

Fall 2004

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Recommended Citation

Repousis, A. (2004). The Trojan Women: Emma Hart Willard and the Troy Society For the Advancement of Female Education in Greece. *Journal of the Early Republic*, 24(3), 445-476. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/hist_facpub/6

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Society for Historians of the Early American Republic

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Source: *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Autumn, 2004), pp. 445-476

Published by: [University of Pennsylvania Press](#) on behalf of the [Society for Historians of the Early American Republic](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4141441>

Accessed: 05/11/2013 18:49

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The Trojan Women

Emma Hart Willard and the Troy Society for the
Advancement of Female Education in Greece

ANGELO REPOUSIS

In ancient story we are told that one of our sex remaining in Troy wrought harm to the Greeks. In modern recital may it be said that women of American Troy have done them lasting good.—Emma Hart Willard, *The Troy Press, Extra*, Jan. 17, 1833

In *The Trojan Women*, the Greek playwright Euripides focuses on the sufferings of a small group of women from the captured city of Troy as they await their departure into slavery. The play's denunciation of such brutality is symbolized in the character of Cassandra, who warns against the folly of far-flung aggression. In the end retribution comes when the god Poseidon shatters the returning Greek fleet. In the "modern recital" of the "women of Troy," as told by Emma Hart Willard, the scene shifts from the shores of Ilium to the banks of the Hudson River in upstate New York. There, in 1833, in the city by the same name, a small group of women led by Willard embarked on an ambitious campaign to establish, in Greece, a female seminary to train women teachers, making the women of the United States, not the ancients, the wellspring of western civilization. Women's rights and American supremacy combine in Willard's Greek projects. Civilization will be recast simultaneously in America and the Old World to include women's influence.

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Journal of the Early Republic, 24 (Fall 2004)

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A leader in women's education and founder of the Troy Female Seminary (the first school to offer higher education for young women in the United States), Willard saw an opportunity to impart to the struggling Greeks, recently emancipated after four centuries of Turkish rule, some of the benefits in education that she had given to American women. Her Troy Seminary, founded in 1821, had introduced into the curriculum advanced courses in history, philosophy, morals, mathematics, and the natural sciences.¹ The question of female education in Greece also offered Willard a forum to enter into a much broader debate on the subject of women's rights, both at home and abroad. And like Cassandra, who foretells the consequences of male aggression against the helpless women of Troy, Willard warned against denying women their proper rights in society:

[W]hen men in their legislative capacity, forget our rights—when in extending for the education of male youth, they bestow not a thought on us—when in some cases . . . they make laws oppressive to us, it is not strange that some among us of impetuous spirits, madly seek to break the social order[.]

She only had to point to the “ravings” of Mary Wollstonecraft and Frances Wright, who sought to eliminate distinctions of women's social role based on their gender. Wright was an advocate of “true equality” between the sexes; she promoted birth control, liberalized divorce laws, and legal rights for married women. Willard's goals were more moderate, but no less revolutionary.²

1. For more on the school and its curriculum see Alma Lutz, *Emma Willard: Pioneer Educator of American Women* (Boston, 1964) and John Lord, *The Life of Emma Willard* (New York, 1873). On the subject of higher education for women see Linda K. Kerber, “‘Why Should Girls Be Learn'd and Wise?’ Two Centuries of Higher Education for Women as Seen Through the Unfinished Work of Alice Mary Baldwin,” in *Women and Higher Education in American History*, ed. John Mack Faragher and Florence Howe (New York, 1988), 18–42; and Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, CT, 1986).

2. *Mrs. Willard's Address, read by the Rev. Mr. Peck, at a meeting held at St. John's Church, Troy, on the evening of Jan. 8, 1833, whose object, as expressed by previous notices, was to interest the public IN BEHALF OF FEMALE EDUCATION IN GREECE.* Published in the *Troy Press, Extra*, Jan. 17, 1833; address also printed in the *Episcopal Watchman* (Hartford), Feb. 9, 1833; and in the

Unlike Wright and other more “radical” feminists, Willard did not openly challenge the prevailing belief that most arenas of public life should be reserved for men. Nonetheless, she believed that the nation’s future prosperity rested upon the character of its citizens—characters that would be formed by American mothers. In antebellum America, women could not participate in formal politics, nor could they pursue many professional or business careers. Married women had no property rights or a legal identity apart from their husbands. But a prevailing female ideal, under the guise of “republican motherhood,” which encouraged women to exercise their maternal and domestic faculties, also recognized women’s role in promoting public virtue. While it belonged to men to determine the republic’s political institutions, it fell to women to provide—through education and domestic training—the foundation for giving those institutions permanence by training their sons in republican citizenship.³

For Willard, women’s uplift and the improved status of women marked the degree of “civilization” reached by society as a whole. When men fail to uphold women’s rights, society crumbles. As she explained, “if with our women that character of moral dignity should sink, then would the coming generation of the men show themselves degenerate.”⁴ Therefore, as the “anointed guardians of character,” women could move beyond their traditional domestic “sphere” to speak out on matters that

American Ladies’ Magazine (Boston), 6 (May 1833), 232–36. On Frances Wright see Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815–1840* (Baltimore and New York, 1995), 155–57, 159; S. J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States: 1830–1945* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1999), 86; and Celia Morris, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America* (Cambridge, MA, 1984).

3. See Anne Firor Scott, “The Ever Widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Female Seminary, 1822–1872,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 19 (Spring 1979), 3–5; Nina Baym, “Women and the Republic: Emma Willard’s Rhetoric of History,” *American Quarterly*, 43 (Mar. 1991), 2; Mary Kelley, “Reading Women/Women Reading: The Making of Learned Women in Antebellum America,” *Journal of American History*, 83 (Sept. 1996), 403–406. For more on the concept of “republican motherhood” see Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideals in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1980).

4. Emma Willard, *Advancement of Female Education: or a Series of Addresses in Favor of Establishing in Athens, in Greece, a Female Seminary, especially designed to Instruct Female Teachers* (Troy, 1833), 29.

threatened public morality. Moreover, this “ideology of female moral influence,” as Lori Ginzberg writes, “granted some women more personal authority than they might otherwise have had, even as it demanded that they accede to their social subordination to men.” Many women in antebellum America participated in a host of benevolent organizations and reform crusades, from temperance to antislavery.⁵

By 1833, this idealized view of women as the inculcators of virtue and the foundation upon which the nation’s republican experiment rested had already become widely accepted tenets in the discourse on educated womanhood. Although promoters of female education from Judith Sargent Murray to Catherine Beecher had been making this claim since the start of the nineteenth century, Willard was the first woman to show that this argument could serve transatlantic purposes. “We wish,” Willard wrote, “to educate Grecian girls, that they may hereafter give a good impulse to their sons, as well as their daughters.” Simply put, she sought to instruct the Greeks in the “ways of piety, intelligence, and virtue” that typified American women.⁶

In showing the transatlantic dimensions of Willard’s commitment to female education this study moves forward along several historiographical fronts. Aside from broadening our understanding of the history of antebellum female education, this study also contributes to recent scholarship on women’s involvement in the growing missionary movement that emerged in the decades before the Civil War, and to the overlapping histories of reform movements, including abolitionism and feminism. Willard’s efforts to uplift her “sisters” in Greece mirrored the commitment of Protestant missionary societies to reform the ancient Greek Church and to bring American, Protestant-style civilization to the land

5. See Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, CT, 1990), 8–9. See also Feller, *Jacksonian Promise*, 157–59. For more on female benevolence see Catherine E. Kelly, *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women’s Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY, 1999); Nancy A. Hewitt, *Women’s Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822–1872* (Ithaca, NY, 1984); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (Cambridge, 1981); and Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven and London, 1977).

6. Willard, *Advancement of Female Education*, 33.

of Homer and Plato. Female missionaries in Greece, including one of Willard's former students, likewise identified their Greek sisters—burdened by excessive childbirths and enveloped in layers of restrictive clothing—as suitable targets for an American educational and religious imperialism. Recent studies of postbellum female missionaries have placed this missionary impulse to spread Christianity and civilization “within the broader cultural context that assigned women special responsibilities for upgrading the moral condition of society.”⁷⁷ It should come as no surprise then that Willard would align her campaign to that of evangelical Protestantism. In doing so she became one of the first to use this rhetoric of “social uplift, Christianity, and civilization” to extend women’s public activity onto the international stage. But this still leaves the question: why, with the entire world before her, would Willard choose Greece? That answer lies, in part, in the romantic idealization of ancient Hellas as the birthplace of art and letters.

Willard’s campaign to uplift Greek women is in many ways a product of the larger nineteenth-century philhellenic movement (triggered by the 1821 uprising of the modern Greeks against Turkish oppression) that sought to return Greece to its former glory in the arts and sciences. Learned Americans had long considered classical learning an important preparation and model for daily life and as a source of moral and political guidance. Having weathered the ordeals of nation building and two wars with Britain, there were those antebellum Americans like the classical scholar and statesman, Edward Everett, who believed that their generation had an opportunity to fashion a new American golden age comparable to Periclean Athens, “where poetry and the fine arts put forth their blossoms.”⁷⁸ This reverence for ancient Hellas as the fountainhead of western civilization can also be seen in Willard’s own efforts to introduce the arts and sciences at her Troy Seminary. In this regard, Willard repre-

7. Quoted in Emily S. Rosenberg, “Gender,” *Journal of American History*, 77 (June 1990), 117–18. Women’s postbellum involvement in missionary work has been documented by Jane Hunter’s *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven, CT, 1984); and Patricia Ruth Hill’s *The World Their Household: The American Women’s Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870–1920* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1984).

8. Edward Everett, “Politics of Ancient Greece,” *North American Review*, 18 (April 1824), 401–402.

sents both the religious and secular commitments that were woven together in securing an independent Greece. But this begs another question: why would Willard and her female supporters extol a culture that considered women an inferior and degraded class? Pericles, it seemed, cared little for the rights of women. And for that matter, so did many of Willard's male contemporaries. Quite possibly, Willard and her friends may have had a more veiled objective than simply educating Greek women. While the women of Troy certainly shared the commitment of their generation to recreate the glory of Periclean Athens in the "woods of America," their vision of "a brighter Hellas" would include a place for the women. And what better way to accomplish that feat than by first "emancipating" the daughters of Greece?

What is particularly striking about the campaign for a female seminary in Greece is the frequent use of rhetoric oftentimes associated with early abolitionism and feminism. On several occasions Willard and her friends specifically describe their Greek "sisters" as slaves. By employing this critique of the "enslavement" of Greek women, the Troy women could also have been trying to draw attention to their own enslavement as wives. Greek and "Oriental" imagery had figured prominently in the art and literature of antebellum American society as a metaphor for enslavement. In 1847, for example, the sculptor Hiram Powers purposely cast his celebrated statue "The Greek Slave" as a white marble woman in chains. And during the Greek revolution, when the women of Virginia enlisted in the campaign to send relief to Greece, Congressman John Randolph was said to have pointed to long gangs of black slaves and remarked: "Ladies, the Greeks are at your doors." The connection between "Greek" enslavement and black enslavement is obvious, a connection that antislavery advocates like Powers readily exploited. His "Greek Slave" was accompanied by a narrative that tells the story of a young girl captured and sold at the hands of her "libidinous" Turkish captors, whose "barbarian excesses" contrasted with the Greek maiden's Christian purity. Similar stories of African-American slaves riddled the accounts of American slavery put forth by abolitionist societies. But the important difference here is that Greek enslavement was imagined as "white" (female) enslavement, more disturbing, it seems, than the enslavement of African-Americans. In linking Greek enslavement with white female enslavement, the women of Troy furnished subsequent gen-

erations of women's rights advocates with a powerful rhetorical tool in their struggle for equal rights.⁹

In the end, Willard's efforts to establish a female seminary in Greece were not only successful in introducing female education in that country, where none existed before, but are illustrative of how women were able to break away from their appointed "sphere" and take an interest in international issues and pursue humanitarian endeavors while acting in the name of traditional roles.

Willard first became interested in the cause of the Greeks during a visit by Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe in April 1828. Howe, who later achieved success as a social reformer and the first director of the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston, had just returned to the United States after a three-year stint in Greece. During the 1820s, the drama of the Greek revolution against Ottoman Turkish rule aroused American sympathies. In several U.S. cities, philhellenic supporters organized ad hoc committees to raise money and provisions to aid the cause; a handful of Americans even served in the Greek revolutionary army. In the midst of a fundraising campaign across New York and New England, Howe came to Troy to discuss measures for procuring relief for the people of Greece. His heartrending portrayal of the conflict, especially the plight of women and children left homeless by the war, moved several in the audience, including Willard, to take action.¹⁰

9. Randolph's remarks were quoted in the "Speech of Ernestine Rose to the Seventh National Women's Rights Convention, New York, November, 1856," which is reprinted in *History of Women's Suffrage, vol. 1: 1848-1861* (New York, 1881), 666. During the Greek revolution Randolph was a staunch opponent against sending aid to Greece. For more on Powers's *The Greek Slave*, see Steve Frangos, "The Greek Slave," in *Founded on Freedom & Virtue: Documents Illustrating the Impact in the United States of the Greek War of Independence, 1821-1829*, ed. Constantine G. Hatzidimitriou (New York and Athens, 2002), 377-80; and "Narratives of the Female Body: The Greek Slave," in *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Shirley Samuels (Oxford, 1992), 172-90.

10. For more on America's efforts to aid the Greeks see Steven Larrabee, *Hellas Observed: The American Experience of Greece, 1775-1865* (New York, 1957), especially ch. 3-6; Myrtle Cline, *American Attitude Toward the Greek War of Independence, 1821-1828* (Atlanta, GA, 1930); and Paul Constantine Pappas, *The United States and the Greek War for Independence, 1821-1828* (Boulder, CO, 1985).

Together with her younger sister, Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps, Willard helped organize a female committee to make collections on behalf of the “daughters of Greece.” Phelps, who also worked as an instructor in her sister’s school, served as corresponding secretary. Within a few weeks, the ladies of Troy collected shoes, clothing, thread, needles, blankets, and other items valued at \$1000. Of the garments sent to Greece, 120 were made by Willard’s students. Though inconsequential to the final outcome, the relief from American committees like the Troy Society alleviated the sufferings of an embattled people.¹¹

This concern for Greek independence, in the words of Marius Byron Raizis and Alexander Papas, “derived mainly from American interest in the classical tradition and in the hope for the realization of the dream common among romantics and humanists: the restoration of Greece to her old glory and the return of arts and sciences to the land of the Hellenes.”¹² Supporters also capitalized on the Christian-Moslem nature of the conflict to arouse American sympathies. No one doubted that the downfall of Turkey would remove a significant obstacle that had previously excluded Christianity from western Asia. And philhellenes often spoke of Hellenic liberty as a cause greater than Greece: “If we would restore Greece to her ancient glory; if we would erect on the outposts of Christendom light-houses and beacons, to guide the missionary and the teacher into the pagan East,” Howe wrote Willard, “we must elevate the moral and intellectual standard of the Greeks; we must make them the pioneers of religion and civilization to Asia.”¹³ It went without saying that both Howe and Willard envisioned a Protestant Greece eventually emerging to lead the renaissance.

11. See Emma Lydia Bolzau, *Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps: Her Life and Work* (Philadelphia, PA, 1936), 401–410. As corresponding secretary Phelps would use her pen to encourage other women to join the crusade. Besides the Troy Society, enthusiasts formed Ladies’ Greek committees in New York City, Baltimore, New Haven, and other New England towns.

12. Marius Byron Raizis and Alexander Papas, *American Poets and the Greek Revolution* (Thessaloniki, 1972), 9. See also David Roessel, *In Byron’s Shadow: Modern Greece in the English and American Imagination* (Oxford, 2002). On American interest in classical Greece see Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780–1910* (Baltimore, MD, 2002).

13. Howe to Willard, Aug. 20, 1834, reprinted in *American Ladies’ Magazine* (Oct. 1834), 460.

Following the conclusion of the revolution in 1829, philhellenes made several attempts to promote common school education in Greece. The most successful were those made by Protestant missionary societies. In 1831, the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church established a mission in Athens under the charge of Rev. John J. Robertson of Baltimore and Rev. John Henry Hill of Virginia. Like their secular contemporaries who longed for a return of the arts and sciences to Greece, Hill and Robertson were inspired by the prospect of elevating the ancient Greek Church, which over the centuries had lapsed into “spiritual darkness” and “superstition.” Convinced that individual Christians were responsible for shaping their conscience exclusively from the word of God (as found in the scriptures), and faced with a largely illiterate population, the missionaries had to first “educate” the Greeks before “evangelization” and “civilization” could commence. In other words, the apparatus of spiritual uplift and instruction devised by Hill and Robertson was merely a front for promoting Protestant goals, namely the winning of converts to the Episcopal faith. Over the next several months, the missionaries founded a number of schools, including one for girls under the direction of Hill’s wife Frances. With the exception of a similar institution on the island of Syra operated by the Church Missionary Society of England, no schools had existed for the instruction of women in the whole of Greece.¹⁴

14. See *Plan for Promoting Common School Education in Greece, Adopted by the Greek School Committee* (New York, May 1829); and *First Annual Report of the New Haven Ladies’ Greek Association* (New York, 1831). For more on Protestant missions in Greece see Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 177–205; P. E. Shaw, *American Contacts with the Eastern Churches, 1820–1870* (Chicago, IL, 1937); and Theodore Saloutos, “American Missionaries in Greece: 1820–1869,” *Church History*, 24 (June 1955), 152–74. In the spring of 1829, New Yorkers led by former secretary of the treasury under Jefferson and Madison, Albert Gallatin, and social reformer and future abolitionist, Arthur Tappan, formed a committee to consider measures for promoting common school education in Greece. At the same time, a similar committee took shape in New Haven, Connecticut, to establish a female high school to train women teachers. The New Haven committee even succeeded in hiring the Reverend Josiah Brewer and Miss Mary Reynolds as agents and teachers for the school. Neither venture, it turned out, had lasting success. The school sponsored by the New Haven committee eventually relocated to Smyrna in western Anatolia. Besides the Episcopalians, the Baptists and Congregationalists also established a missionary presence in Greece during this time.

Hill and Robertson trained their students in arithmetic, geography, history, ancient Greek, and even English. The Gospel was not neglected; the Bible made up the principal text and the scriptures were “daily explained, line upon line, and precept upon precept.” The young women were also taught the “domestic arts” of sewing and cooking. By 1833, the number of pupils that came under the daily supervision of the missionaries exceeded 300. Of that number, 250 were female. Enrollment was not limited to children from Greece proper; admission was open to the Greek population in Constantinople, Moldavia, and Asia Minor. The rapid growth and success of the Athens mission, in turn, created a pressing need for qualified instructors. The staff consisted of just the missionaries and their wives. But with a “great want of teachers throughout the country,” the “preparation of female teachers, that” the mission “may extend the benefits of education far and wide,” became “imperative.” To this end Hill and Robertson turned to Willard for help.¹⁵

Since the establishment of the Troy Seminary in 1821, Willard had garnered the reputation as one of the great educators of her day. Born in 1787 in Berlin, Connecticut, Willard began teaching at age 17 in a small village school. By the time she turned 20, she became principal of a female academy in Middlebury, Vermont. Throughout her early teaching career, Willard continually hungered for further study; she studied history and painting and even wrote poetry. She soon became frustrated, however, when the men who ran nearby Middlebury College declined her request to attend classes.¹⁶ Convinced that men would not take the education of women seriously, unless they were forced to, Willard

formed the design of effecting an important change in education by the introduction of a grade of schools for women higher than heretofore known. . . . I determined to

15. See letter from John and Frances Hill to Emma Willard, Sept. 7, 1833, published in the *American Ladies' Magazine*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 448–51; and Hill to a young gentleman of the Theological Seminary at Alexandria, March 26, 1833, printed in the *American Ladies' Magazine*, 6 (Oct. 1833), 461–63. See also the correspondence of the missionaries published in the *Episcopal Watchman*, Dec. 20, 1831, Jan. 24 and May 8, 1832; and *Episcopal Recorder* (Philadelphia), Feb. 25, 1832, and May 5, 1832.

16. For more on Willard's early life see John Lord, *The Life of Emma Willard*; Lutz, *Emma Willard*; Willystine Goodsell, *Pioneers of Women's Education in the United States: Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher, and Mary Lyon* (New York, 1931), 15–103; and Anne Firor Scott, “What, Then, is the American: This New Woman,” *Journal of American History*, 65 (Dec. 1978), 682–85.

inform myself, and increase my personal influence and fame as a teacher, calculating that, in this way, I might be sought for in other places, where influential men would carry my project before some Legislature, for the sake of obtaining a good school.¹⁷

In 1819, Willard presented her plan for improving female education to New York Governor DeWitt Clinton, who agreed to speak before the state legislature on her behalf. Her arguments were drawn from the tenets of republican ideology, namely that the nation's prosperity depended on the character of its citizens, and that educated women were best suited to shape that character. But she added several important addendums: that government should provide public monies to create a series of colleges for women; that women were as "capable of intellectual excellence" as men; and that teaching should be considered a serious profession open to women. In the end, the legislature proved unresponsive. Willard, however, was able to obtain the backing of city officials in Troy, New York, who convinced her to relocate. In September 1821, the Troy Female Seminary admitted ninety "young ladies" from across New England, New York, and parts of the Midwest and South.¹⁸

Innovative for its day, the curriculum approximated that of contemporary men's colleges; it included science, mathematics, history, philosophy, literature, and geography. Indeed, "nowhere else in the country in the 1820s," Anne Firor Scott writes, "were young women told that they could learn any academic subject, including those hitherto reserved for men, that they should prepare themselves for self-support and not seek marriage as an end in itself." The school also offered religious instruction, although its tendency remained nonsectarian. The overriding aim was to instill moral values and build character. During the years that she presided at Troy (1821–1838), Willard saw a number of her students leave the seminary to spread her ideas about women's education. She even helped place several former students as teachers in exclusively fe-

17. Henry Fowler, "Emma Willard," in *Memoirs of Teachers*, ed. Henry Barnard (New York, 1861), 133. Also quoted in Baym, "Women and the Republic," 4–5.

18. Scott, "Ever Widening Circle," 6–7; Baym, "Women and the Republic," 5; and Lutz, *Emma Willard*, 27–34, 38–39. Willard's proposal was later published under the title *An Address to the Public; Particularly to the Members of the Legislature of New York, Proposing a Plan for Improving Female Education* (Middlebury, VT, 1819).

male schools throughout the United States; some of those graduates would later found seminaries of their own. By the mid-1830s, institutions modeled on the “Troy plan” sprang up in South Carolina, Maryland, Ohio, Vermont, and other parts of the country.¹⁹ These networks of educated women would be key to the success of her Society for the Advancement of Female Education in Greece.

In 1832, following a visit by John Robertson, Willard saw an opportunity to extend her influence to the eastern Mediterranean. Robertson, whose wife was a former pupil of Willard’s, spoke about the physical and intellectual impoverishment of the women of Greece and how education had been almost completely withheld from them. Moved by the appeal, Willard agreed to lend her support. Her reasons went beyond simply aiding Greek women:

I consider it still more important to the cause of female education to give permanency to the improvement which Troy herself has begun. . . . By educating numbers, by bringing up teachers, and scattering them abroad, I may diffuse widely what I believe to be the correct views of female education.²⁰

Willard’s recent sabbatical in England and France (from October 1830 to August 1831) had cemented her conviction that female education in the United States was “incomparably better than the systems of public education for our sex” in Europe. In her journals and letters, she regularly commented on the general difference of “style” and “manner” between European and American men respecting women. Willard inferred that American women occupied a “condition of companionship” with men not found in either France or England. For her, this was the consequence and cause of women’s “moral elevation.” And unlike “corrupt” Europe, “rational liberty” in the United States prevailed in both the family and the state. In other words, republicanism and women’s uplift exercised a reciprocal influence. But because most nations of the world

19. Scott, “Ever Widening Circle,” 9–12; and *idem*, “What, Then, is the American,” 689–91. For more on Willard’s students see A. W. Fairbanks, ed., *Mrs. Willard and Her Pupils or Fifty Years of the Troy Female Seminary 1822–1872* (New York, 1898); and Lutz, *Emma Willard*, 45–59.

20. *Mrs. Willard’s Address*. Also printed in the *Episcopal Watchman*, Feb. 9, 1833; the *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 6 (May 1833), 232–36; and Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*, 162–64.

were antirepublican, Willard doubted that they would be receptive to her views on women's education. Not so with Greece. Convinced that the Greeks had embarked on the "same experiment" which the United States first began in 1776, she concluded that "from no country could a more healing female influence go to revive prostrate Greece than from our own."²¹

After receiving the approval and backing of the local clergy and town leaders, Willard moved to put her plan into operation. She prepared an address to the public, which was read before a town meeting at St. John's Church in Troy on January 8, 1833. She was clearly excited about the project. As Willard explained to Almira Phelps, her discourse represented "the greatest week's work that" she "ever did in" her "life, as it regards intellectual labor."²² In this address and two others, Willard pleaded for the Greeks and detailed her designs for supporting a female seminary. She also expounded upon her views regarding the rights of women.

A *tour de force* of melodrama and hyperbole, Willard's appeals touched several important nerves that radiated through U.S. society and culture in the 1830s. First, she capitalized on the popular feeling for ancient Greece then in vogue in American cultural circles. During the antebellum era learned Americans increasingly turned to the "art, literature, and landscape of Greece." Seminaries and colleges, including Willard's female academy, taught Greek literature and history for the lessons they provided in republican virtue and morality. Americans in these years built their homes and public buildings in the Greek temple style and named their cities and towns for those of antiquity. And in the early nineteenth century a host of American tourists increasingly made the pilgrimage to Greece.²³

This romantic idealization of the Greek past found particular expression in the modern Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire (1821–1829), as philhellenes anticipated the political and spiritual regeneration of ancient Hellas. Many private citizens, colleges, and even women's

21. See Willard, *Advancement of Female Education*, 20–24, 33; and Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*, 162–63.

22. Willard's letter to her sister Almira Phelps is reprinted in Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*, 160–61.

23. For more on this nascent American Hellenism see Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*, 62–67.

academies had joined in the campaign to raise money for the Greek cause. Willard's own students at Troy had contributed funds. "The cause of the Greeks," Willard now reminded the assemblage at St. John's Church, had "appealed to us as that of a struggling and suffering nation. They have bled at every pore in the cause of liberty; and we, as the inheritors of a freedom bought by the blood of our fathers, have felt the appeal." The parallels between the Greek revolution and the American were obvious.²⁴

But now that Greek independence had been secured, the larger goal of effecting a Greek political, spiritual, and cultural revival remained. For Willard and likeminded others, it went without saying that resurrected Greece ought to resemble the United States, which was presumably founded on classical Greek models. Indebted to ancient Hellas for their free and liberal institutions, philhellenes naturally saw the United States as the mentor to Greece's rehabilitation into a modern liberal democracy.²⁵ Willard tapped into these sentiments when she wrote:

Now, politically born again, [Greece] . . . with the meek lineaments of dependent childhood . . . now stands, with imploring eyes, and asks for guidance and instruction. And, as far as she is allowed the liberty of choice, she chooses America for her guardian. . . . Let us adopt and educate her, as far as practicable, and we will hereafter have cause to rejoice, with maternal pride, over the child of our adoption. Where is the child so noble in its lineage as Greece? . . . With the advantages of instruction, with the renovating light of pure Christianity, Greece may again lead the nations of Europe, not merely to eminence in arts and arms, but by moral regeneration to the glorious liberty of the sons of God.²⁶

As the above passage illustrates, Willard's motives went beyond simply educating Greek women and involved nationalism, imperialism (of a nascent form), Protestant missionary impulses, as well as a burgeoning feminism. Her invocations of Greece's historic past and visions of a glorious future (under American tutelage) were also meant to emphasize the

24. See *Mrs. Willard's Address*.

25. For more on this impulse to "revive ancient Athens" see Roessel, *In Byron's Shadow*, especially ch. 1.

26. See *Mrs. Willard's Address*. See also excerpts of her address in Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*, 163–64.

uniqueness of U.S. society and to elevate the United States in world opinion.

Antebellum Americans defined themselves through comparison with Europe. The United States represented freedom, virtue, and democracy, whereas Europe symbolized oppression, corruption, and decadence. This pursuit of American identity led many Americans to “think and speak” of America as a nation singled out by Providence for a special role in the world as the “exporter of the spirit of liberty” and as a model republic.²⁷ Willard’s speech reflected this budding nationalism and sense of mission, but with a twist. For Willard, it went without saying that those best suited to teach the fallen Greeks the virtues of republican government and intellectual worth were American women. And as Willard added, “should we impart to Greece” the “elements of moral vigor” and a better system of education, “then Greece may impart” to the “old, decrepit states of Europe” what “she now receives from us.”²⁸

Protestant missionary impulses dovetailed nicely with the secular mission of spreading republican values. “This is also the cause of Christianity,” Willard wrote, “in which all Christians are called to unite, for it will be our first object to teach the Greeks to read the word of God, the channel of his grace to man.” “Could the women of our country be moved to feel and act with decision and constancy on this subject,” she added, “we might at length do that towards undermining Mohometanism [sic], which the armed crusaders of former times were never able to accomplish.” Following the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century, American Protestants embarked on a quest to “missionize” the world. Sharing a belief in individual self-improvement and citing Christ’s instruction to preach the gospel to every creature, Christians in these years actively organized to convert others. Missions were established in such far-off places as Hawaii, China, and the Middle East. No longer regarded as “sinners in the hands of an angry God,” individuals were now viewed more as lost souls. And after four centuries of Islamic rule, no people appeared more lost than the Greeks, who in the eyes of

27. Clinton Rossiter, *The American Quest, 1790–1860: An Emerging Nation in Search of Identity, Unity, and Modernity* (New York, 1971), 123–35.

28. Willard, *Advancement of Female Education*, 29, 33.

Protestants still continued to pay an “idolatrous regard to images, holy places, and saints.”²⁹

Willard also revealed a nascent imperialist impulse in her campaign for a female seminary in Greece. She averred that success in this endeavor would “serve [Greece] more honorably and more effectually, than if by purchase or conquest we made that land an American colony.” An American influenced system of education would engender among the next generation of Greeks a “filial feeling for Americans,” who would be welcomed as a “parent and friend.” This could prove to be of enormous advantage to the United States both politically and economically, Willard mused.³⁰ What is also interesting about these pronouncements is the frequent use of gendered imagery to depict the Greeks as both figurative women and children, seemingly unable to care for themselves and in need of guidance. This metaphor had figured prominently in discussions of Greece during the Greek revolution, where the country was depicted as a woman in distress, a victim of Turkish brutality. Similar depictions of weaker nations (such as China, Cuba, and Puerto Rico) would subsequently inform late nineteenth-century discourse on U.S. imperialism. Indeed, as Andrew Rotter notes, when Americans “looked abroad in the late nineteenth century, they beheld nations whose populations seemed to cry out for the protection, guidance, and discipline that only” Ameri-

29. See *Mrs. Willard's Address*; “Female Education in Greece,” in the *American Ladies' Magazine*, 6 (June 1833), 272; and *Missionary Herald at Home and Abroad*, 23 (Sept. 1827), 267–68 and *Episcopal Watchman*, Nov. 1, 1828. The editor of the *Missionary Herald* also expressed the belief that the Greeks “as a body” were “irreligious, profane, and unprincipled.” For more on the American missionary impulse see Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise*, especially ch. 6; William R. Hutchinson, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago, IL, 1987), especially ch. 2; Joseph Conforti, “David Brainerd and the Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 5 (Fall 1985), 318; Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1966); O. W. Elsbee, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America, 1790–1815* (Williamsport, PA, 1928); and Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT, 1972).

30. See *Report of Mrs. Willard, Corresponding Secretary of the Troy Society for the advancement of Female Education in Greece. Read by the Rev. S. B. Paddock, in Christ's Church, Norwich, Conn., Aug. 20th, 1834*. Excerpts of Willard's report were published in the *American Ladies' Magazine*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 456–59.

cans could provide. From the country's dealings with Native Americans, through the orations on "Manifest Destiny," to the cowboy diplomacy of Theodore Roosevelt, white American men developed these "patriarchal designs" on weaker nations and peoples, in part due to a concern over their own masculinity.³¹

In using this imperialist rhetoric, Willard may have sought to empower women as central players in this nineteenth-century "civilization-work" that aimed to "elevate" downtrodden and backward peoples and nations.³² In the nineteenth century, foreign policy was considered a male preserve. So much so, it seems, that even historians have relatively neglected the role of women in United States foreign relations.³³ But as her remarks illustrate, Willard was among the earliest American women who sought, in the name of social uplift, Christianity, and civilization, to extend their public activity into not just the domestic but also the international sphere. Willard's sister Almira Phelps perhaps said it best when she wrote that "[C]hristian females of the present age are destined to have with each other a more general intercourse, and to influence more extensively the moral condition of the world, than in any preceding period."³⁴

31. See Roessel, *In Byron's Shadow*, 59–66; and Andrew J. Rotter, "Gender Relations, Foreign Relations: The United States and South Asia, 1947–1964," *Journal of American History*, 81 (Sept. 1994), 522, 526–28. As Roessel notes, two images of the Greeks existed side by side with one another; the one image depicted ancient Greece as the "mother of republics," whereas the other saw modern Greece as a helpless, dependent child in need of guidance. For more on the relationship between gender and foreign relations see Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review*, 91 (Dec. 1986), 1066–75.

32. This theme is more fully developed in Louise Michele Newman's *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York and Oxford, 1999).

33. See, for example, Rosenberg, "Gender," 116–24; Edward P. Crapol, ed., *Women and American Foreign Policy: Lobbyists, Critics, and Insiders* (New York, 1987); also a review essay by Rosemary Foot, "Where are the Women? The Gender Dimension in the Study of International Relations," *Diplomatic History*, 14 (Fall 1990), 615–22; and Petra Goedde, "Women and Foreign Affairs," *idem*, 23 (Fall 1999), 693–97.

34. Almira H. L. Phelps, *Address on the Subject of Female Education in Greece, and General Extension of Christian Intercourse among Females. Read by the Rev. Mr. Beman to a large and respectable audience, convened at the First Presbyterian*

For Willard, female education represented an important feature in the “grand system of moral advancement” then going on in the world. “Should we not strengthen it at home and send it abroad?” she asked. To some the answer remained an unequivocal no. One outspoken critic in particular chastised “this second Frances Wright” for mixing in “men’s affairs” and accused her of being a “vain” and “egotistical” woman, easily susceptible to “flattery” and “fulsome adulation.” “The waters of her ambition have for a long time been stagnant” after the founding of her Troy seminary, the author bristled, and now “she eagerly entered into the arena of public life, and became the gazing stock of community.” In other words, Willard’s public efforts on behalf of Greek women had “violated the decencies of her sex.”³⁵ In nineteenth-century America, women were denied political standing and barred from pursuing most business or professional careers. Women were not even allowed to speak in public before mixed audiences. Willard had her public addresses on behalf of female education in Greece delivered by men. In short, women were consigned to the home, “constrained by excessive childbirths, masses of restrictive clothing, and an ideology that condemned [them] to silence and self-abnegation.”³⁶

In actuality, antebellum women challenged these conservative definitions of proper female behavior, blurring the “distinctions between private and public,” and expanding the boundaries of “woman’s sphere.” In the words of Mary Kelley, some women

claimed a transcendent morality, making use of the feminine convention that ascribed to women guardianship of their family’s and by extension their nation’s virtue. Others looked to a gendered psychology that identified in women a special sensitivity and sympathy for the dispossessed of the world. And still others claimed for women a distinctive strength, dignity, and fortitude.³⁷

Church in Troy, on the 8th of August, 1833. Extracts of Phelps’s address were published in the *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 6 (Oct. 1833), 464–72.

35. *Mrs. Willard Reviewed, or, a Short Examination of the Proceedings of “The Society for the Advancement of Female Education in Greece.”* By a Friend to Suffering Humanity (Albany, 1833), 4, 6.

36. Laura McCall, “Shall I Fetter Her Will?” *Literary Americans Confront Feminine Submission, 1820–1860*, *Journal of the Early Republic*, 21 (Spring 2001), 95.

37. Mary Kelley, “Beyond the Boundaries,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 21 (Spring 2001), 73–77. According to Barbara Welter, antebellum women were subject to four basic behavioral tenets—“piety, purity, submissiveness and domestic-

Although Kelley's remarks refer to female abolitionists, they can also be applied to Willard and her friends. Unlike her more "radical" contemporaries, such as Frances Wright, who sought admittance into the "masculine world of politics," Willard tried to diffuse criticism that labeled her "unwomanly." She took great pains to obtain male approval, influence, and financial support for her plan. She hoped that by aligning her association with the Protestant Episcopal Society and its agents (Hill and Robertson), her society could "remove all jealousies which might otherwise have arisen." In doing so, she assured the public that she and her colleagues would "walk with more assured steps, feeling that" they "lean on the arm of the stronger sex, and are guided by their wisdom." In reality, Willard remained the dominant personality within the movement. She was not about to "draw back from an undertaking which" she "*took up in peril and darkness*, with the derision of many upon the extravagance and unreasonableness of her views, which" she and her friends "*have pursued with union and constancy* through discouragement and opposition" [Willard's italics].³⁸

In any event, Willard was on much firmer ground when she confined her appeals to her benevolent countrywomen. As Willard noted, antebellum American women played leading roles in the era's numerous charitable, religious, and reform causes, where their "traditional" feminine traits of "sympathy," "piety," and "charity" could find expression outside the home. But the object of educating female teachers in Greece represented the first "in which it has been proposed, that women should associate in the cause of woman." Her plea drew attention to the sad plight of Greek women, still "wandering with [their] helpless offspring over the devastated hills of [their] now barren country." Greek women, she added, still suffered under the yoke of the "vilest slavery," which considered them the property of men. And "far from thinking of cultivating" their minds, Willard lamented, "men here forget, or deny, that" they "possess them." "How [then] can we but feel for the misery and degradation of our own

ity." Recently, historians like Kelley have challenged Welter's model. For more on Welter's "ideology of womanhood" see "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, 18 (Summer 1966), 151-74.

38. See "Report of Mrs. Willard," in the *American Ladies' Magazine*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 456-57; Willard's letter to her sister, Almira Phelps, Troy, Jan. 11, 1832, and Willard's letter to the Ladies of the Troy Society, Jan. 10, 1835, reprinted in Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*, 160-62, 176.

sex?" she mused.³⁹ Willard could also have been speaking about the condition of women in the United States.

It is notable that Willard would use the terms "slave" and "slavery" to describe the plight of her Greek "sisters." Since the eighteenth century, Greek exoticism had served as shorthand for enslavement and modern Greece was often portrayed, in both art and literature, as a woman in chains. As David Roessel writes, the picture of an enslaved Greek woman who, "it is implied, is at the mercy of a Turkish man was one of the most effective and pervasive means of evoking sympathy for" modern Greece.⁴⁰ The women of the Troy Society readily made use of this rhetorical device to arouse support for their cause. Indeed, as Willard's sister Elmira Phelps remarked, women in "this delightful region has ever been degraded." "When we reflect on these abuses of the virtuous of our sex, holding them in intellectual bondage," and

when we consider what they have since endured from the licentiousness of Turkish soldiers and Turkish princes, or from the servitude to which they have been condemned, can we but feel our hearts burn within us with the wish to elevate the Greek female in the scale of being, and to impart to her some of the blessings of improvement so richly bestowed upon us?⁴¹

At several points, the Troy women are attempting to link their campaign for a female seminary in Greece to the larger philhellenic movement that envisioned a Greek revival in art and literature. But if we look beneath the surface of their calculated rhetoric we can see more disruptive elements. The "woman-in-bondage" analogy, for one, typically presumed that only "western men" were capable of breaking the chains of "female Greece," since Greek men were considered too debased to aid in their own regeneration. But now Willard and friends were proposing that American women, in introducing female education in Greece, were the "only means of civilizing the eastern men." For some, like Willard's aforementioned critic, the thought of a woman restoring "hallowed" Greece—whose poets, philosophers, and statesmen were the "fathers" of Western civilization—to "its original brightness" was just "absurd." After

39. See "Female Education in Greece," in the *American Ladies' Magazine*, 6 (June 1833), 270–72.

40. Roessel, *In Byron's Shadow*, 59–68.

41. Phelps, *Address on the Subject of Female Education in Greece*.

all, antebellum women were governed by the same patriarchy that con-signed a “feminized” Greece to a subordinate and dependent place among western nations. Moreover, classical republican thought, in the words of Caroline Winterer, “identified the political sphere with the masculine virtues of independence and self-reliance.” Accordingly, women, with their “ostensibly more passionate, emotional natures,” and their economic dependence, were excluded from actual participation in public life. Seen in this light, the Troy women may have been using this critique of the “enslavement” of Greek women as a veiled critique of their own enslavement as wives.⁴²

Educated women in the revolutionary and early republican eras often employed classical imagery to describe their domestic and political status.⁴³ And similarly in the 1840s and 1850s, white female abolitionists began to call attention to the parallels between their own oppressed status as wives and daughters and the debased condition of African-Americans under slavery. The Troy women could empathize with their Greek “sisters” because they, as women, faced a similar oppression due to their sex. Phelps could also have been talking about American women when she used the analogy of the Trojan Andromache, who, like the Greek matron, was “commanded by her lord to guide the spindle and direct the loom,” not dreaming that she “had an intellect to improve, or a soul to save.”⁴⁴

Phelps also challenged the romantic idealization of the Greek past shared by her male contemporaries. Indeed, when looking back “to the glorious days of the Grecian republic,” Phelps saw “a gloomy picture” of Greece’s condition,

more gloomy because there was light around her, and yet she was in darkness. While the great and noble men of ancient Greece cultivated a taste for all that was exquisite and beautiful in nature and art, they wholly overlooked her who might, by her smiles, have encouraged, and by her taste improved, their labors of art and their efforts in literature.⁴⁵

42. See “Female Education in Greece,” in *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 6 (June 1833), 271; *Mrs. Willard Reviewed*; and Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*, 22–24.

43. Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*, 22–24.

44. Phelps, “Address on the Subject of Female Education in Greece,” in *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 6 (Oct. 1833), 467–68.

45. *Ibid.*

Phelps could also have been talking about American society in the 1830s. The democratization of American politics and the spread of Greek-themed architecture all gave the impression to many that “a brighter Hellas” was beginning anew in America. But as Phelps implies, such brightness would likewise dim if proper care and support were not given to women, the true “Corinthian pillars” of society. When one considers the reverence for ancient Greece as the birthplace of western (and American) civilization, any challenge to that classical tradition was nothing short of incendiary. By emancipating their Greek sisters, the Troy women would also be liberating themselves from the shackles of classical republican thought that had traditionally relegated women to a subordinate and dependent position in western society.

Considering that the Troy women needed male approval and financial assistance for their undertaking, Phelps and Willard often had to mask their plans in rhetoric that presented themselves as models of female respectability who would always be dependent and subservient, and “lean on the arm of the stronger sex.” Phelps, while empathizing with the fate of Andromache, was also quick to criticize the “Sapphos and Aspasia” of ancient Greece who, while throwing off their chains, lived to disgrace the “delicacy of their sex” by becoming the “rivals of the other sex.” Nevertheless, there were also times when the Troy women were straightforward in their feminism. In her appeal on behalf of female education in Greece, read before the congregation at St. John’s Church, Willard proclaimed “justice will yet be done. Women will have her rights. I see it in the course of events.”⁴⁶ For both symbolic and humanitarian reasons, the promotion of a female seminary in Greece offered Willard a unique opportunity to realize that goal.

Willard’s appeals on behalf of Greek women galvanized the ladies of Troy, who convened at her seminary on February 9, 1833, to form the Society for the Advancement of Female Education in Greece. The immediate aim of this voluntary society was to raise a fund to “establish a school at Athens for the more especial purpose of instructing female teachers.” As corresponding secretary, Willard used her pen to encourage others of her gender to join the cause. Toward this end the society issued a circular directed at “such ladies as are known by their benevo-

46. *Ibid.*; Willard, *Advancement of Female Education*.

lence, piety, intelligence, and influence.” Willard’s previous addresses were also published and disseminated.⁴⁷

Willard’s appeals on behalf of female education in Greece, in the words of some of her contemporaries, were “powerful.” The *American Annals of Education* considered the object “of prime importance to the moral and social regeneration” of that country, and its editors expressed hope that it would “excite the sympathies, and call forth the charities of the favored females of our country and everywhere.” One woman who was particularly moved by Willard’s pleas was Sarah J. Hale, editor of the *American Ladies’ Magazine* of Boston. “Your ‘appeal,’” she wrote Willard,

is full of noble sentiments and just inferences. . . . I was not prepared for the *comprehensiveness* [Hale’s italics] of your philosophy of the female character—as it ought to be. With the ideas you have advanced in the “appeal” I heartily concur, and all the aid I can lend in the promotion of your plan shall be given.

Hale gave much publicity to the proceedings and correspondence of the Troy Society in her magazine, which had a national circulation. Hardly an issue appeared in 1833 and 1834 without some mention about Willard’s plan. Hale also used her influence to spur the ladies of Boston and elsewhere to form “cooperating societies.”⁴⁸

Willard also tapped into her vast network of Troy alumnae, who had spread to parts of the Northeast and South. Through the years Willard maintained a regular correspondence with many of her former pupils and often provided them with support. In April 1833, Willard contacted Miranda Aldis of St. Albans Academy in Vermont, trying to enlist her aid in forming an auxiliary society. She even offered to contribute a portion of the Troy Society’s funds to help Aldis get started. Willard talked about her plan for the Greeks and the impact it would have on the uplift of women. “If this Greek business succeeds,” she wrote, “we shall do great good.” In addition to Aldis, Willard’s sister Almira Phelps agreed to “do her quarter” in Vermont. Phelps, who had earlier played

47. *Ibid.* See also Lutz, *Emma Willard*, 89. The society’s circular was published in the *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 6 (June 1833), 270–72.

48. *American Annals of Education*, 3, Third series (April 1833), 189; and letter from Hale to Willard, Boston, April 21, 1833, published in Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*, 165–66. See also Lutz, *Emma Willard*, 89.

a prominent role in the fundraising drive for the Greeks during the late revolution, was now living and teaching in Vermont. Willard was determined to “get together” a “number of the most talented . . . women in the country.”⁴⁹

The Troy Society also sent an agent, William F. Walker, on a speaking tour across the Northeast to excite interest in the Greek cause and to organize cooperating societies. Among the cities Walker visited was Hartford, Connecticut, where the ladies there pledged to “outdo Troy in benevolence to the Greeks.” One noteworthy coadjutor who assisted in creating the Hartford auxiliary was the celebrated poet Lydia H. Sigourney, who wrote a poem for the occasion. Sigourney also wrote an “An Appeal to American Females, for the Education of their Own Sex in Greece” and gave numerous addresses on modern Greece. Like Phelps and Willard, Sigourney had formed a similar female committee to collect subscriptions for the famine-ridden women and children of revolutionary Greece a few years earlier. Soon other Hellenic associations of ladies sprang up in New Haven and Norwich, Connecticut; Portland, Maine; Boston and Dedham, Massachusetts; New York City, and other northeastern cities and towns. In the South, Georgetown in Washington, D.C. and Savannah, Georgia, boasted societies.⁵⁰

On August 8, 1833, delegates from the various auxiliaries met at the First Presbyterian Church in Troy to coordinate their activities. Phelps delivered the keynote address. Like her sister’s prior discourses, Phelps invoked classical, Christian, and humanitarian reasons for aiding the Greeks. Her belief that by elevating the character of Greek women, through the promotion of Protestant Christianity and education, could the Greek people rise to the same level of “civilization” exemplified in American society reflected a powerful trope of American exceptionalism, nationalism, and the imperial project.⁵¹ “Let the industrious, economical,

49. Willard to Aldis, Troy, April 15, 1833, excerpt printed in Lord, *Life of Willard*, 177–79. For more on Willard’s network of women see Scott, “Ever Widening Circle,” 9–12.

50. Lord, *Life of Willard*, 166–69, 177–79; Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 200; and “Report of Mrs. Willard,” in the *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 456–59. See also a letter from a lady of Dedham, Massachusetts to Hale, in *idem*, 6 (Sept. 1833), 424.

51. These ideas are more fully developed in Emily S. Rosenberg, “Consuming Women: Images of Americanization in the ‘American Century,’” *Diplomatic History*, 23 (Summer 1999), 479–97.

contriving New England woman be placed in a cottage in Greece,” Phelps imagined,

she would soon establish around her little home an appearance of neatness and comfort. She who, upon the bleak hills of New England, . . . can create so many domestic comforts, what might she not do in the land of vines and of olives, of perennial fruits and flowers[.]

Like her sister, Phelps was convinced that antebellum American women were destined to elevate the “moral condition” of the world through the promotion of female education and women’s uplift.⁵² Similarly, the American missionaries in Greece shared these views.

At the Troy convention, the delegates agreed to place the proposed school for teachers under the guardianship of Robertson and Hill of the Protestant Episcopal Society. Initially Willard and her colleagues had hoped to found a separate and independent institution. The Troy Society even contemplated bringing Greek girls to the United States to be educated and then sending them back home to teach others. But for reasons of expediency and economy, they chose to associate with an agency already established in Greece. The Episcopal Mission had the necessary facilities in place, including a new schoolhouse, recently erected in the ancient Agora, capable of housing 600 students. Furthermore, the missionaries knew the language and, after two years in Athens, had gained the “confidence” of the community. As Hill and his wife explained to Willard, no new school could attain “our state of maturity in less time than ours has.”⁵³

After extensive consultation with the missionaries, the Troy Society agreed that Hill and Robertson would superintend the school. As principal, Frances Hill had the responsibility of selecting those young women best suited to becoming teachers. The Troy Society pledged to pay for their support and instruction. Committee members also agreed to finance an extension to the missionary house sufficient to accommodate the anticipated beneficiaries. The president of the Protestant Episcopal Soci-

52. See Phelps’s *Address on the Subject of Female Education in Greece*.

53. See John H. Hill and Frances M. Hill to Emma Willard, Athens, Sept. 7, 1833, and Eunice Pawling to Frances Hill, Troy, Oct. 17, 1833, published in the *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 448–53. See also Phelps’s address, published in *idem*, 6 (Oct. 1833), 467–70.

ety, William White, consented to this proposal, his only stipulation being that the school be under Episcopal influence. White sympathized with the ladies' cause; during the Greek revolution, he served as chairman of a fundraising committee in Philadelphia.⁵⁴

Willard also accepted this arrangement, principally because Frances Hill shared many of the same views about female education. Like Willard, Hill believed that "many of the blessings, religious and moral, enjoyed in America have been attributed to the influence which females of cultivated minds exert upon society," and it was her "earnest wish to enlighten those of [Greece] that they too may receive this great commendation." Not content with merely spreading the gospel of Christianity, Hill often concentrated her efforts on women's uplift and on abolishing the visible signs of subordinated status. In this and other "unenlightened" countries, she told the Troy Society, "females are kept in the most abject subjugation." Children were betrothed in infancy, and in some cases girls were married at the age of nine. The permanent support of the Troy Society, she predicted, "would go very far to break up the present system of selling them in marriage, which is to us so very abhorrent." Long desirous of adding a boarding house to her day school, Hill hoped to bring a select number of young women under her "own watchful eye," thereby "separating them from the too often wretched example of their parents." She already had taken in four girls to live as members of her extended family. Two of the young women were teachers in the "infant" (elementary) school.⁵⁵

With the direction of the seminary now set, members of the Troy Society and its auxiliaries proceeded to raise the necessary funds. The sum of \$3000 was the goal. To help raise money, Willard agreed to

54. See Phelps's address in the *American Ladies' Magazine*, 6 (Oct. 1833), 467-70; and Willard's report in Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*, 166-69. See also Bolzau, *Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps*, 407-408. On White's activities during the Greek revolution see Angelo Repousis, "'The Cause of the Greeks': Philadelphia and the Greek War for Independence, 1821-1828," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 123 (Oct. 1999), 333-63.

55. See letter from Hill to Mrs. Rev. Gregory T. Bedell, Smyrna, Nov. 11, 1831, reprinted in the *Episcopal Recorder*, Feb. 25, 1832; and letters by John H. Hill and Frances M. Hill to Emma Willard, Athens, Sept. 7, 1833, and Frances Hill to Eunice Pawling, Athens, Feb. 21, 1834, published in the *American Ladies' Magazine*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 448-56.

publish her *Journal and Letters from France and Great Britain* and sell it for \$1 per copy. Within a year and a half, Willard sold an estimated 2500 copies. Less printing and other expenses, the book brought in over \$1100 for the benefit of the Greek fund. Several societies sponsored “ladies’ fairs,” which sold articles made by members. The results of these united exertions were promising. By September 1833 the Troy Society had already appropriated \$500 to the enlargement of the Episcopal mission school at Athens and paid an additional \$500 for the instruction of those pupils chosen to become teachers. Besides money, members donated books, music, and other items for use in the classroom.⁵⁶

After the initial flurry of success, the fundraising drive stalled. There were those, including the same detractor who reproached Willard for stepping outside her anointed sphere, who also questioned the feasibility and practicality of the proposed undertaking. Writing under the moniker of “a friend to suffering humanity,” the author warned against giving aid to the Greeks. He doubted whether Willard and her associates were qualified to teach the Hellenic language to Greek women, let alone be the ones to restore Greece to its “original brightness” and ancient renown. In short, he defied Willard to show the public the “real” advantages that would result from such a scheme. He even went so far as to allege that the city’s clergy were the ones who really controlled the operations of the society and that they would likely “pocket” any money raised to further themselves “in ease and luxury.” In the end, he advised his readers to look upon the “scenes of want and misery” in their “own streets.” “Here you can *see* that [charity] is *needed*, and *know* that it is *applied* [author’s italics].”⁵⁷

Willard was aware of the criticism. Certainly, the Episcopal Church supported and promoted the project. And several of city’s most prominent clergymen from various denominations were members of the Troy Society. Hill and Robertson agreed to serve as trustees for the school, and their wives would instruct those girls chosen to become teachers. But to depict Willard as their “tool” in this “deep and priestly undertaking” in exchange for having the school named after her would be unfair.

56. See *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 6 (Sept. 1833), 424. Also Phelps’s address published in *idem*, 6 (Oct. 1833), 468–69; Willard’s report on the society’s activities published in *idem*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 456–59. See also Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*, 168–69; and Lutz, *Emma Willard*, 89.

57. *Mrs. Willard Reviewed*, 2–12.

Willard came from an Episcopalian background and her Troy Seminary, though not affiliated with a particular denomination, was “eminently religious.” Every Sunday afternoon students assembled for Bible study. Willard considered a sound Christian education essential for the “mental and moral regeneration” of her gender. She trusted that Hill and Robertson would fulfill her ambitions for the proposed female school. Robertson’s wife was a former pupil and shared Willard’s beliefs about women’s uplift. And although the missionaries were not bound by any prescribed rules, they were subject to the views of the Troy Society and were required to keep the executive committee informed regarding the situation and progress of the seminary.⁵⁸

Willard and her colleagues were also aware of the reluctance that many Americans had toward sending relief abroad, especially when there were so many social ills at home that needed attention. During the 1820s and 1830s, Americans in increasing numbers joined a host of benevolent, charitable, and religious organizations that aimed to improve society. Some sought to abolish slavery, others to suppress liquor or to discover and eliminate the causes of pauperism. But these were all domestic endeavors. In some places, the Greek cause was overshadowed by other charities. In Boston, philanthropists were preoccupied with raising funds for an institution for the education of the blind. Philhellenes, Sarah Hale cautioned Willard, had to “let this mania run its course before making any effort” on behalf of the Greeks.⁵⁹

Willard conceded that it was natural for Americans to feel more for the distress of those closest to home, but, she added, “should we therefore feel nothing for the distant?” In “expanding our hearts to general benevolence,” she doubted whether any harm would result “to ourselves, to our neighbors, or our country.” Willard pointed to the Greek revolution a few years earlier, which established a precedent for American overseas philanthropy. “Have not we who have opened our hearts to the past sufferings of our sisters in Greece . . . been made better and

58. On Willard’s religious background and convictions see Lutz, *Emma Willard*; Fairbanks, *Emma Willard and Her Pupils*; and Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*. The extent of the relationship between the missionaries and the Troy Society can be gleaned from their correspondence, published in the *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 447–57.

59. See letter from Sarah Hale to Willard, Boston, April 21, 1833, in Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*, 165–66.

happier?" she queried. In short, she argued that American sympathy for the Greeks had not lessened America's humanitarian impulses toward the downtrodden in the United States. On the contrary, as Thomas Haskell argues, the resources available for attaining a variety of humanitarian goals actually increased as the American economy flourished in these years following the advent of the market revolution. Nevertheless, Willard was quick to point out that she was not asking "the benevolent here to do for Greece one moment after she becomes able to do for herself." In other words, this was not an "indefinite" and "interminable" obligation. The immediate aim of the Troy Society was to merely get the Greeks started on the road to recovery, after which time they themselves would support the undertaking.⁶⁰

Throughout 1833 and 1834 Willard kept the Greek cause before the public. On August 20, 1834, members of the Troy Society and its auxiliaries met at their second annual meeting at Christ Church in Norwich, Connecticut. Rev. S. B. Paddock read a report prepared by Willard detailing the past transactions of the society. A poem from the pen of Lydia Sigourney was also read for the occasion. Sarah Hale published both documents in her *American Ladies' Magazine* to show "our American ladies the necessity of their [continued] exertions to emancipate their sisters of the East." In addition to these articles, Hale published a letter written by Samuel Gridley Howe, the old veteran of the Greek war for independence. An authority on the subject, Howe reiterated many of the reasons for aiding Greek women. Howe told of the importance of women's uplift in the progress of civilization and that the women of Greece were among the "most virtuous" in Europe. All they needed to raise themselves to the same level of "moral excellence" as American women was education.⁶¹

These renewed exertions proved successful. In the eighteen months since the founding of the Troy Society more than \$3000 passed through

60. "Report of Mrs. Willard," in the *American Ladies' Magazine*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 456–59. On how the Greek revolution fits into the American benevolent impulses of the antebellum period see Repousis, "The Cause of the Greeks," 335, 345–47. For more on the connection between capitalism and humanitarianism see Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2," *American Historical Review*, 90 (1985), 547, 556–58.

61. See Howe to Willard, Aug. 20, 1834, in the *American Ladies' Magazine*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 456–61.

its hands for the benefit of female education in Greece. Of that sum, \$1600 had already been expended for the Greek seminary. The society pledged to send an additional \$1000 over the next two years, after which time the Episcopal Mission Board was expected to assume the entire control and financial support of the institution. With that, Willard considered the society to have fulfilled “all reasonable expectations.” As she concluded, “more has been done than the most sanguine among us anticipated could have been accomplished in such short a time.”⁶²

Meanwhile in Athens, the seminary went into operation as planned under the name of “The American Ladies’ Institute,” though it was commonly known as the “Troy School.” During the years 1833–1835 twenty young Greek women received special education for the purpose of becoming teachers. The success of the seminary can be seen in the glowing accounts made by American travel writers. At the time of John Lloyd Stephens’s visit in 1835, nearly 500 students were receiving daily instruction from twelve native-born teachers. In addition, several others had been sent out to take charge of other schools. The female department drew the largest praise: “The girls were distributed in different classes, according to their age and advancement; they had clean hands and faces, a rare thing for Greek children, and were neatly dressed.” Another visitor to the school remarked that the female students “acquitted themselves exceedingly well.”⁶³

Willard also received praise for her contribution to female education. As Howe told Willard, the members of the Troy Society “are indeed the friends of Greece . . . and deserve more of her gratitude than many who joined her in her struggle for independence.” Sure enough, the Hellenic government gave its approval and appreciation to the “Troy School.” The *American Ladies’ Magazine* reported that the appeals of Willard and Phelps had been translated into modern Greek, circulated in the country, and “read with great avidity by the people.” The Queen was also said to be “interesting herself in the plan.” In July 1834, the government issued

62. See Willard’s report in the *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 457–58; and Willard’s letter to the Ladies of Troy Society, Jan. 10, 1835, published in Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*, 174–77.

63. See John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Greece, Turkey, Russia, and Poland* (2 vols., New York, 1838), I, 63–67; and *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 7 (1834), 370–72. See also Bolzau, *Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps*, 409–10; and Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 200.

a decree encouraging female education in Greece and announced its intention of paying the tuition of twelve students chosen from the different provinces. For Willard, this was more than even she expected. At no time in recorded history, she boasted, “has any government in that part of the world . . . made a public decree whose object was the special improvement and elevation of the female character.”⁶⁴

For Willard, the success of the female seminary in Greece validated her lifelong mission to improve the lot of women, both at home and abroad. In the ensuing years Willard continued to promote the cause of female education. After her retirement from the Troy Seminary in 1838 she became superintendent of the four district schools of Kensington, Connecticut, where she instructed the teachers in her educational practices. She later galvanized scores of ladies from across New York and New England into playing a leading role in the common school movement. Indeed, when she died in 1870, Willard had compiled an impressive resume. She was among the first to promote higher education for women. She established a successful school without state aid and sent out hundreds of teachers from her seminary to bring education to a growing number of American women.⁶⁵ Her efforts on behalf of Greek women extended Willard’s influence and American philanthropy overseas. She helped establish a school to train teachers and encouraged the education of women in a country previously lacking in that department.

Willard also stood at the forefront of those women who spoke publicly about “women’s rights.” Although she never championed some women’s issues, such as temperance, abolition, and especially women’s suffrage, which have traditionally been associated with nineteenth-century feminism, her influence in advancing the cause of women cannot be underestimated. She was one of the first American women to direct the attention of Americans to the plight of the dispossessed of her gender outside the United States. More broadly, Willard’s campaign to promote female

64. Howe to Willard, Aug. 20, 1834, published in the *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 7 (Oct. 1834), 460; *American Ladies’ Magazine*, 7 (1834), 575; and Willard’s letter to the Ladies of the Troy Society, Jan. 10, 1835, in Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*, 175–76. See also Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 200; and Bolzau, *Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps*, 409.

65. For more on Willard’s life after she left the Troy Seminary see Lutz, *Emma Willard*; Lord, *Life of Emma Willard*; Scott, “Ever Widening Circle,” 3–25; and Baym, “Women and the Republic,” 1–23.

education in Greece provided her contemporaries with lessons in female activism and expanded the boundaries of “women’s sphere,” both at home and abroad. The Greek drive was national in scope and applied modern techniques of communication, propaganda, and fundraising. Willard organized women from across New England, New York, and elsewhere in a public crusade that defied conventional definitions of “proper” female behavior.