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Howard Roberts' *Hypatia of Alexandria*: A Form of Neoplatonic Beauty*

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This essay examines an American 19th-century sculpture, Howard Roberts' *Hypatia*, both historically and aesthetically (see Figures 1 and 2). Problems of interpretation are found at both levels because of limited documentation. However, a speculative analysis adapting Plotinus' notions on the "delight of the intellect" and of "seeing" assist in considering beauty in the carved form, even if the subject is grave. What prompted this commission and who commissioned this work are questions to be considered.

Keywords: 19th Century American Sculpture, Howard Roberts, *Hypatia*, Neoplatonism, Philadelphia

Introduction

This essay examines an American 19th-century sculpture, Howard Roberts' *Hypatia*, both historically and aesthetically (see Figures 1 and 2). Problems of interpretation are found at both levels because of limited documentation. However, a speculative analysis adapting Plotinus' notions on the "delight of the intellect" and of "seeing" assist in considering beauty in the carved form, even if the subject is grave.

The American sculptor, Howard Roberts (April 8, 1843-April 19, 1900) completes the marble a statue of *Hypatia* in 1873.[1] The purpose of this commission is unclear. Documents from the Free Library of Philadelphia, Archives of American Art, and Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts indicate that at this time, the Philadelphia sculptor travels with his life-size plaster cast of *Hypatia* to Paris in 1873 to transform it into

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[1] Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts (PAFA) Inventory 1928.1, Marble statue dated 1890, height 67" (170.2 cm), width 23.74" (60.3 cm) and depth 28.5" (72.4 cm). The signature "HRoberts" is incised in the marble, located in the horizontal surface, in front left hand corner of the base. There are several conservation records in the PAFA inventories, dated September 19, 1980, March 1, 1981 and July 25, 1988. The first conservation report of 1980 is a proposal for cleaning the statue from Virginia N. Naudé, Sculptor Conservator, to Frank H. Goodyear, Jr., PAFA Curator. Naudé notes that there has been no previous cleaning and explains the condition of the statue: "The surface of the marble is very dirty. The overall effect is grey and yellow tones with an accumulation of dust in the pockets of the modeling. There are no major losses. There are minor chips particularly at the base". The second record of 1981, also from Naudé, confirms condition, treatment and execution of conservation for payment of $1,350.00. In the third conservation record of 1988, a new conservator, D. Disanto, suggests an overall cleaning, after having "dusted with soft brushes the statue".

marble.[2] Other documents from the Academy contain a handwritten letter of Howard Roberts, dated February 22, 1894, to Harrison S. Morris, Director of PAFA, who offers to loan *Hypatia* to the Academy. The letter states:

> Howard Roberts
> Bryn Mawr, PA (crossed off)
> 1500 Walnut Street
>
> Mr. Harrison S. Morris, Dear Sir,
>
> I have a large life size marble figure, entitled "*Hypatia*". Executed by me several years ago, which has never been on exhibition except a short time at Earles' Galleries [Philadelphia].[3]
>
> I should like to offer this statue as a loan to the Academy if it meets your approval, and also of the Board of Directors.
>
> I have also my life size nude figure in marble. Entitled "La Premiere Pose" which took a medal at the Centennial—This statue I propose taking with me to Europe, but it would give me great pleasure to exhibit it in your Academy before I leave my home for an indefinite time.
>
> If you will place this matter before the Board of Directors, You will
> Much oblige
> Very truly yours
> Howard Roberts

The Academy responded favorably by acquiring on loan *Hypatia* on March 9, 1894,[4] and acknowledging the statue as gift and part of the permanent collection on January 30, 1928.[5]

Other letters in the PAFA's documents deal with the official acquisition of *Hypatia* by the Academy from the Roberts' Estate.[6] After his wife's death, Helen Pauline Davies Lewis Roberts (1853-1938), and on behalf of her estate, the sculpture of *Hypatia* is donated to the Academy in 1939.[7] Although Roberts never taught there, he attended as a student and was a registered as a member.[8]

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[2] See Free Library of Philadelphia, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian, Roll 3657, Howard Roberts, Scrapbook and Photographs, [ca 1867]-1894, microfilm reel, 55-119, and PAFA's records on Howard Roberts' *Hypatia*.

[3] Roberts' wife, Pauline, composed this Scrapbook documenting her husband's career. Unfortunately, many of the entries are untitled or undated. In the Scrapbook, there are several newspaper clippings on Roberts' *Hypatia* exhibited at the Earles' Galleries, No. 816 Chestnut Street, on February 19, 1877, admission fee of 25 cents, from *The Star*, March nd, 1877, *The Ledge*, March nd, 1877, and *The Press*, March nd, 1977.

[4] Noted in a letter of January 3, 1939, from Joseph T. Fraser, Secretary of PAFA, to Paul J. Hess, Assistant Trust Officer of the Estate of Pauline L. Roberts, from the Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company, in the PAHA folder on Roberts' *Hypatia*.

[5] See PAHA folder on Roberts' *Hypatia*. In the letter, Roberts' wife, Pauline also requests the transfer release of Roberts' *Premier Pose*, on loan at the PAFA, to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

[6] In the records of the PAHA folder on Roberts' *Hypatia*, there are three letters addressing to this inheritance. The statue of *Hypatia* is appraised for $50.00. See correspondence between Paul J. Hess, Assistant Trust Officer of the Estate of Pauline L. Roberts, from the Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company, and Alfred G. B. Steel, President of PAFA, dated December 21, 1938, December 24, 1938, December 27, 1938, and January 3, 1939.

[7] In the records of the PAFA folder on Roberts' *Hypatia*, the letter of Paul J. Hess, Assistant Trust Officer of the Estate of Pauline L. Roberts, from the Fidelity-Philadelphia Trust Company, dated December 21, 1938, to Alfred G. B. Steel, President of PAFA, specifically requests an official letter of Inventory and Appraisement for inheritance tax purposes and in order to comply with the "satisfaction of the award in connection with the statue of *Hypatia* [$50.00], which the state Mrs. Pauline L. Roberts gave to the Academy and which you accepted over 10 years ago". From this letter, it is assumed that the statue was in view at the Academy 10 years before it became part of the permanent collection in 1939. See PAHA folder on Roberts' *Hypatia*, letter of January 3, 1939, where the PAHA curator, Joseph T. Fraser, writes that the Academy acquired *Hypatia* "on March 9, 1894, through deposit by the artists, Howard Roberts".

[8] Correspondence with Dr. Jeff Richmond-Moll, Archives Coordinator of PAFA, March 28, 2014. Unfortunately, at present there are no drawings of this sculpture. Data on this artist is limited. See David Sellin, "The First Pose: Howard Roberts, Thomas Eakins and a Century of Philadelphia Nudes", *Bulletin of the Philadelphia Museum of Art*, (Spring 1975), 70, pp. 311-12; Joe Rischl, "Howard Roberts (1843-1900)", *Philadelphia: Three Centuries of American Art* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1976), pp. 394-96; and Susan James-Gadzinski and Mary Mullen Cunningham, "Howard Roberts, 1843-1900", *American Sculpture in the Museum of American Art of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts* (PAFA, 1997), pp. 86-89.

There is limited information on the life and career of Roberts. He was born in Philadelphia from a social and cultured established family. At an early age, he enrolls at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts to study sculpture.[9] In 1866, he moves to Paris to continue his studies at the Ècole nationale supèrieure des Beaux-Arts. While there, befriends Philadelphian artists Mary Cassatt and Thomas Eakins. Their friendship was short lived though, due to a clash in personalities. Eakins finds Roberts to be "a rich disagreeable Philadelphian".[10]

In 1869, Roberts returns to Philadelphia for a brief time to complete in marble *Hester Pyrnne* (1869-72, location unknown), a heroine in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter* and a marble bust of *Lucile* (1872, location unknown) inspired by Owen Meredith's love poem *Lucile*.[11] He returns to Paris in 1873 with his plaster cast of *Hypatia* (another heroine and protagonist from a novel of Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia*) to be carved in marble. While in Paris, Roberts also starts carving *La Premiere Pose* (1873-76, now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art), which he completes in Philadelphia in 1876 for the Centennial Exposition, winning a gold medal.

Now renown as a sculptor in America, Roberts receives a commission in 1877 for a major sculptural work to be placed in the US Capitol in Washington, DC—a statue of *Robert Fulton* (1765-1815), American inventor and engineer of the steamboat. Remaining in Philadelphia till 1884, Roberts continues to sculpt in his studio, but then moves to Paris and lives and works there until his death in 1900. Although highly regarded as an American artist, his productivity as a sculptor was scarce, completing only eight known sculptures.[12] After his death, his family presented to the Philadelphia Museum of Art a gift of a fifteen-century Italian interior belonging to Howard Roberts as a memorial to his artistic achievements. The composition of the room consisted of wooden ceiling and floor; two marble doorways: a Florentine oval arch with floral ornaments and a Venetian stoned arch, with a Latin inscription above it, which reads, "Enter and you will be happy"; and some furnishings.[13]

Today, Roberts' *Hypatia*, a life-size marble sculpture, is on view at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts (see Figures 1 and 2). The subject of an ancient mathematician, astronomer, and philosopher of the Neoplatonic Alexandria School is an unusual theme for an American sculptor at this time. What might have prompted this commission and who commissioned this work is not known. It appears to be a personal creation, probably from Roberts' life experience. He is a learned man interested in the portrayal of heroines in literature who are victimized by religious fanatics, as with his sculpture of *Hester Pyrnne*, which is based on Hawthorne's heroine, who was charged with adultery and sentenced to wear a large scarlet letter A by her Puritan community because she violated their social mores as being a single, unmarried woman with a child. Similarly, Hypatia is persecuted and brutally murdered by a Christian mob in Alexandria because she taught non-Christian

[9] In the Scrapbook, there is short essay, "An Hour in a Sculptor's Studio", printed by the editor of *Art* (no name), dated January 18, 1879. The article explains Roberts' method of composing a statue, starting his pieces as studies in clay models, which he refers to them as "sculptor's art or life", then transforming these models into plaster, a process that he calls "death", and finishing them in marble, a conversion of an artistic invention into a material form, which he refers to as "a resurrection".

[10] See David Sellin who identifies Roberts as a subject in Eakins' 1867 life study by Sellin, p. 21, and Fig. 16.

[11] In the Scrapbook, there are three undated and unlisted newspaper's clippings praising Roberts' *Lucile* and relating it to the 1860 narrative poem of *Lucile* by Owen Meredith (pseudonym adopted by Edward Roberts, Earl of Lytton).

[12] Other works are the *Bust of Eleanore* (1870) at PAFA, *Lot's Wife* (1876) private collection; *Napoleon's First Battle* (1878), private collection.

[13] See Scrapbook containing three photos and two newspaper entries, with no date and no paginations. This room is still in view at the museum.

philosophy and did not abide by the laws of Christian rulers.

Some records reveal Roberts' fascination with Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia, or New Foes with an Old Face*. Perhaps based on the French novel of Charles Marie-René Leconte de Lisle's *Hypatie* of 1847,[14] Kingsley's English novel written in 1852 achieved great popularity, not only in England, but also in the rest of Europe and in America.[15] In 1859, The Academy of Music in Philadelphia performed a play staging *The Black Agate, or, Old Foes with New Faces*, based on Kingsley's book. Probably enlightened Philadelphians attended the performance, and little doubt Roberts was present and inspired by this performance.

This study contemplates on how Roberts' Neoplatonic concept of beauty is visualized in *Hypatia*. The historical figure of Hypatia, who lectured on Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus at the Alexandria Academy, captivated him. She was known for her intellectual "beauty" as well for her physical beauty, and thus a target and a victim of Christian persecution, a threat to the men of the Academy of Alexandria and to the "domestic" women of that city.

There are limited historical sources on the life Hypatia of Alexandria (350/70-415 CE) (Dzielska, 1995; Gálvez, 2010; Beretta, 1993; MacLennan, 2013). Most of the records were probably destroyed during her massacre on "the month of March during Lent"[16] and the second burning of the Library of Alexander the Great and The Temple of Serapis or Serapium in 391. These cruel and ruthless events occur during the governance of Emperor Theodosius II (408-450), a Christian Patriarch of Alexandria, and continued by his fanatic nephew, Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria.

There are some primary sources on the life Hypatia.[17] Christian historiographer Socrates Scholasticus' (380 BCE-439 CE) *Ecclesiastical History* (VIII. 9) completed in 439,[18] best captures the personality of Hypatia:

> 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 who 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] infrequently appeared in public in presence of the magistrates. Neither did she feel abashed in going to an assembly of men. For all men on account of her extraordinary dignity and virtue admired her the more.[19]

Throughout the history of art, there are numerous depictions of this extraordinary female from Roman fresco (*Hypatia*, before 79 CE, Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples), medieval manuscripts (*A Woman*

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[14] He portrayed Hypatia as the epitome of "vulnerable truth and beauty" See Catherine Edwards, *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789-1945* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 112-15.

[15] Ibid., p. 55.

[16] See Socrates Scholasticus (380 BCE-439 CE) in *Historia Ecclesiastica* (VII. 15). For an English translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica* (*Ecclessiastical History*), see A. C. Zenos publication as *Nicene and post Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1890), and Theresa Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

[17] See Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria*, pp. 111-119, for sources on Hypatia. These primary sources are as follows: 1) An entry in the *Suda Lexicon* (Suidas–10th century A.D.); 2) A passage in the *Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus*; 3) An excerpt from *The Chronicle of John, Coptic Bishop of Nikiu*; 4) Six letters by Hypatia's pupil, Synesius of Cyrene; 5) Four miscellaneous short extracts from other works: (a) The inscription at the beginning of Book III of Theon's Commentary on Ptolemy's *Almagest*; (b) A brief reference in an ecclesiastical history by Philostorgius; (c) Another brief reference in the *Chronicle* of John Malalas; and (d) A further brief reference in the *Chronographia* of Theophanes.

[18] See Zenos, *Nicene and post Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, and Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State*, passim.

[19] See Socrates Scholasticus (380 BCE-439 CE) in *Ecclesiastical History* (VIII. 9).

Teaching Geometry in the frontispiece of Abelard of Bath's Latin translation of Euclid's' *Elements* 1309-1316, at the British Library, Catalogue entry: Burney 275), and Renaissance paintings (Raphael's *Hypatia*, 1512, a detail, in the School of Athens, Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican). In the 19th century, Hypatia's notoriety is revived and dramatized in photographs (Julia Margaret Cameron's *Hypatia*, 1868, Victoria and Albert Museum in London), in paintings (Charles William Mitchell's *Hypatia*, 1885, Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK), and in sculptures (Francis John Williamson's *Hypatia*, 1891, at the Royal Academy of Arts in London), culminating in the 20th century with a depiction of a place setting in Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* in1974 (Collection of Elizabeth A. Sackler, Brooklyn Museum in New York), and numerous novels on her life as well as a recent melodramatic film on her persona.

In the 19th century, inspired by the victimization of Hypatia, Roberts selects this passage from Kingsley's writing for composing his statue.

> On, up the nave, fresh shreds of her dress strewing the holy pavement—up the chancel steps themselves—up to the altar—right underneath the great still Christ: and there even those hell-hounds paused. She shook herself free from her tormentors, and springing back, rose for one moment to her full height, naked, snow-white against the dusky mass around—shame and indignation in those wide clear eyes, but not a stain of fear. With one hand she clasped her golden locks around her; the other long white arm was stretched upward toward the great still Christ appealing—and who dare say in vain?—from man to God. Charles Kingsley, *Hypatia (XXIX)*.

Roberts depicts a disheveled Hypatia (see Figures 1 and 2), partially nude revealing her breasts, attempting to hold on to her clothing with her right hand, while clutching a large candelabrum with her left hand in order to maintain her balance. At her feet are Christian symbols, a large Crucified Christ, and an incense-cover, alluding to the cause of her persecution for not being a Christian follower. Her exaggerated contrapposto stance, unbalanced posture and messy attire differ from her stern and angry gaze. Roberts captures the dramatization of the event, creating a visual paradox for the viewer knowledgeable of the horror story.

By portraying the protagonist in a beautiful composition of a carved and polish marble, with idealized human proportion and sensual volumes and lines, Roberts glorifies martyrdom and violence. By employing white marble, he enhances the physical beauty of the form, transgressing the gravity of the subject, in order to elevate the level of just seeing beauty to the delight in experiencing beauty or a beautiful form.

In an unusual version of *Hypatia*, 1891, Williamson portrays her completely nude and valiantly defying her aggressors (compare Figures 1 and 3). While Hiram Powers' *Greek Slave*, 1851 (Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, CT, compare Figures 1 and 4), an earlier sculpture, conveys the opposite sentiment of Williamson's *Hypatia* and Roberts' *Hypatia*. Powers' *Greek Slave* (compare Figures 1, 3, and 4), as Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem narrates, is a victim of pagan degradation and rape (Browning, 1886). The poem reads:

> They say Ideal beauty cannot enter
> The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
> An alien Image with unshackled hands,
> Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her
> (That passionless perfection which he lent her,
> Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)
> To so confront man's crimes in different lands
> With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,

> Art's fiery finger! and break up ere long
> The serfdom of this world. Appeal, fair stone,
> From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!
> Catch up in thy divine face, not alone
> East griefs but west, and strike and shame the strong,
> By thunders of white silence, overthrown. (Browning, 1886, p. 302)

Powers' beautiful sensual statue allures the viewer to enjoy the physical beauty of the young female, ignoring the consequences for the victimization of the female. A small crucifix is placed above her removed garment, wrapped around the column, which alludes to her Christian belief.

During the 19th century, American sculptors such as Powers and Roberts travel to Paris and Florence to study art. Roberts opts for Paris, while Powers resides in Florence. Their studies consisted not only in viewing classical and Renaissance sculpture, but also of learning the art of carving marble, since there were no major art collections and museums in the United States at this time for them to study. Along with the fascination of learning the art form, these sculptors also became familiar with the artistic theory of antiquity and their assimilation in the Renaissance.

It is puzzling why Roberts would select an image of Hypatia, a Greek female scholar and a Neoplatonic advocate for his modern sculpture. Perhaps his interest in or affinity for Neoplatonism originates from his educational experiences in Philadelphia and Paris. In his native city of Philadelphia, there is a flourishing religious group and quasi-philosophical movement called *The Philadelphian Society*, which had Neoplatonic empathies. Although at this time it is not possible to ascertain his familiarity or membership in this group, it can be assumed that because of his social status and level of education, he was culturally aware of this well-established philosophical movement. And in Paris, during his sojourns and artistic trainings, Roberts likely acquire knowledge of antiquity in art through reading Johann Joachim Wincklemann's *History of the Art of Antiquity* of 1764 and *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* of 1765 (Harloe, 2013).

In Paris, another probable source for learning about antiquity is through the philosophical writings on Neoplatonism from the leading literati such as the Neoplatonic philosopher Victor Cousin (1792-1867), who translates the works of Proclus Diadochus, between 1820 and 1827, as well as the writings of Plato, thus providing awareness into the Hellenistic Platonic ideals to the French humanists in the 19th century (Vos, 2006; Taylor, 1816; Coleridge, n.d.; Kooy, 2002; Hunt Jr., 1976; Wallace, 1972; Hankey, n.d.). In turn, Cousin's research influenced Henri Bergson's philosophical lectures on Plotinus at the Collège de France in 1897-89.

A further cultural influence are the literary writings of poet and literary critic Thèophile Gauthier, with his popular novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835) and collection of poems on art, *Èmaux et Camées* (1852). His work fostered Neoplatonic interest in his humanist's circles. Anglo-American writer, Henry James, an admirer of Gauthier' writings, claims that Gauthier's poems in *Èmaux et Camées* reveal "robustness of vision and association to Plato" (Osrermark-Johansen, 2011, p. 124). In *Plato and Platonism* of 1889, Walter Horatio Pater (1839-1894), also an aficionado of Gauthier and Plato, elaborates on Gauthier's Platonic "pursuit of an ideal and of a diaphanous [and] sexless beauty" and on Gauthier's notion of "double vision" that is "the glance into both the visible and the invisible worlds". Gauthier regards sculpture as a "pagan art form, closely linked to the nude, to mythology and to the heroic life of the Greeks" (Osrermark-Johansen, 2011, p. 125).

Neoplatonism in France is earlier manifested by the writings of Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) in his *Essays*, and Francois Rabelais (1483-1553) in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. In turn, these French writers are

influenced by earlier 16th century translations of the philosophical books of Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), in particular, his commentary on *Plato's Symposium* (1484 in Latin and 1544 in Italian) and Ficino's influence on Italian treatises of love-poetry. Successively, this Italian literature was translated into French, e.g., Pietro Bembo's *Asolani* (1505) with the French translation of 1545; Baldassare Castiglone's *Il Corteggiano* (1517/28) with a French translation of 1537; and Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'amore* (1502/25) with two French translations in 1551 (Merrill & Clements, 1957).

There is an interesting parallel between the American sculptors and the students of Hypatia. When American 19th-century sculptors travel to Paris and Florence for their artistic training in carving marble sculpture, there is also their quest for the intellectual pursuit on classical culture and its assimilation by Renaissance masters. Perhaps with the same eagerness, students and scholars in Hellenistic world travel to Alexandria to study philosophy, mathematics and astronomy with the renowned Hypatia.

According to the *Suda Lexicon* (Adler, 1928 and 1971, pp. 16-18), a 10th-century Byzantine encyclopedia, during her residence in Athens, Hypatia comes in contact with the Neoplatonic School, founded by Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus (MacLennan, 2013, pp. 27-37). Since most of her original writings are destroyed during her life, what survive are fragmented statements and mathematical references. Hypatia's mathematical references assist in comprehending their association with proportion and its application in artistic term (Cameron, 1990). While passages on astronomy (*Astronomical Canon*) and philosophy reveal her love for knowledge of the celestial bodies and beauty of the "mystery of being" (MacLennan, 2013). These passages, for example, recall Plotinus' concept of beauty as a form of the Intellect/Spirit or the love of beauty (Plotinus, *Enneads*, I).[20]

In composing his statue, Roberts is aesthetically concerned with the creation of a total form, which is expressed in intuitive mathematically measurable terms and proportions. Technically, this artistic form demonstrates the physical composition in relation to a proportional design. This artistic form is also manifested in the subject matter, which is the sum of human experience. The artist's metaphysical notion of artistic-divine is visualized in terms of a creative force, love, which is expressed in the creation of beauty. Roberts creates beauty, which is perceived by the senses, what Eric Newton refers as "contemplating faculty of the perceiver" (Newton, 1967; Lefkowitz, 1986), to insight sensational pleasure or visual delight. The deeper the experience of the viewer, the greater is the human capacity for contemplation, transforming the immediate visual physical delight into a suspended intellectual delight, a contemplation of beauty. Thus, Hypatia's persona and Neoplatonic ideals of artistic measurability inspire Roberts' conceit of beauty for his sculpture.

With these observations on the analysis of Roberts' *Hypatia*, maybe considered to be a Hypatia's perception of love, Eros, or her quest to delight the intellect manifestation of ultimate beauty. According to Synesius of Cyrene's *Epistles* (ES. 139 c. 410), Hypatia's student and follower, her notion of beauty is similar to that of Plotinus.[21] Noting Plotinus' comments on beauty, he writes:

> When a man sees the beauty in bodies he must not run after them; we must know that they are images, traces, shadows, and hurry away to that which they image. For if a man runs to the image and wants to seize it as if it was the

[20] See *Plotinus* (*Biography and Enneads*), ed. and trans. A. H. Armstrong, vols. 7 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), *Enneads*, I.

[21] See *Synesii Cyrenensis Epistolae*, ed. A. Garzya (Rome, 1979) and *Opere di Sinesio di Cirene, epistole, operette*, ed. A. Garzya (Turin: Unione Tipographico, 1989), cited in Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria*, p. 51, and *Synesius. The essays and Hymans of Synesius of Cyrene, Including the Address to the Emperor Arcadius and the Political Speech*, ed. and trans. Augustine Fitzgerald, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926 and 1930), passim.

> reality… then this man who clings to beautiful bodies and does not let them go… sinks down into the dark depths. Where intellect has no delight, and stays blind in Hades consorting with shadows there and here. (Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.6.8). (Dzielska, 1995, p. 51)

Plotinus' notion of the sense of sight (Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.6.1) contributes to his theory of beauty, as Gauthier appropriates it as a "double vision". Plotinus further claims, "Symmetry of parts toward each other and toward a whole constitutes the beauty that is the beauty of the Good. This type of beauty consists in the virtual unity of all the Forms. As it is the ultimate cause of the complexity of intelligible reality, it is the cause of the delight we experience in a Forms" (Plotinus, *Enneads*, V 5. 12), as visualized in the sculpture of Roberts.

> The eye, Plotinus notes, is employed as a metaphor for a statue, if it is chipped or broken, smooth it out so that it looks like the original one. After doing this, you will have a vision of yourself as true light. But only if your own eye is purely refined: the perceiver and thing perceived must be similar to each other before true vision exists. (Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.6.8)

In his sculpture, Roberts aims to delight the senses, even with a brutal story. This delight has a bittersweet twist. The eye is guided in seeing the part and the whole of the form. Once the eye captures the totality of the form, the intellect processes the visual experience with delight—an aesthetic pause—[22] ignoring the cruel subject matter. In viewing this statue, Hypatia might respond in saying:

> Forces of the universe, interior virtues
> Harmonious union of earth and heaven
> That delights the mind and the ear and the eye,
> That offers an attainable ideal to all wise men
> And a visible splendor to the beauty of the soul.
> Such are my Gods! (Dzielska, 1995, p. 6)

Conclusion

In the sculpture of *Hypatia*, Roberts selects for his imagery a subject of a Greek heroine and a renowned Neoplatonic scholar, who is brutally murdered by a Christian mob. Roberts' creation aims to delight the senses, even with a merciless story. The visual delight has a bittersweet twist. The viewer's eye is guided in seeing the part and the whole of the form. Once the eye captures the totality of the form, the intellect processes the visual experience with delight—an aesthetic pause—ignoring the cruel subject matter. The beauty of the form transcends the visual experience from a natural realm into an aesthetic realm. In *Hypatia*, Roberts reveals a Neoplatonic conceit.

[22] See *A Companion to the Works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessings*, ed. Barbara Fischer and Thomas C. Fox (New York: Camden House, 2005), p. 271, for a discussion of Lessing's *pregnant moment*, a suspended aesthetic moment in the visualization of an artwork.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Howard Roberts, *Hypatia*, 1873, front view, Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA. Source: Author. Permission from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA.

Figure 2. Howard Roberts, *Hypatia*, 1873, back view, Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA. Source: Author. Permission from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA.

Figure 3. Francis John Williamson, *Hypatia*, 1891, Royal Academy of the Art, London, UK.
Source: Retrieved from http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/sculpture/williamson/8.html, online permission.

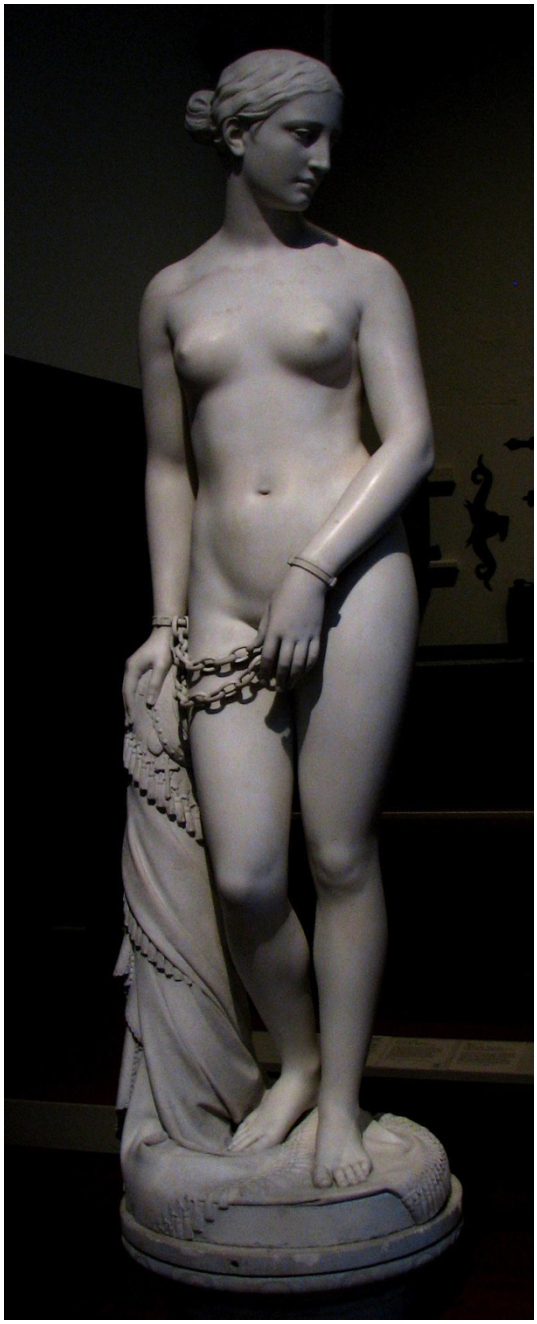

Figure 4. Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave*, 1851. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT.
Source: Retrieved from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Greek_Slave.jpg, public dominion.

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