned her body with fire. And all the people surrounded the patriarch Cyril and named him ‘the new Theophilus’; for he had destroyed the last remains of idolatry in the city.

**Palladas *Greek Anthology* 11.400 (tr. Paton 1960)**

‘Revered Hypatia, ornament of learning, stainless star of wise teaching, when I see thee and thy discourse I worship thee, looking on the starry house of the Virgin [Virgo]; for thy business is in heaven.’

**Philostorgius *Ecclesiastical History* 8.9 (tr. Walford 1855)**

Philostorgius says that Hypatia, the daughter of Theon, was so well educated in mathematics by her father, that she far surpassed her teacher, and especially in astronomy, and taught many others the mathematical sciences. The impious writer asserts that, during the reign of Theodosius the younger, she was torn in pieces by the Homoousian party.

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