

## In Search of Hypatia

Colleagues,

My subject is Hypatia. Many of you, I think, will be only rather vaguely aware of her name and her story — a mathematician and philosopher of the late fourth and early fifth centuries CE, daughter of Theon the mathematician, a pagan woman living in Alexandria at the time that the Roman empire was being forcibly Christianized, a charismatic teacher (as much of Christians as of pagans) and leading citizen, who was savagely murdered by a gang of Christian thug-monks who flayed her alive with sharp seashells, perhaps at the instigation of the rather nasty archbishop of Alexandria, St Cyril. Although her name and story have been somewhat present to western consciousness for centuries in such writers as Gibbon, Voltaire, Leconte de Lisle and Charles Kingsley — she has come to renewed prominence as a heroine of the feminist movement. Judy Chicago set a place for her at her Dinner Party in 1979, and in 1986 a journal of feminist thought was founded, bearing her name. In 1989 an issue of *Hypatia* contains, as its first entry, a poetic biography of her by Ursule Molinaro — a biography which owes much more to fancy than to fact.

Hypatia is the perfect hero. She was charismatic; she died a death of horrible cruelty; she was at the centre of a complex array of political and religious tensions; and — the most important qualification for heroism — not very much is known about her for sure. A brightly shining star of which, through the mists of time and oblivion, we cannot get a really clear picture — this is the ideal material for the construction of a hero. And one of the themes of recent scholarship about Hypatia has been precisely the rich diversity of her *Nachleben*. In fact one book in Italian, by Elena Gajeri, bears the title *Ipazia, un mito letterario* — Hypatia, a literary myth, with the suggestion that Hypatia as we know her is more construction than foundation.

Already in late antiquity she was a heroine of the pagans because she was butchered by the Christians, or a heroine to the Arians because she was butchered by the orthodox, or a heroine to the tolerant Constantinopolitan Christians because she was butchered by the intolerant Alexandrian ones. In more recent centuries she has been the heroine of Anticlericalism — the victim of the hierarchy —, of Protestantism — the victim of Catholic extremism —, of Hellenizing Romanticism — the victim of western civilization's move away from the Glory that was Greece —, of Positivism — the victim of the subjugation of science to religion —, and, most recently, of Feminism — the victim of advancing Christian misogyny. A busy lady.

Enduring Christian discomfort over her emerges from a story that is told of Raphael. When he showed a draft of his *School of Athens* to a Vatican prefect the latter asked who the woman was in the bottom centre; Raphael replied "Hypatia, the most famous student of the School of Athens". The prefect instructed him "Remove her. Knowledge

of her runs counter to the belief of the faithful! Otherwise, the work is acceptable". So Raphael removed her, but then slyly kept the reference to her by placing the likeness of the pope's effeminate nephew Francesco Maria della Rovere in the picture.

We can get some flavour of her use as a mascot for protestantism and anticlericalism from the title, in an age of long titles, of a pamphlet written in 1720 by John Toland: *Hypatia, or the History of a Most Beautiful, Most Virtuous, Most Learned and in Every Way Accomplished Lady; Who Was Torn to Pieces by the Clergy of Alexandria, to Gratify the Pride, Emulation, and Cruelty of the Archbishop, Commonly but Undeservedly Titled St. Cyril*. And the flavour of the partisan fighting over her emerges from a Catholic answer to this pamphlet, by one Thomas Lewis, entitled, *The History of Hypatia, a Most Impudent School-Mistress of Alexandria. In Defense of Saint Cyril and the Alexandrian Clergy from the Aspersions of Mr. Toland*. In the same enlightenment mode of anticlericalism Voltaire makes good use of her, as also does Gibbon.

In the nineteenth century in France she was a favourite subject for Leconte de Lisle and his followers Gérard de Nerval and Maurice Barrès, who wrote poems and stories about her in which she figures, romantically, as the last bastion of classical Greek values, standing against, but falling before, the crude, rigid and unsubtle intellectual system of Christianity. De Lisle famously describes her as *le souffle de Platon et le corps d'Aphrodite*. And in England Charles Kingsley's novel exalts Protestant rationality against Catholic superstition; he injects an erotic subplot by having Hypatia fall in love with Orestes, the Roman prefect of Egypt; he resolves the awkwardness attendant on having a pagan heroine by having her convert to Christianity — though not the catholic brand — in the last days of her life.

In her long 1989 poem "A Christian Martyr in Reverse: Hypatia 370-415" Ursule Molinaro makes Hypatia an icon not just of feminism but also of sexual liberation; she depicts her as having had many lovers from a young age, and as married to a philosopher husband, Isidore, who is philosophically tolerant as she continues to have many amorous friendships, including with Orestes the prefect. We'll examine the evidence for this in due course.

So, with Hypatia, all the ingredients for a tantalizing story are there. There is the exoticism, in the late antique world, of a woman intellectual; there is the evidence of her powerful charisma; there is the erotic element introduced by her alleged beauty and her virginity; there is the conjunction of powerful political and religious forces in a city given to violence; there is the obscene cruelty of her death; there is a sense of change of eras. And, of course, there is the crucial lack of really clear information about her, allowing the mythmakers of any stripe to fill in the details pretty much as they please. No wonder she has been such an attractive subject; perhaps the wonder is rather that she isn't even better known than she is.

I'd like to go briefly with you over the evidence that we have for her life and her character.

## **The Sources**

There are four principal sources.

1. The only primary source is Hypatia's student Synesius. A son of one of the leading families in Cyrene in present-day Libya, he appears to have studied with her for several years in the early 390s. Though probably born and raised a Christian he was not a very churchy one, and his primary allegiance appears to have been neoplatonism. His heterodoxy notwithstanding, Synesius was eventually pressed, very much against his will, into service as bishop of the town of Ptolemaïs, near his birthplace. It was a time of severe unrest and difficulty for his native region, as it was being overrun by barbarian hordes from the deserts of Lybia. The importance of Synesius for us is that many of his writings have come down to us, including about 150 letters, some of which are addressed to Hypatia herself and others to some of his friends who were fellow students with him at her feet; these letters give us a clear picture of the undying reverence he and his fellows felt for their teacher Hypatia, and the esteem in which they held her. Unfortunately he died the year before Hypatia, so though he is our only eyewitness source for Hypatia, his record does not discuss the most striking moment in her life, that of her death. His writings do not set out to inform us about Hypatia, so what evidence they contain must be extracted from between the lines.

However that may be, any account of Hypatia must, to be accepted as reliable, pass the test of measurement against the words of a man who knew her well and admired her unreservedly.

2. Socrates Scholasticus was an ecclesiastical historian who wrote at Constantinople in the decades after Hypatia's death. He gives a pithy account of her character, her teaching, her political engagement and her death. If he has a bias it is the bias of the civilized Christian of the capital city Constantinople looking down his nose on these rough and unsavoury goings-on in untamed Alexandria. He ends his account with fairly stern criticism of the patriarch Cyril and the unchristian behaviour of the Alexandrian Christians. He writes, of course, at a remove of two or three decades and about 1000 km from the event; on the other hand he writes from the capital of the Eastern Empire where he will have had access to governors' reports. Here is his account of her character:

There was a woman at Alexandria named Hypatia, daughter of the philosopher Theon, who advanced so far in learning, as to surpass all the philosophers of her own time, to take up the study of Plato's thought as derived from Plotinus, and to explain all philosophical learning to those who wished to hear. Those who desired to learn

philosophy came to her from all over. On account of the self-possession and ease of manner which came to her from her cultivation of mind, she would appear with composure before the chief citizens. Neither was there any shame in her going into the midst of men. For because of her extraordinary virtue all men admired and esteemed her the more.

All of this accords easily with what we read in Synesius.

3. Much more troubling as a source are the various accounts which bear the name of Damascius. Damascius would be fairly well placed as a source; he lived within a century of Hypatia, studied under a famous Alexandrian philosopher of fifth century, Isidore, and wrote a biography of him. He was a philosopher, indeed the last head of the Academy when it was closed by the Emperor in 529 CE, so he would have an eye for details of interest to a philosopher. He would be the only substantial pagan source. The trouble is that there are three discussions of Hypatia bearing the name of Damascius, they are largely inconsistent, and they come to us only as excerpts from two much later compendia: the *Abridgement of Photius* in the ninth century, and the *Suda* in the tenth.

The shortest account of Hypatia bearing the name of Damascius, from the *Abridgement of Photius*, is disagreeable indeed:

A. Isidore was very different from Hypatia, not only as a man is different from a woman, but also as a true philosopher is different from a geometer.

A longer account, from the *Suda*, includes this:

B. Hypatia, daughter of Theon the geometer and philosopher of Alexandria, was herself a well-known philosopher. She was the wife of the philosopher Isidorus....She was torn apart by the Alexandrians and her body was mocked and scattered through the whole city. This happened because of envy and her outstanding wisdom especially regarding astronomy....

A yet longer account from the *Suda* which also bears the name of Damascius includes the following:

C. Hypatia was born, reared and educated in Alexandria. Since she had greater genius than her father, she was not satisfied with his instruction in mathematical subjects; she also devoted herself high-mindedly to all of philosophy. The woman used to put on her philosopher's cloak and walk through the middle of town and publicly interpret Plato, Aristotle or the works of any other philosopher to those who wished to hear her. In addition to her expertise in teaching, rising to the pinnacle of civic virtue, being both just and chaste, she remained always a virgin. She was so extremely beautiful and well-formed that one of her students fell in love with her....

We should, I think, reject account B as unreliable for the simple reason that Hypatia *cannot* have been the wife of Isidore: the dates don't work. If you calculate it out using known dates and plausible about people's ages, it turns out that Isidore would have to have married Hypatia either before he was born or else after she died. The alleged marriage is out of the question. B is the only piece of evidence to suggest that Hypatia was anything but a chaste virgin; to reject it undermines the Ursule Molinaro's fanciful portrayal of Hypatia as a heroine of sexual liberation married to a longsuffering philosopher husband.

Let us consider account A. Apart from its disagreeable misogynist drift, and its judgment that Isidore was a better philosopher than she was, it claims that Hypatia was not really a philosopher but a mathematician. The remark about Isidore gives the passage a terminus post quem of 480, and it may have been much later than that. And the claim that Hypatia was more a mathematician than a philosopher is entirely at variance with both the account of Socrates Scholasticus, and with the direct testimony of the letters of Hypatia's pupil Synesius. Account A is unreliable.

That leaves account C. Its claim to reliability rests, it seems to me, on its broad conformity to Socrates Scholasticus, and on its agreement with the view of Hypatia which emerges from Synesius' letters. It may or may not be by Damascius, but of the three texts associated with his name it has the best claim to accuracy, for its content is in conformity with our two best sources.

4. John, Bishop of Nikiu in Egypt, in the seventh century wrote a Chronicle of the Egyptian church, in which he devotes a short section to Hypatia. His treatment of her is utterly unsympathetic; he accuses her of being devoted to "magic, astrolabes and instruments of music" and of "beguiling many people through her Satanic wiles". This account is highly laudatory of Cyril; he ends by reporting that after Hypatia's death "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". Writing more than two centuries after the event, constantly concerned to praise Cyril whom he regards as the founder of the Coptic Church, and with a view of Hypatia which is totally at variance with other views whether Christian or pagan, John, Bishop of Nikiu, must be taken with a grain of salt. But some details may be right.

### **Assembling and Analyzing the Evidence**

It's all very sketchy, and very alluring. I would like at this point to make and defend a claim about Hypatia, and then, against the background of that claim, to raise three

questions. The claim I make is that Hypatia was the first woman academic of the western tradition. She wasn't the first intellectual; neither was she the first philosopher — she had many female predecessors in the discipline, from Theano and Perictione to Aspasia and Macrina; but she is the first whom we know to have been engaged in teaching and research as we understand it today. Indeed, the parallels to a modern university professor are remarkable. First there was her research and publication, which seems entirely to have been technical mathematics, and about which we shall say more below. Second there was her teaching — to large numbers in her lectures, whether at her house or in the public street, on Plato or Aristotle or whatever, and to smaller numbers, her graduate students, Synesius and the other young noblemen who gathered around her. Thirdly, there was service: there is a tradition that she succeeded to the headship of the academy, but whether that is true or not, her engagement in the public life of the city is clear. And, as with many academics of our own day, it was service that did her in.

I'd like, against that sketchy background, to raise three questions. The first, about which there has been much debate, is just what Hypatia wrote; exactly what was the basis of her reputation for scholarship and research? The second is this: what were her philosophical views — what was her "line" — that so enthralled Synesius and his fellows? Thirdly, one of the most puzzling things about her, how did it come to be that, in times of such strident factionalism, though a pagan, she was the beloved teacher of Christians? It is presumably even the case that noble Christian families were willing to send their sons to her for instruction.

First, then, what did she write and what are we to make of it? A good deal has shifted in the scholarship of this question in the last two decades. It used to be thought that virtually nothing that Hypatia wrote has come down to us. Now, though, that assessment has been turned on its head, and the consensus appears to be that we actually have quite a lot of her scholarly production. The difficulty is that all her work lay in editing and commenting on technical mathematical and astronomical texts, and her editorial contributions and her comments have become incorporated into those texts, and can only be extricated by the most exacting scholarship, the scholarship of de-interpolation. Thus, according to the *Suda*, she published a commentary on Diophantus' *Arithmetica*, an edition of Ptolemy's *Handy Astronomical Tables*, and a commentary on the *Conic Sections* of Apollonius of Perga. The modern scholars who have worked to isolate Hypatia's contributions here, however they may differ in their exact results, are of one mind on the essential point: her contribution was pedagogical, expository and elementary. Alan Cameron's exhaustive study of the matter judges that "the more extravagant expectations are certainly dashed"; the content is "exegetical rather than critical, designed for the use of elementary students". And Wilbur Knorr is alarmed at what he has discovered about Hypatia's published work, noting that it

seems to bespeak an "essentially trivial mind". She was not, then, a creative mathematical genius; she was a math teacher, a writer of school textbooks.

Well, that is something of a blow to the heroine, and it raises the question of the basis of her reputation in antiquity. Of course, it would not be the first time that an intellectual's reputation has stemmed not from his or her writing but from teaching, from self-presentation, from exemplary embodiment of a set of values. So we are brought to my second question: what were her philosophical views, what was her "line" that so enthralled her students, both the casual hearers of her lectures and the small circle of enrapt "graduate students"?

I think we cannot answer the first part of this question, except insofar as we can answer the second part. We have no real evidence about the subjects of her popular lectures, except that they were about Plato and Aristotle or any other philosopher anyone asked about. It is more likely that the success of these lectures had less to do with their content and more to do rather with her reputation and her presence. I am reminded of the recent lectures in Canada of the Dalai Lama; it cannot have been their content which drew the crowds; it was rather the reputation of the man, a reputation built to some extent by public persona, but more by the spreading word of those who have studied and worked with him more intimately.

And on the second part of the question we have some chance of making progress. The letters and other writings of Synesius are our window here. And, before we turn to analyze them and extract some sort of answer to our question, it must be said that — unlike any of the other sources for Hypatia — they are largely immune to the usual sort of source-criticism: he has no motive for bias. When Synesius writes to or of Hypatia it is always with the most devoted respect; yet he was not currying favour with her or trying to arm one side against another in the ongoing tensions of Alexandria. He is beating no drums, unlike Socrates Scholasticus or John of Nikiu. He is mostly concerned with his own troubles in Cyrene, and either seeking help with some or other scientific problem, or else trying to lift his spirits by thinking of his glory days as one of the coterie of Hypatia's students.

From the letters (there are about 160 of them) we can reconstruct something of that coterie of students. We know the names of some of them: Herculianus, Olympius, Ision, Hesychius, Euoptius (Synesius' brother), Alexander, Theotecnus, Athanasius, Theodosius, Gaius, Auxentius. It is significant that many of these young men were well-born, and well off. They were to become high-ranking civil servants or ecclesiastics or otherwise important in various parts of the empire. Athanasius became a famous sophist; Theodosius became a famous grammarian. They hailed from many different parts of the Empire: certainly from the Cyrenaica, from Syria, from Alexandria (of course), from the Thebaid and from Constantinople, and doubtless from other places as well. The bonds of friendship they established seem to have been

enduring ones; and Synesius' letters imply that they visited one another in their various cities after their student days were over. These were the *jeunesse dorée* of the eastern Empire; part of the unforgettable richness of their student days, of course, will have derived from who *they* were — and not just from the virtues of their teacher. It seems to me that nowadays in a good university a student learns half of what he or she learns from interaction with other students; it will have been no different then. (When parents worry about what university to send their students to they shouldn't just worry about the quality of the professors; much more important is the quality of the other students!)

But what did Hypatia teach, that so inspired and fired them? She certainly taught mathematics: Synesius speaks of learning "divine geometry" (iJera; gewmetriva), and he speaks elsewhere of the students "toiling painfully together" (sugkekuvfamen). Synesius' writings betray no particular aptitude for mathematics, and so I imagine him and some of his fellows being led arduously through Euclid, and experiencing the great adolescent rush of adrenalin which comes from completing a proof. And as extensions of mathematics, I imagine that Hypatia will have taught rudimentary astronomy, and also musical theory, since the ancient understanding of the latter was as an entirely mathematical science. The Greek reduction of music to arithmetic, accomplished in different ways by Pythagoreans and by Aristoxenus, brings a great gasp of satisfaction when one understands it.

She appears also to have taught some experimental science. Certainly Synesius knows enough later in life to design an astrolabe and have it made by a silversmith; he knows about hydrometers for measuring the density of a liquid; indeed he asks Hypatia to have one made up for him. John of Nikiu mentions that Hypatia was much occupied with "magic, astrolabes and instruments of music"; I am not sure what is meant by "magic" here, but there is this other evidence for the astrolabes, and instruments of music are not at all improbable.

There is excitement in studies of this sort; they carry a sense of progress and accomplishment in themselves: "astronomy proceeds to its demonstrations clearly and distinctly, making use of arithmetic and geometry as helpers; disciplines which one can properly call a fixed measure of truth." These studies were, however, set by Hypatia within a standard Platonic framework, a framework in which they were merely propaedeutic to higher sorts of knowledge. She did not do mathematics for its own sake. Synesius writes that astronomy opens up the way to ineffable theology.

So these bright students learned technical disciplines which gave them a huge sense of excitement and of actual accomplishment — arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music — and they learned that these technical studies were but initiatory to a great study, a great cognitive adventure, which lay beyond — the mystical knowledge of Being of which Plato writes in various ways. Whether or not they thought they had achieved this greater knowledge by the time they left their formal studies, they knew that they

had engaged most securely and most satisfyingly — quite palpably — on the path which led to it.

It is also the case, and I think this may be quite important, that there was an understanding of esotericism among them, an agreement that the subject of their studies was secret and must remain so.

But I think that something else was going on as well, and this brings me to my third question, my question about the fact that Hypatia the pagan philosopher was the chosen teacher for so many Christian students. She does not appear to have been inimical to Christianity; she was, for example, quite able to be friendly with Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria before Cyril; there is no record of any Christian student being led into apostasy as a result of her teaching. What was going on? Actually, I suspect that in the answer to this question there lies the great truth about Hypatia, the great secret of her fame and her success.

If we were to draw a continuum for the manifestations of paganism, they might be seen to run from theurgy — magic and sorcery — at one end, through mythology and liturgy in the middle, to rather rarefied deep spiritual truth — philosophy — at the other. And if we were to draw a similar continuum for Christianity, it would run from superstition at one end, to liturgy and revelation in the middle, to natural theology at the other end. Now it is arguable that pagan philosophy and Christian natural theology overlap to a significant degree; such, at any rate, would be the view of a Christian neoplatonist. I think that Hypatia was able to teach the propositions of this overlapping region in such a way that they might appear to be the real truth of the Christian, or the pagan, system, the spiritual truth which ultimately lay beneath either mythology. She was able to find the point of congruence of Christianity and paganism.

Consider again Hypatia's students. In one way or another they were all schizophrenic. As Hellenes they will all or most have had a Greek classical education, with the whole view of the world that that entailed. But they were living in a society — and were set to become important players in a society — in which Christianity was clearly gaining ground; indeed it had recently become pretty much obligatory. They cannot have been immune to these tensions. And Hypatia was able to resolve them, or seemed able to do so. She offered them a way of reconciling their pagan culture with the requirement to be Christian by pointing to a common philosophical truth behind them both.

Certainly, something of this sort appears to have been the case for Synesius. After his studies were over, and after he successfully accomplished a diplomatic mission to the Emperor on behalf of his native city, he hoped to retire to his beloved life of minding his estates, hunting ostriches, writing philosophy and poetry, keeping contact with his friends, and "contemplation". It was not to be. He was pressed most unwillingly into service as bishop of his native city, and indeed as metropolitan of the whole region. As

he was considering this prospect he wrote a marvellous letter about his hesitations to his brother Euoptios, part of which reads:

There is one point, however, which is not new to Theophilus [the archbishop of Alexandria], but of which I must remind him. I must press my point here a little more, for beside his difficulty all the others are as nothing. It is difficult, if not quite impossible, that convictions should be shaken, which have entered the soul through knowledge to the point of demonstration. Now you know that philosophy rejects many of those convictions which are cherished by the common people. For my own part, I can never persuade myself that the soul is of more recent origin than the body. Never would I admit that the world and the parts which make it up must perish. This resurrection, which is an object of common belief, is nothing for me but a sacred and mysterious allegory, and I am far from sharing the views of the vulgar crowd thereon. The philosophic mind, albeit a discerner of truth, admits the employment of falsehood...I consider that the false may be beneficial to the populace, and the truth injurious to those not strong enough to gaze steadfastly on the radiance of real being. If the laws of the priesthood that obtain with us permit these views to me, I can take over the holy office on condition that I may proscute philosophy at home and spread legends abroad....

So Synesius' view is that many of the doctrines of Christianity are "noble lies" which it is good for the populace to believe; the truth, however, is attained by philosophy. Must this not have been the secret teaching of Hypatia, the balm for the worried souls of her students, and the ultimate source of their undying loyalty to her? Hypatia had found the way to make being Christian acceptable to a philosopher, by the utterly platonic device of the noble lie.

So, here is my picture. Hypatia did not have a creative mathematical mind, though she knew her mathematics. Her writings were math textbooks. Whatever she may have taught to larger audiences, to her intimate coterie of students she taught the quadrivium — arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music; she taught these subjects rigorously and set them within a Platonic picture in which they were understood as steps to a mystical sort of knowledge of being itself. Moreover, she helped her students with the great tension of the age by applying to certain Christian teachings the typical Platonic doctrine of the noble lie — as she would also have done with many pagan teachings. This part, at least, of her instruction was esoteric.

It was, perhaps, a kind of peacemaking that was destined to come apart in the end, and whatever the precise story of the events leading to her death (and we won't try to unravel those this evening) it seems clear that, at least by some, she was regarded as a disturbingly anti-Christian force.

**A final twist**

Thus far I have told you the story of the first woman academic in the western tradition, as far as we know it, and I have tried to understand why she had such a powerful reputation as a philosopher and teacher in her own day. I've tried to neutralize some of the more extravagant claims about her that have been made by people seeking to invoke her as heroine and mascot for a whole series of causes. There is, however, a further twist to this story. I first encountered it in a novel by the Quebec novelist Jean Marcel: *Hypatie ou la fin des dieux*; I thought at the time that it was purely fanciful, but I have since discovered that it is widely thought to be true by those who know about these things.

Those of us who were raised as Catholics will remember the story of St Catherine of Alexandria. She was a Christian girl who, at the tender age of 18, approached the Emperor Maximinus (late 3rd century) to remonstrate with him for persecuting Christians. He was no match for her argumentative skill, so he summoned his best philosophers to come in and defeat her in argument. One after another they failed, were converted, and then promptly beheaded by the Emperor. Even the Empress went to visit her, was converted, and then put to death. The Emperor, in a rage, ordered that Catherine be put to death by the torture of the wheel; but when the saint touched the wheel it crumbled away. So he had her beheaded, and then she did, indeed, die. Angels spirited her body away to Mt Sinai, where it lay hidden until it was miraculously discovered in the 9th century, and the famous monastery of St Catherine of Sinai was founded on the spot. St Catherine was the object of a vigorous cult for half a millennium. Fittingly enough, she is the patron saint of philosophers. Colleagues, she is *our* representative in heaven.

Or she *was*. The Bollandists — the rigorous jesuit society which looks into the historicity of saints — began to suspect about a hundred years ago that the legend of St Catherine was simply without historical foundation. Their doubts led to the dropping of St Catherine from the Roman Catholic calendar of feastdays in 1969. But what they also suspected — and this suspicion is now widely shared — that the story of St Catherine was merely a Christian reworking of the story of Hypatia, Hypatia who had maintained a high if blurry reputation in the minds of the Alexandrian populace.

So, colleagues, I leave you with a little puzzle for the theory of reference:

St. Catherine does not exist; she is really Hypatia.