"THE GREEK FIRE": THE GREEK WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE AND THE EMERGENCE OF AMERICAN REFORM MOVEMENTS, 1780-1860

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of George Mason University in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy History

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my loving and supportive husband, Steve.
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I would like to thank the many friends, relatives, and supporters who encouraged me throughout my journey as a graduate student at George Mason University. I especially would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Rosemarie Zagarri, who has been an irreplaceable mentor throughout my graduate career, providing me with essential support and wisdom. I also would like to thank my committee members, Drs. Cynthia Kierner and Mack Holt, who provided invaluable suggestions and guidance. The many research repositories to which I travelled aided me in my research, especially The Library Company of Philadelphia and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. In addition, I would like to thank my good friend, Jenny Reeder, who read portions of my work and was a tireless cheerleader throughout the process. And finally, I would like to thank my husband who travelled with me to many research repositories assisting me with my research. His support sustained me.
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ABSTRACT


Maureen Connors Santelli, Ph.D.
George Mason University, 2014
Dissertation Director: Dr. Rosemarie Zagarri

This dissertation places early Americans in the midst of a global conflict that pit the Greeks against the Ottoman Turks. Although historians have focused a great deal of attention on American support for the French Revolution, few have examined a similar conflict, the Greek War for Independence. Fought from 1821 to 1832, this war generated nearly as much popular support and interest as had the French movement. Perceiving strong cultural and intellectual ties with Greece, American men and women identified the region as the seedbed of American democracy and a crucial source of American values. Contrasting their western classical tradition with the Muslim origins of the Ottoman Empire, Americans portrayed the struggle in Greece as a climactic battle between western freedom and Oriental despotism.

The sentimental bond with ancient Greece, along with contemporary distrust of the Ottoman Empire, produced an outpouring of popular enthusiasm. Joining in a
transatlantic alliance that linked Britain and the United States, American authors produced numerous poems, plays, and political tracts to generate support for the Greek cause. At the same time, American men and women throughout the country organized at the grassroots level to send men, money, and supplies to aid the Greeks. Pressure was placed on Congress to intervene on the Greeks’ behalf. These efforts, however, encountered serious resistance from U.S. officials who wished to maintain official neutrality and cultivate commercial ties with the Ottomans.

After the Greek War ended, American interest in Greek independence continued to exert an influence on American society and politics. Americans had long imagined their society to be the Ottoman Empire’s antithesis, but this perception would be turned on its head in the years that followed. Lurid portrayals of Ottoman slavery and their mistreatment of women had inadvertently highlighted American failures with regard to slavery and the status of women. Many men and women who had organized in support of Greek independence transitioned into supporting other forms of social and political reform. More than a transient political movement, support for the Greek War had created a practical school for politics that facilitated the emergence of abolitionist and women’s rights movements in antebellum America.
INTRODUCTION

In 1821 American poet James G. Percival wrote: “Greeks! Arise, be free, Arm for liberty; Men of Sparta! Hear the call, who could never bear the thrall of coward Frank, or savage Turk; From those mountains, where you lurk, Send the voice of freedom forth.”¹ Percival’s poem represented a response to the coming of a revolution in Greece, a rebellion fought from 1821 to 1832 in which Greek subjects struggled to free themselves from the control of the Ottoman Empire. The heroes, at least in the opinion of the American public, were the Greeks, the villains were the Ottoman Turks.²

This poem, like so many other similar pieces of popular literature printed in the 1820s, compared the cause of American independence with that of the Greeks and urged Americans to come to the Greeks’ aid. The comparison resonated with American audiences throughout the country. For nearly ten years American newspapers of the 1820s were filled with news reports and public opinion articles that portrayed the Ottoman Turks as the enemy of liberty and a font of pernicious despotism. The Greeks, on the other hand, were seen as the heirs of an ancient political tradition that valorized a form of liberty and self-government to which Americans themselves lay claim. Editors and authors of newspapers, pamphlets, and broadsides advertised plays, printed poems,

² Except in instances where Greek pirates seized American commercial goods later in the war, Greek War literature expressed exclusive favor for the Greeks over the Turks.
and reported on sympathetic support as well as financial assistance given by American men and women to these defenders of liberty in their struggle against oppression.  

Perhaps the most startling aspect of this public outpouring was that Americans of the 1820s were enamored of a place to which most of them would never travel and engrossed in a war that did not directly affect them. Unlike the French Revolution, to which there had been a similarly widespread response in the 1790s, Greece and the United States had not previously shared diplomatic ties nor engaged in extensive trade relations with each other. In sifting through the wealth of contemporary texts written in support of the Greek War many questions emerge, including: Why did so many American men and women support the Greek cause of independence and what lasting effects did their support have on American society?  

Support for the Greek cause was, in fact, a transatlantic phenomenon. Prior to the war, many people in Britain as well as in the United States embraced not only the prospect of a Greek nation but all things Greek, including Greek architecture, literature, philosophy, and fashion. They embraced their cause with such fervor that they were designated “philhellenes.” American philhellenes not only wrote poems and performed plays that hailed the praises of the Greeks, but also donated large amounts of money and supplies to the Greek war effort. Over time, relief societies began to shift their focus from military aid to assistance for Greek civilians – men, women, and children – who were the victims of war. Americans responded to the calls for aid and joined these efforts largely

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3 Greek War literature and news can be found in publications throughout the United States, but especially in large cities such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, and Savannah. Those who opposed the movement included some politicians, who expressed their opinions in private, and merchants, who stood to lose money if the U.S. chose to support the Greeks against the Ottoman Empire.
because they felt a visceral, sympathetic tie with the Greeks. Imagining themselves to be political and ideologically connected to the ancient Greeks, many Americans wished to release the modern Greeks from their current state of oppression and enable them to reclaim their ancient liberty.

This national outpouring of sympathy and support, which one newspaper referred to as “The Greek Fire,” was largely unprecedented and unparalleled. Although many Americans supported the French Revolution and adopted some of its practices, including styles of dress, manners of speaking, and particular political values, groups of Americans never organized at the grassroots level to send money and direct aid to the French. Although the Latin American revolutions of the nineteenth century garnered a great deal of attention in the United States there were few popular calls for direct assistance. The Serbian Revolution, occurring around the same time, never managed to make much of a dent in public awareness. Americans supported the Greeks because of a perceived cultural and intellectual connection to ancient Greece, which, along with ancient Rome, was regarded as the source of western values and the origin of the American political tradition. The classical tradition in American politics and popular culture had a long

4 “The Greeks,” Richmond Enquirer, January 15, 1824; Angelo Repousis, “The Cause of the Greeks”: Philadelphia and the Greek War for Independence, 1821-1828, The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 123, no. 4 (October 1, 1999): 333; The Greek Fire was a military weapon developed during the Byzantine Empire, a medieval Greek empire. An early form of napalm, the Byzantines used this secret weapon in defeating a Muslim naval force that would have otherwise conquered Constantinople. Alex Roland, “Secrecy, Technology, and War: Greek Fire and the Defense of Byzantium, 678-1204,” Technology and Culture 33, no. 4 (October 1, 1992): 655.


history of its own. Stretching back to the Renaissance, the classical tradition would later become an integral part of the Enlightenment where civic duty, virtue, and the defense of liberty against tyranny would come to play an important role in American revolutionary rhetoric. Americans imagined their society as part of the legacy of the ancient world. Classical authors, particularly from the Roman republic, were especially influential to the founding generation, serving as a cornerstone for revolutionary literature and later the foundation of a new American society and government.

After the American Revolution, the classical tradition persisted but became democratized. Although highly educated scholars were expected to know Greek and Latin, ordinary people would learn about the classical tradition in other ways. By the beginning of the nineteenth century Americans came to embrace a classical tradition that included what was known as the Grecian style, exerting a profound influence on American art, architecture, fashion, literature, and government. Thus even non-elite American men and women had a chance to become familiar with the classical tradition.

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text citations


The United States’ relationship with the Ottoman Empire also played an influential and complicated role in Americans support for Greeks. Even during the eighteenth century, many American men and women expressed a mistrust of the Muslim world. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Barbary Wars had intensified the antagonism. Contrasting their western classical tradition with the Muslim origins of the Ottoman Empire, Americans imagined their nation as the freest country in the world and the Ottoman Empire as the most despotical. The sentimental bond with ancient Greece, along with contemporary mistrust of the Ottoman Empire, played dual roles in producing the “Greek fire.” Popular enthusiasm for Greece led American citizens as well as some elected officials not only to rhapsodize in favor of the Greek cause but also to send substantial amounts of material assistance to the country’s beleaguered people. Muddying the waters, however, was the American government’s desire to maintain official neutrality in the struggle. Merchants, in particular, pressured the U.S. government to pursue commercial ties with the Ottomans. Yet continuing calls for American intervention in the war complicated the diplomatic goal of obtaining a commercial treaty, thus creating continual tension between the government’s official policies and popular political sentiment.

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Besides generating a widespread popular movement, the most significant effect of American support for the Greek War for Independence was in its influence on the social reform movements of antebellum America. Invoking their perceptions of Muslim tyranny over the Greeks, American missionaries began to evangelize in Greece, spreading both their Protestant beliefs as well as educational reforms. Once again the imagined link to the Greeks influenced missionary interest in travelling to the Mediterranean and Greece in particular.

Around the same time, the domestic abolitionist and women’s rights movements began to gain momentum. Some reformers began to articulate a troubling issue: the similarity between the language applied to the Turks with regard to their treatment of the Greeks and the condition of women and enslaved people in their own midst. This commentary led to an even more troubling realization: that while Americans wished to liberate the Greeks from Turkish oppression they tolerated the enslavement of black people and subjugation of women in the United States. To the dismay of many Americans, the United States possessed a serious shortcoming that was shared by their antithesis, the Ottoman Empire. These realizations heightened the popular impact of reformist rhetoric and gave added impetus to these movements. Moreover, increased participation in grassroots pro-Greek organizations was easily translated into participation in other kinds of social reform groups. Ultimately, American’s popular interest in the Greek War for Independence developed into something more than a transient political movement. By the end of the 1830s: it had become a practical school
for political action, which facilitated the rise of the abolitionist movement and generated support for female education and women’s rights.

**Historiography**

Among the few historians to examine the Greek War in the American context are William St. Clair, Michael Herzfeld, David Larrabee, and Paul Pappas. In their studies, these historians focus on the literary and philosophical origins of the philhellenic movement. Americans, they say, increasingly became enamored of Greece through growing knowledge of European archaeological discoveries in the Mediterranean. Publicity surrounding the adventures of Lord Byron and others in Greece heightened popular interest in that part of the world. This dissertation, however, moves beyond the cultural and intellectual sources of the philhellenic movement in order to investigate its social implications and political meanings in the United States. It claims that American interest in Greek independence was not simply a nostalgic dream or romantic indulgence. Rather, it demonstrates something important about how early Americans defined themselves as a people and interpreted the legacy of the American Revolution. They saw the ancient Greek tradition as being part of the American political tradition. Sharing in this tradition, Americans believed they had a civic duty to the descendents of the ancient Greeks - to assist them in restoring their ancient liberties.

Historians have failed to connect American interest in the Greek War with the persistence of the classical tradition in the United States. Historians such as J.G.A. Pocock, Bernard Bailyn, and Gordon Wood have examined various aspects of classical beliefs and the rise of republicanism in revolutionary America. Still others, such as Meier
Reinhold, Carl Richard, and Caroline Winterer, have more specifically delved into the changing role of the classical tradition in the early United States. Nonetheless, historians have paid less attention to a deeper question how and why republicanism became democracy. Although Richard and Winterer have noted this transition they have not explored this subject in depth. This dissertation endeavors to explain this phenomenon in terms that have not been used before, through the lens of American support for the Greek War.

Studying women’s participation in the Greek War provides new insights for understanding the evolution of antebellum social reform movements. While historians have focused on the reasons by which women came to be involved in abolitionist and women’s rights few have examined female involvement in the Greek War effort and its connections to these subsequent reform activities. Historians Julie Roy Jeffrey, Anne Boylan, Lori Ginzberg, Mary Kelley, Christine, Stansell, and Beth A. Salerno have written on the subject of female participation in charitable societies, benevolent groups, abolitionism, and women’s rights organizations. As these historians have shown, women argued that participation in such activities did not represent an intervention in the male realm of politics but was simply an extension of their feminine role in preserving the moral integrity and virtue of their families and communities.⁹

Most existing studies do not analyze the key role played by women’s involvement in Greek relief societies. Like many men, women were sympathetic to the Greek cause, especially after the focus shifted from military aid to civilian assistance and educational outreach. More than other domestically focused reform activities, however, the Greek War became a way in which female social reform could be extended abroad. Through their involvement with the Greek cause, women increasingly came to recognize the shortcomings in their own country, particularly with respect to the plight of enslaved people and the oppression of their own sex. By looking outside of the United States, this dissertation seeks to understand American support for the Greek War within the larger context of Americans’ relationship with the wider world – a historiographical move known as the “global turn.”  

Within the last two decades, early American historians have sought to expand their studies beyond the borders of the United States to encompass much broader frames of reference. The United States, it is emphasized, did not develop in isolation from the rest of the world. The country both influenced and was influenced by other places in the world. People, goods, and ideas circulated throughout the globe. Americans imagined their society as being very much a part of a global as well as ancient tradition.

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11 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised Edition* (London; New York: Verso, 2006) This dissertation in part examines the phenomenon of an imagined American community linked to the ancient world and the ways in which this understanding inspired many Americans to participate in supporting the Greek War for Independence. The ways in which this imagined community evolved and conflicted with other perceptions of the American identity will also be discussed.
As such, more historians, including Frank Lambert, Timothy Marr, and Robert J. Allison have investigated how Americans perceived the far-off and distant Muslim world, discovering many more connections than have previously been supposed. Allison, for example, has argued that Europeans understood the Muslim world in terms of religion where conflict surrounding trade routes and territory became a contest over civilization and barbarism. This was the context through which Americans came to initially know the Muslim world prior to their conflict with the Barbary States. One aspect of Allison’s work, *The Crescent Obscured*, particularly focused on the issue of slavery in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century America and how it was compared and contrasted with slavery in the Muslim world.\(^{12}\) His examination specifically related to literature that emerged at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but does not consider the later conflict of the Greek War or the emergence of the abolitionist movement.

Frank Lambert’s *The Barbary Wars* takes another approach. Lambert examines the Barbary conflict as a period that represents an extension of the American Revolution. Lambert states that the differences in religious beliefs produced more differences in the present day than in the historical past. Lambert also maintains that the Barbary Wars marked a point in time where “Americans hoped to chart their own course in the Atlantic world, trading in markets that offered them the greatest profits” and “must also be understood within the context of domestic politics in the early American republic as

\(^{12}\) Allison, *The Crescent Obscured*, xv and 98.

Timothy Marr shifts the focus to culture. Islamic orientalism in America, he says, “offers a critical history of cultural imagination,” that imparts a more “planetary perspective to a period of American Studies too often confined within concerns of the nation alone.”\footnote{Marr, \textit{The Cultural Roots of American Islamism}, 5.}

Locating American ideas and practices within a global context provides new perspectives on domestic issues. The trans-national nature of the philhellenic movement brings an additional kind of insight. As this dissertation shows, American attitudes towards the persistence of the classical tradition and perceptions of the Muslim world had a discernible impact on the growth of grassroots social reform activities, the involvement of women in social reform movements, and the increasing awareness of the injustice of slavery and the oppression of women. Ironically, identifying the injustice of Turkish slavery and subordination of women made it easier for some Americans to identify the existence of similar injustices within their own country.

\textit{Organization}

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. The first two chapters trace how early Americans embraced the classical world and some of the ways in which they came to distrust the Ottoman Empire. These chapters provide context for the significance of American support for the Greek War for Independence. The remaining chapters are thematic, discussing the organization of the American philhellenic movement, the widespread participation in the Greek War effort, and the diplomatic conflict the U.S.
government encountered with the Ottoman Empire as a result of this popular support. The final chapter explores how support for the Greek War played an important role in antebellum reform.

Chapter One: The Classical Tradition in America and the Rise of Greek Democracy and Chapter Two: American Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire, 1783-1820, trace how Americans of the 1820s came to know Greece and the Ottoman Empire. Chapter one explores the importance of the classical tradition in American society by examining education, women, architecture, and city planning to illustrate a shift from an exclusively Roman inspired classical tradition of the eighteenth century to the rise of a Grecian influence by the 1820s. Chapter Two addresses how Americans came to know the Ottoman Empire through politics, school curriculum, popular literature, material goods, and naval conflict during the Barbary Wars. These sources reveal the presence of the Middle East in the minds of early Americans, that there was an unquenchable curiosity in the Middle East that also reflected a superior western sensibility: a sentiment that intensified during the Barbary Wars. The contrast between East and West became synonymous with the struggle between liberty and tyranny by the eighteenth century and through this understanding Americans recognized the Ottoman Empire as the despotic “other.”

Chapters One and Two build a foundation for understanding why Americans would have been so invested in the Greek cause in the 1820s. That the Ottoman Empire was a Muslim nation certainly played an important role in contemporary literature that called on Americans to support the Christian Greeks. However, classical rhetoric was just
as important, if not more so, than religion. For example, Americans did not show any discernible interest in the Serbian Revolution, which was also a war between Christians and Muslims. Popular familiarity with the classical tradition as well as the growth of the philhellenic movement in the United States were driving forces behind the success of the Greek war effort.

*Chapter Three: The Rise of American Philhellenism* introduces the philhellenic movement, its European origins, how American philhellenes felt especially connected to ancient Greece and the ways in which they appealed to the American public to support the Greek cause. On the surface, the philhellenic movement appears to be purely a sentimental one, but in reality it was political, reflecting Americans conceptions of themselves as a people. This chapter draws on literature and manuscripts written by notable philhellenes such as Edward Everett and Mathew Carey as well as other important philhellenes of the period.

*Chapter Four: American Philhellenism and Public Activism* explores how charitable efforts to support the Greeks shifted toward assisting Greek women and children instead of Greek soldiers. This shift especially involved female participation. The philhellenic movement encouraged female activism with leaders arguing that humanitarianism fell under a woman’s realm of influence in society. The chapter considers female activism as an important part of the movement and how their organizations arose especially to meet the needs of the suffering Greek civilians. This chapter discusses the critical portrayal of the Ottoman’s treatment of women, who suffered in harems, without any rights or freedom. This rhetoric directly appealed to
American women and would play a continuing role in American female-centered social
reform movements.

Chapter Five: Freedom at Home, Freedom Abroad: Internal Conflicts over the
Support of the Greek War examines internal conflict over support for the Greek War.
After the close of the War of 1812 and the Barbary Wars in 1815, American merchants
hoped they had finally secured the ability to freely conduct business abroad. Trade with
the Ottoman Empire was especially attractive. Merchants were hopeful that diplomatic
negotiations would be settled soon. Widespread support for the Greek War in the United
States, however, created a heated debate in the United States. Conflict emerged between
those who supported the Greek cause and those who supported improved trade relations
with the Ottoman Empire. The conflict between philhellenes and merchants ultimately
boiled down to differing approaches to developing and preserving American liberty at
home and abroad.

Chapter Six: From Philhellenism to Abolitionism and Women’s Rights discusses
how popular support for the Greeks changed political life in America, specifically within
anti-slavery and women’s rights circles. Even though Americans characterized Turkish
slavery as being a mark of despotism, few Americans prior to 1821 connected Turkish
slavery with American slavery. The chapter traces the development of this realization,
beginning with an article written by Benjamin Franklin in 1790 where he specifically cast
American reluctance to abolish slavery in terms of the Turkish tradition of slavery.
Turkish slavery, inflicted upon Americans taken captive in the Mediterranean, dominated
anti-Ottoman discussion throughout the Barbary Wars and was an important way the
American public identified the Turks as tyrannical and despotic. This paradigm was turned on its head by abolitionist authors, however, as the Greek War came to a close. Many Americans came to realize the contradiction in supporting reform on the other side of the world while similar problems existed at home, particularly with regard to slavery and women’s rights.

By understanding American support for the Greek War for Independence in a global context, it is possible to gain a whole new perspective on a variety of domestic American issues. Much of what early Americans knew about the Ottoman Empire was understood through existing stereotypes. Americans also had strong opinions concerning how they saw their own country in comparison. Familiarity with the classics gave Americans a strong visceral connection with Greece. More than just a disagreement about what happened on the other side of the world, American debate about the Greek War represented a larger discussion about what it meant to be American. Viewing American support for the war in this light, abolitionist Franklin Benjamin Sanborn reflected on the significance of the Greek War for Independence in the United States. He concluded that the eventual abolition of slavery in the U.S. had “begun in Greece” and culminated “in our American Civil War.” In rejecting Turkish slavery and oppression of women, abolitionists and women’s rights activists called on Americans to reaffirm their

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15 Samuel Gridley Howe, *Letters and Journals of Samuel Gridley Howe*, ed. Franklin Benjamin Sanborn (Boston: D. Estes & company, 1906) Franklin Benjamin Sanborn was a close friend of Howe’s and wrote the introduction of a volume of his friend’s printed journals and letters. Both Sanborn and Howe were members of the “Secret Six,” a group of men who privately provided John Brown with financial support for his raid at Harpers Ferry in 1859.
commitment to liberty as a fundamental value shared as much by their own country as by ancient Greece.
CHAPTER ONE: THE CLASSICAL TRADITION IN AMERICA AND THE RISE OF GREEK DEMOCRACY

In the early years of the United States, the patriots who waged the American Revolution and the framers who wrote the U.S. Constitution primarily looked to a classical past rooted in ancient Rome rather than in ancient Greece. The founding generation preferred republics to democracies, believing that a republican form of government best preserved the public good through the representation of a virtuous citizenry. Democracies, on the other hand, were thought of as unpredictable and susceptible to mob rule.

Yet the classical tradition in America was not static. The development of a republican tradition inspired primarily by the Roman Republic eventually gave way to a Grecian, influence by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The infusion of Greece into the American classical tradition expanded the appeal of the classical world beyond educated elites and made the ancient world more accessible to the masses. Where the founding generation drew a distinction between Roman and Greek political thought in the eighteenth century, Americans of the nineteenth century increasingly viewed the classical tradition as a melding of both Greek and Roman traditions. This change influenced how the American public viewed civic duty and political activism by the 1820s.

As a result of the widespread presence of the classical world in the United States, many men and women from all levels of society possessed at least some basic knowledge
of ancient history and understood that the United States derived many of their political and social ideals from the classical world. After around 1800, Americans moved away from a focus on the Roman republic and came to a larger appreciation of the ancient world, especially ancient Greece. In fact, a rage for Greek fashions, architecture, and literature swept through popular culture in both Great Britain and the United States. Those with a strong interest in Greece came to be known as “philhellenes.” This strong sympathy with ancient Greece laid the foundation for future fascination with the Greek War for Independence in the United States.

Republicanism in Early America

Ideas derived from ancient concepts of republican government were prevalent in America before the Revolution. In the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, American colonists praised the English monarchy, especially the early reign of King George III, as being closer to a republic than to an absolute monarchy. As conflict with England increased during the 1760s, popular concepts of republicanism came to mean essentially the same system of government that was already established in the colonies - a representative system of government on the local level and without royal or proprietary officials. Ultimately, republicanism was envisioned as a system of mixed government that would be kept in check by a virtuous citizenry. Although the decision to break ties with Great Britain was unprecedented and radical, Americans already possessed the

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ideological as well as governmental framework for governing themselves, which they believed they could trace to the ancient world.3

Historians have debated the importance of the classics in considering the intellectual foundation of the American Revolution and the United States. Historian Bernard Bailyn argued “The classics of the ancient world are everywhere in the literature of the Revolution, but they are everywhere illustrative, not determinative, of thought.”4 Instead, Bailyn argued that the writings of Enlightenment rationalism were more directly influential. Countering this claim, historian Carl Richard wrote that “the classics supplied a large portion of the founders’ intellectual tools” which were transmitted from one generation to the next through the education system.5 Richard and others have argued that in order to understand the founders it is imperative to understand their knowledge of the classics.6

Detailed knowledge of the classics was particularly focused on the Roman Republic and the years in which the Republic began to decline. Learned early Americans read these sources with a view of learning more about how the Romans allowed their

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5 Richard, The Founders and the Classics, 8.
moral and political virtues to decay. Early American public servants looked to ancient political theory and history in order to ensure the survival of the new American republic. Early Americans possessed an understanding of political theory that was derived from classical authors such as Cicero, Tacitus, Livy, and Polybius. Each of these authors described at great length the greatness of the Roman Republic, the necessity of preserving the public good through civic virtue, and the consequences sustained when representatives forsook the public good’s best interests. Plutarch’s Lives was also widely read, which praised the efforts of historical figures such as Cato, Brutus, and Cassius who sought to uphold the Roman republic in the face of tyranny. These historical figures were often cited in newspaper articles and pamphlets at the time of the Constitution’s ratification, suggesting that ancient history and politics were influential to those engaged in public debate as well as those who created the new American nation.

During this period, both men and women were very much influenced by these classical figures and strived to achieve in themselves a sense of piety and virtue based on their understanding of these classical models. Members of the founding generation held that only by maintaining virtue among public officials could Americans hope to sustain the freedom of the people. John Adams, for example, wrote to Mercy Otis Warren that “Public virtue cannot exist in a Nation without private, and public Virtue is the only Foundation of Republics. There must be a positive Passion for the public good, the public

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8 For more reading on the classical tradition and how the concepts of civic duty and virtue played a major role in public life from the Renaissance to the American Revolution please see: Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny; Gummere, The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition; Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment.
9 McDonald, Novus Ordo Seclorum, 67–68.
Interest, Honour, Power and Glory, established in the Minds of the People, or there can be no Republican Government, nor any real liberty.” Adams also wrote to his wife Abigail declaring that in order for the American republic to succeed, their sons must learn to be good republicans and in order to do this their sons must “revere nothing but Religion, Morality, and Liberty.”

Many of the founding generation’s conception of republican virtue and natural law were derived from ancient Roman sources. In contrast, Greece was the birthplace of democracy and democracy, to the founding generation, in its purest sense was not considered to be a model that had proven successful. Instead, Americans of the eighteenth century were more interested in republics and endowing the people with the power to check tyranny within government. The opposing forces of civic virtue and tyranny were concepts steeped in the classics. American colonists eventually came to perceive their struggle with the king as the people’s struggle to overthrow tyranny and uphold virtue. These sentiments were prevalent in contemporary print culture, providing support for the idea that the greater American public was at least in some superficial sense familiar with the idea of republicanism. Educated and elite individuals in the eighteenth century would have been very familiar with classical texts, having read ancient works in the original classical languages. Although studied, Greek authors were

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10 Quoted in ibid., 72.
often translated into Latin and were only considered important in so far as they complemented their Roman counterparts.

Classical texts provided heroes for the founding generation, which they used to project a particular classical persona for the masses in an effort to obtain legitimacy as well as to promote the idea that they did indeed have the public good’s interest at heart. Cato the younger, Brutus, Cassius, Publius (or Publicola, which refers to the same person) and Cicero were favorite Roman heroes because of their attempts to save the Roman republic.\(^{13}\) The play *Cato* was George Washington’s favorite; he even had it performed for the troops at Valley Forge.\(^{14}\) The *Federalist Papers* were all written under the pseudonym “Publius,” a reference to the Roman who assisted Brutus in the overthrow of the Roman monarchy in 509 B.C., which brought about the dawn of the Roman republic.

The founding generation frequently referred to these figures in newspaper articles, public debates and pamphlets, as well as in private letters, indicating that the founding generation endeavored to be more like these model ancient republicans. Even women of the revolutionary period, such as Abigail Adams, tried to assume Roman republican persona.\(^{15}\) She often signed her letters to her husband as “Portia,” a reference to the wife of Marcus Junius Brutus, one of Julius Caesar’s assassins.\(^{16}\) John Adams was perhaps one of the most vocal advocates for a classically inspired republic and heavily relied on Roman classical texts. Adams frequently quoted Cicero in his *Defence of the*

\(^{13}\) Richard, *The Founders and the Classics*, 57.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 59.


\(^{16}\) Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 46.
Constitutions of the United States, which is his explanation for choosing a republic and describes the role of the people within that form of government. Adams also quoted an entire section of Cicero in Latin where a republic was defined as the property of the people, \( \text{res publica est res populi} \) where the people must develop a common sense of justice \( \text{(consensus iuris)} \).\(^{17}\)

It is difficult to know to what extent the classics pervaded all levels of early American society. Early American public discourse reflected an expectation of classical knowledge through copious references to ancient history and literature with repetitive calls for republican virtue to restrain those who did not have the best interests of the people at heart. Many men who held positions of power “did not go to school, but knew Latin.”\(^{18}\) Men and women of the middling class may have gained a familiarity with the classics, either by reading them in translation or through popular references. The use of classical pseudonyms in public opinion newspaper articles, for example, was extensive and the heavy use of names such as Cato, Brutus, and Cassius reflects the obsession early Americans had for “spotting the early warning signs of impending tyranny” that their classical heroes had failed to avoid.\(^{19}\) Public opinion articles signed with a classical pseudonym took on a recognizable classical persona.\(^{20}\) Brutus and Cassius, for example, had defended the Roman republic against Julius Caesar’s increasing desire for a life-long


\(^{20}\) Reinhold, Classica Americana, 157; Richard, The Founders and the Classics, 40–41.
dictatorship. The reading audience would have easily identified these figures and understood the reasons for choosing the persona.

Historians have probed who had access to print culture during the colonial period and especially the extent to which non-elites used print to develop self-conscious political identities. Historian Michael Warner has argued that, “not all printing is done with a press, nor with ink, nor on paper, nor with movable types, nor even by the method of impression” and instead viewed the distribution of information as part of a larger discourse that consisted of all who might encounter the texts even if their participation was limited to reading.\(^{21}\) According to Warner, early Americans could become active participants in the public discourse merely by reading or even hearing about political current events. Saul Cornell argued that many authors addressed their writing “to an elite, middling, or plebeian audience. Once their texts entered the public sphere, however, authors no longer controlled how they were read.”\(^{22}\) In his examination of newspaper articles signed with Classical pseudonyms, Cornell attempted to demonstrate how all three of these groups participated in using classical references in their writing as a rhetorical tool for promoting a particular ideal. Given the common educational standards of the time, most literate individuals would have encountered the classics and would have understood references to it in political writing. It is also likely, given the prevalence of the classical tradition in political literature of the period, that even illiterate individuals

could gather at least some cursory understanding of the classics by interacting with literate individuals at public meeting places.²³

Warner described the language of republicanism as being a “cultural vocabulary” where the “print discourse made it possible to imagine a people that could act as a people and in distinction from the state.”²⁴ Classical references to history and literature were very much a part of this vocabulary, especially in the late eighteenth century. In most cases, the use of classical references were employed as a type of litmus test for how virtuous the author believed members of congress were conducting themselves. For example, one public opinion author writing at the time of the First Federal Congress expressed concerns on this subject and addressed his article to “The Public” and signed it as “Brutus.” Writing for subscribers of the *Connecticut Courant*, “Brutus” observed:

In the first part of the first Session… we saw (and we rejoiced at the spectacle) all parties exerting themselves to devise a revenue system for a great empire, and all parties disposed to make small concessions for the general good. When the great principles of the constitutions were agitated, we saw a Maddison, an Ames, a Boudinot, a Benson and other able and eloquent men boldly come forward, and with the manliness of Roman Senators, contend for the establishment of a vigorous Executive, without which our whole government would have been a nerveless body… But at the close of the session, what a change! When the question respecting the Residence of Congress came before the House of Representatives, a question that did not materially affect the Union… this trifling question called forth all the narrow selfish passions of the members.²⁵

The author compared the personalities of the members of the House with that of Roman senators, which was significant in that the author uses this allusion to suggest that at the start of the first session, these men displayed the virtuous qualities thought necessary to

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possess in serving the public good. The author’s confidence in their abilities as representatives of the public was evident in making this connection with antiquity.

Once a controversial subject to the members of Congress was brought forth, however, the author’s opinion changed. “Brutus” claimed that once intense debate took hold of Congress, these qualities of virtue vanished, yielding to passion instead of eloquence and intellectuality. The author accused the members of Congress of neglecting to preserve their intentions for the public good as “the great and leading object of their deliberations.” “Brutus’s” audience would have easily recognized the comparison between Roman senators and the current members of Congress. The author’s feelings toward Congress were punctuated by this comparison and would have indicated an underlying meaning of impending disaster should Congress refuse to turn their attentions to the public good. Brutus concluded that passion had blinded the members of Congress from seeing what was in the best interests of the public good and claimed that the very credibility of the new government could be called into question should they fail to correct their errors.

Perhaps the ultimate republican role model for the founding generation was Cincinnatus. The embodiment of public service, Cincinnatus was a farmer who led the Romans to victory over the Aequians in 458 B.C. and as reward was offered a dictatorship in Rome. Livy wrote that after only six months, Cincinnatus declined to serve as a dictator for life and returned to his farm.26 John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington, to name a few, desired to emulate Cincinnatus by returning to their

farms and leaving behind politics. When he resigned his military commission at the conclusion of the Revolution as well as when he left the presidency upon the completion of his second term, Washington especially came to be associated with Cincinnatus. Whether Washington did this consciously or not, this relinquishment of power reinforced the Cincinnatus model. Evidence suggests that men such as Washington were very much cognizant of the fact that all contemporary as well as future eyes were on them. Leading by example and emulating republican heroes of the past would bring legitimacy to the new republic and its leadership.

Public opinion writers also assumed the Cincinnatus identity. Sometimes authors specifically used “Cincinnatus” as their classical pseudonym while others used “Agricola” and “Ruricola,” all names that refer to the personae of Roman farmers. Public opinion authors using this pseudonym wrote on a range of topics, but ultimately all referred to their supposed service in the Continental Army, their life as farmers after the war, and their concern for the preservation of individual liberty, especially for Revolutionary War veterans and farmers, in the immediate years following the ratification of the Constitution.

Referring to the Roman Republic was an important aspect of politics in late eighteenth-century America. That literate citizens of the United States, whether elite or non-elite, engaged in the political discourse of the time using the classics as a common language is indicative of the importance of classical rhetoric. A Roman-centered classical

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tradition in the United States was short lived, however, and was superseded by a broader conception of the ancient world in popular culture.

**Emergence of Hellenism in America**

Despite the predominance of ancient Rome in the founding era, many American men and women became increasingly interested in Greece by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The classical tradition became more prevalent due in part to archaeological discoveries in the Mediterranean region. Most notably, Napoleon’s conquest of the Mediterranean at the turn of the nineteenth century and Thomas Bruce, Earl of Elgin’s acquisition in 1812 of the Parthenon Marbles from Ottoman officials in Athens captivated the imaginations of Europeans and Americans alike. Archeological discoveries were brought back to Europe and put on display in museums and private homes and relayed to Americans through printed materials.

One of the most noticeable shifts from a preference in things Roman to Greek can be discerned through the rising popularity of the “Grecian” style. Historian Caroline Winterer defined what would develop into a “Grecian” aesthetic influence as being the melding of “Roman antiquities with the Greek-inspired court style of dress and furnishings” that would be closely associated with Napoleon’s regime.²⁹ Both European and American travelers to Greece in the nineteenth century found remnants of classical Greek architecture that had been altered by Ottoman Turks. The Grecian style had distinctive aesthetic qualities that combined classical Greece with an exotic, Oriental flair

²⁹ Winterer *Mirror of Antiquity* 103.
due to the inclusion of modern Greece under Ottoman rule. The exoticism of the East with its supposed incredible wealth captured the imaginations of merchants and rural farmers alike. Even though the Grecian style often reflected an opulent, exotic flair, it also was defined as possessing simplicity with “moneyed minimalism” and “opulent austerity” intended to illustrate the permanence and majesty of ancient Greece.

As a result of this enthusiastic interest in archaeological discoveries, classical influences marketed for public consumption yielded an opulent, classically inspired popular culture of the early republic. Men such as Thomas Hope, the son of an influential Dutch banking family, expressed interest in nineteenth-century architecture, painting, sculpture, costume and furniture design, as well as novel writing through his passion for the ancient world. In the midst of a rising middle class in the early nineteenth century, Americans sought to obtain classically inspired items in order to acquire the refinement of the upper classes. Even in Boston, where republican ideals of virtue had so easily melded with the deeply embedded Puritan sensibilities of frugality and austerity, the opulence of the Grecian style made obvious appearances especially in furniture by 1815.

Modern Greece also entered the popular consciousness. By the 1790s, there is clear evidence that literature Americans were not only aware of the rising conflict

between the Greeks and the Ottoman Turks, but also that Americans identified with the Greeks and desired their freedom. It was well known to literate Americans even by the 1790s that the power of the Ottoman Empire was faltering in some of its territories and therefore they could not fathom why the Greek people had not yet led a revolution against the Turks.\(^36\) Thomas Jefferson, for example, was a vocal advocate for Greek independence as early as the 1780s and wrote to both American as well as European intellectuals on the subject expressing his desire that the Greeks reclaim their “antient liberty.”\(^37\)

Examples of sympathy for the Greeks can be found in popular literature as early as the late eighteenth century. Popular American writer, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, wrote in his 1793 novel, *Modern Chivalry*, through his character Captain Farrago: “O Poetic and philosophic country, where my mind ranges every day; whence I draw my best thoughts; where I converse with the schools of wise men, and solace myself with the company of heroes, thou art lost in servitude, and great must be the revolution which can extricate thee thence.”\(^38\) This novel is one that was widely read in the United States and illustrates a pro-Greek sentiment already in place in the late eighteenth century.

Those who supported or were interest in Greek culture and society were known as “philhellenes.” While American taste for the classics followed similar popular European trends, the fervor for Greek independence in the United States took on even greater significance due to the recentness of their own revolution and their experience in having

\(^{36}\) Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 25.


\(^{38}\) Quoted in Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 6.
ousted tyranny in their own country. Americans admired many of the famous European philhellenes such as Lord Elgin and Lord Byron. However, Americans believed they possessed a special bond with the Greeks because of the connections they saw between American liberty and Greece as the ancient source of liberty in the western world.

**Classical Education in America**

The lifeblood of the new republic was thought to be, by many members of the founding generation, education. Many fathers and mothers held that the next generation of Americans must be schooled in the classics in order that the newly formed republic would not fall victim to factionalism and tyranny, as had other republics of the past. Even though the classics defined over two hundred years of curriculum by the eighteenth century, the emphasis of Roman authors became especially important to the small proportion of early Americans who could afford college. A classical education for young boys began at the age of eight and took up the majority of one’s studies. As historian Carl Richard stated, “colleges were interested in a candidate’s ability to read Latin and Greek and little else.” By the time a youth was preparing for college, they were already capable of reading and writing Latin extensively.

Once accepted to college, a student could expect to spend countless hours on the classics, including vacation time, in order to keep one’s skills sharpened. Although there were some dissenting groups who were against an emphasis on a classical education, it was thought by most that this type of education system conditioned American youths to revere the classics as a benchmark of what virtuous republicans should know and

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practice. From childhood, one was taught to “associate the works of certain ancient republican authors with personal and societal virtue. This social conditioning was so successful that it left many of the founders unable to imagine the teaching of virtue independent of the teaching of the classics and, consequently, made the transmission of the classical heritage an urgent concern.”

Early Americans of both elite and non-elite circles recognized a classical education as a “badge denoting class, taste, wisdom, and virtue.” Society recognized the importance of having a command of classical knowledge even by people who were not able to obtain a classical education. George Washington, for example, lacked a formal classical education. Fearing that his stepson might suffer the same fate, Washington oversaw his education, making certain it included extensive instruction in the classics. By the late eighteenth century, the classics became more accessible for students with the advent of classical sources translated into English.

For a student obtaining an education in the eighteenth century, the first few years of study were dedicated to memorizing Latin grammar. In New England, for example, Ezekiel Cheever’s *Latin Accidence: An Elementary Grammar*, first published in Boston in 1709, was predominantly used for over a hundred years as the foremost Latin grammar. Cheever himself arrived in Boston in the 1630s and taught Latin there for over

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40 Ibid., 38.
41 Ibid., 10.
43 Examples include Caleb Bingham, *The Columbian Orator* (Hartford: Lincoln and Gleason, 1807); Noah Webster, *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking* (New York: C & R Waite, 1802); Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009).
seventy years, teaching notable pupils such as Cotton Mather. Cheever decidedly established himself as the model Latin teacher and numerous others sought to emulate his method. After memorizing the rules of Latin grammar, students moved on to translate works by Erasmus and Ovid in their fourth year. The fifth and sixth years were dedicated to increasingly translating more and more complicated works by authors such as Cicero, Ovid, Justin, Lucius Florus, and Vergil. By their seventh year, students continued their translations while also beginning Latin composition and the study of Greek.44

After the American Revolution, there was some debate as to whether such a focus on a classical education was universally necessary and practical. Notable critics of classical education in early America included Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin and Noah Webster. Rush argued that it was a waste of time to force schoolboys to read and write in Latin. It should be noted though that despite the criticism towards the language-heavy classical curriculum of early American schools, Rush and Franklin valued ancient history and its authors. They were instead interested in reforming the language aspect of school curriculum by replacing English translations for the Latin and Greek texts. Historian Caroline Winterer observed that critics of the classical language requirements in schools held that “word-dominated focus of classics teaching… made classical learning inaccessible to many and focused students’ attention on those aspects of antiquity least useful in the new nation.”45 The value of a classical education and the importance of civic virtue were not in question. The issue was whether the language

45 Winterer, The Culture of Classicism, 42.
requirement made education inaccessible to a new generation of American citizens who must all be conditioned with common principles and devotion to defending the new republic.

By the 1820s, education in America had changed significantly. The most dramatic change was that the accessibility to education and the availability of printed materials had greatly increased. In the wake of the American Revolution, another kind of revolution took place: a revolution in print. In 1760 there were less than 20 newspapers published in colonial America. By 1820 there were more than 575.46 The increasing number of printing presses meant that people were able to obtain printed materials more easily and more cheaply than previous generations. The expanded access to printed materials transformed American curriculum and made education obtainable for children outside of exclusively elite circles.47 Not only were more young American boys learning about the classics through a formal education, but also young girls increasingly were educated.48 Found throughout the United States, these academies for girls advertised the teaching of both Greek and Latin. Parents were especially interested in their daughters obtaining at least some knowledge of the classics for personal reasons, not because the girls were preparing for college.49

The transitioning emphasis from Roman republicanism to Greek democracy can also be discerned through education curriculum. The increasing Greek influence in education during the nineteenth century largely was due to American scholarly interest in

47 Winterer, The Culture of Classicism, 45–46.
48 Richard, The Golden Age of the Classics in America, x.
49 Ibid., 3.
the German classical pedagogy. American scholars adopted this approach for similar reasons as German scholars, which stemmed from a revolt against sterile Augustan classicism and aristocratic control.\textsuperscript{50} German classicists were increasingly moving away from the old, memorization approach to the study of classics and instead embraced a new philological approach, which consisted of studying not only language, but also classical literature, philosophy, and art as a means for more fully appreciating the Greek and Roman civilizations.

This change in classical pedagogy was a welcome one for both the younger generation who were required to learn classical languages and the older generations of Americans who desired to keep the classics as the cornerstone of American education. While many members of the founding generation enjoyed reading classical authors as adults, many of them did not reflect on their early years of classical study with great fondness. John Trumbull, the well-known painter, recalled that he began to learn Greek and Latin when quite young and at first he simply memorized the texts like “a parrot” while not comprehending the meaning of any of the words he spoke or read.\textsuperscript{51} By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the impact of German scholarship changed classical education in America, with the incorporation of a philological approach. This meant that the study of classical languages included an examination of classical art, literature, and philosophy in order to fully understand and appreciate the ancient world.\textsuperscript{52} The didactic, philological approach assisted in igniting a romantic perception of the

\textsuperscript{50} Winterer \textit{Culture of Classicism} 51.
\textsuperscript{52} Winterer, \textit{The Culture of Classicism}, 57.
classical world and made the study of the classics more appealing and accessible to a broader audience.

The new pedagogy also ignited a new appreciation of ancient Greece. Educators and parents alike saw the classics as an important moral and political foundation for future generations of Americans. The German school of thought was so popular at the beginning of the nineteenth century that Harvard hired a young scholar of Greek literature in 1815 to a newly endowed post using a $20,000 donation from a Boston merchant. This position included not only teaching duties, but also required the professor to give lectures to both students and the public on “the genius, structure, characteristics, and excellence of the Greek language.” He was also required to “cultivate and promote the knowledge of the Greek language and of Greek literature” so that “the University may send out alumni who possess a discriminating knowledge of the renowned productions of Grecian authors, and the powers of the Grecian language.” This young scholar was Edward Everett, a man who went on to make a name for himself as a great orator and politician as well as an active supporter of the Greek War for Independence.

Harvard immediately sent Everett to Germany to complete his studies in the new pedagogy. Upon his return in 1820, Edward Everett painstakingly tried to replace the old approach to classical study and also desired to instill in the greater American population an appreciation for Greece. Everett even translated a German grammar book that used the new pedagogical approach and wrote the preface for it emphasizing the importance of a philological approach to the study of ancient Greece. “The deficiency of the Greek Grammars in use in this country has been generally felt and loudly complained of,” he
wrote, and that the older grammars used until 1822 were an “insufficient guide to the student who seeks a thorough acquaintance with the language.”\(^{53}\) Everett hoped to not only continue the classical education that had dominated American education for over a century, but also desired to instill a sense of passionate and personal connection to the ancient past driven by a sense of belonging and ownership of the classics.

Everett published articles intended to generate support from the public. In one article published in 1821, for example, Everett went so far as to observe:

> It is sincerely to be regretted that we have not more means among us for forming a taste for the antique, and for the study of the beautiful remains of Grecian art. It may certainly be maintained, without exaggeration, that these beautiful remains are the most authentic legacy, which we have received from the glorious world that went before us. The admirable writings, which have descended to us from them, are indeed invaluable.\(^{54}\)

Everett’s articles in the *North American Review* as well as the public lectures he gave in Boston made him a popular figure both on and off campus. A young Ralph Waldo Emerson even compared Everett’s speaking abilities to that of Pericles of Athens. Everett’s popularity fueled the flames for an increasingly public interest in classical history, art, and literature that continued to influence and shape public opinion into a romanticized understanding of the ancient world. Historian Stephen Larrabee went so far as to say that Everett provided “the greatest impetus to Greek studies in America through his post at Harvard College.”\(^{55}\)

One of Everett’s efforts to introduce the importance of Greece and Athenian democracy to the students of Harvard and the people of Boston was through a public

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\(^{53}\) Philip Buttmann, *Greek Grammar for the Use of Schools*, (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little, and Wilkins, 1831 and 1822), pp. iii.

\(^{54}\) Quoted in Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 53.

\(^{55}\) Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 41.
exhibition of a painting from Europe. Everett managed to persuade a wealthy colleague, Theodore Lyman, to purchase the painting called *The Panorama of Athens*. Lauded as the “best executed of the famous Panoramas” the painting was large and impressive to its Boston audience, depicting “The Parthenon, the entrance of the Acropolis, the Temple of Jupiter Olympius, the ruins of the Stadium, the Islands of Aegina and Salamis, the Academy, and the Temple of Theseus, the most perfect ancient ruin in Athens, all unite their attractions in the picture to gratify the classical.”

Figure 1 The arrival of the painting was advertised in the local Boston papers and stimulated public enthusiasm and discussion of Greek history and art. The public praised Lyman’s purchase as this painting was considered a highly desirable work of art at the time. Bostonians were all the more proud of the painting when it was reported that the English Universities of Cambridge and Oxford had made efforts to acquire the painting and had failed. Americans enthusiastically followed the popular classical trends in Europe that dictated popular fashion, interior design, art, and museums, so the acquisition of this painting was a boon for the residents of Boston.

The display of the *Panorama* heightened the importance of Everett’s new position at Harvard. The arrival of the *Panorama* and the initial interest in Everett’s lectures took place in 1820, two years before Americans would dedicate themselves to supporting the Greek War for Independence. Everett’s use of art as a method for inspiring enthusiasm

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57 “Harvard University; Hon. Jonathan Russell”; Henry Aston Barker et al., eds., *Description of the View of Athens, and Surrounding Country* (Boston: Press of W.W. Clapp, 1837) Destroyed in a fire in 1842, these sketches provide a glimpse into the detailed work the Panorama of Athens must have been.
for Ancient Greece was an active employment of the philological pedagogy Everett learned in Germany, which clearly resonated with the students of Harvard and the people of Boston in general.

Students enthusiastically engaged in the study of the classics in the classroom as well as in extracurricular activities. During the early decades of the nineteenth century, college literary and debate societies promoted enthusiasm for the classics and assisted in the development of a broader appreciation of ancient Greece. Since rhetoric was a topic emphasized for its value in producing good citizens in a Ciceronian mold, debates and speeches were common in these college societies. The College of William and Mary’s Phi Beta Kappa (originally named Societas Philosophiae) was one of the first of these societies. Only later, at least the 1780s, did Phi Beta Kappa start to call itself by the recognizable Greek letters. The letters were chosen to represent a Greek phrase with the letters standing for “Φιλοσοφία Βίου Κυβερνήτης,” meaning: “love of learning is the guide to life.” Founded in 1776, the members of Phi Beta Kappa formed their society for the purposes of creating a secret society that would advance fraternity while fostering appreciation for history, literature, and politics. Many of their early debates focused on deciding classical historical and political questions such as “whether Brutus was justifiable in killing Caesar,” which was a debate topic for a meeting in 1780.59 Using this debate topic as an example, Americans of the late eighteenth century viewed Brutus primarily as a hero who tried and failed to save the Roman Republic. Although this topic

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59 “Phi Beta Kappa, Alpha Chapter Records, 1776-[ongoing],” 1780 1776, 48, William and Mary Special Collections.
indicates continuing interest in classical Rome, the society’s name reflected a growing interest in the Greek tradition.

The Society at William and Mary extended charters to other schools beginning in the 1780s. In addition, many other colleges also witnessed the creation of other societies with similar interests and goals. From the 1776 to 1820 there were no fewer than 50 literary and debating societies at 20 different colleges. By 1830 there were at least 30 more out of a total of 30 colleges. The majority of these societies took on classically inspired names. Most societies created after 1800 adopted Grecian-inspired names such as the Calliopean Society (named for the Greek muse of epic poetry), the Philomathian Society (meaning “lover of learning”), and the Demosthenian Literary Society (named for the great Greek playwright Demosthenes), to name a few. Many of these societies owned their own libraries. One of the largest belonged to the Linonian Society and the Brothers of Unity at Yale. By 1808, this library included almost 1,400 volumes, most of which were classical in content and focus.

The prevalence and persistence of these literary societies indicates that it was not merely the interest of the professors within academia who valued the classics, but that the students themselves embraced the classics with some enthusiasm. One 1828 graduate of Yale recalled that “No part of my training at Yale College seems to me to have been

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60 David Potter, *Debating in The Colonial Chartered Colleges an Historical Survey 1642 to 1900* (Columbia Univ Pr, 1944), 67–70.
more beneficial than that which I derived from the practice of speaking and debating in the literary society to which I belonged.”

American Women and the Classical Tradition

Just as the founding fathers took on classical identities in order to appear more connected to the ancient past, so too did their female counterparts. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams modeled themselves, for example, after the famous Roman general turned farmer, Cincinnatus. Female members of the founding generation such as Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren were also inspired by classical figures. The classical personae that women of the Revolution assumed were various examples of the Republican matron. The Republican matron referred to a married woman who exemplified female dignity, rank, and moral and sexual virtue. The importance of the Roman matron stemmed from the fact that the guarantor of civic virtue within a republican society could not be assigned to a branch of government, the role therefore had to be cultivated and nurtured by families. It was the mother’s role to teach children’s earliest lessons and to instill in them a sense of morality, which many early American men and women viewed as critical to the stability of a republican society.

Some influential women of the Revolutionary era assumed female Roman pseudonyms as inspiration for their Roman matron roles. Abigail Adams signed many of her letters during the revolutionary years to her husband using the name “Portia.” By

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63 Winterer, The Mirror of Antiquity, 42.
using this name, Abigail Adams said much about her thoughts on politics as well as her knowledge of the classics. The name Portia refers to a Roman matron whose husband sought to restore the dying Roman Republic. Mercy Otis Warren, a prolific female political writer and friend of both John and Abigail Adams, used the pseudonym “Marcia” when writing to her husband, a reference to the wife of Cato the Younger, a Roman statesman and popular Roman republican figure in early America. As Historian Caroline Winterer described the Roman matron of the revolutionary generation, she brought together the virtue of the Roman republic while incorporating the “improvements of Christianity, sensibility, and polite learning.”

The Republican matron relied on Roman examples of ideal female character, which enabled American women to better serve as citizens of the new American republic. If women were to have an increasing role in society and politics, then, according to the norms of republican motherhood it was increasingly important to provide more formal educational opportunities for women. Ladies’ academies emerged throughout the country and featured history, arithmetic, composition, and rhetoric, as well as in some cases, classical languages. Most advocates for female education at the turn of the nineteenth century argued that the model republican woman must be self-reliant and untempted by the frivolities of fashion. Republican motherhood also provided women with political responsibilities as long as these duties remained isolated to domestic duties to the home and childrearing. As historian Linda Kerber argued: “The Republican Mother was an

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65 The play Cato was one of the most popular plays at the time of the American Revolution. Washington saw it performed several times and even had a production of it performed at Valley Forge. Joseph Addison, Cato: A Tragedy in Five Acts (London: T. Barrois, 1816); Winterer, The Mirror of Antiquity, 50.
66 Winterer, The Mirror of Antiquity, 42.
educated woman who could be spared the criticism normally addressed to the Learned Lady because she placed her learning at her family’s service.”  

Abigail Adams was not the only woman of the Revolutionary generation to assume the role of Republican matron. In a letter to Abigail Adams, Mercy Otis Warren wrote that Roman matrons were united in having “partners of Distinguished Zeal, integrity and Virtue.” To Warren and Adams, Roman matrons were critical to an idealized state of marriage and virtuous family. Women were able to take on roles as patriots by acting as nurturing mothers whose sole purpose was to nurture both husbands and sons as virtuous citizens of the republic; perhaps the most important factor in maintaining the republic and the interests of the public good. The Roman matron was both radical and conservative in that women claimed a role within the emerging polity and yet the Roman matron did not overturn the existing social order. Even though women were able to achieve some agency in the post-Revolutionary era, the Roman matron was ultimately intended to maintain the gender status quo.

The question of whether women – or men – needed to know classical languages, and read ancient works in the original language, was a matter of contention in post-revolutionary America. College-educated men were expected to master the classics, while most ladies’ academies did not include classical languages in their curriculum. Some Americans, however, believed that in a democratizing society knowledge of the classics was no longer necessary. According to the Philadelphia physician and educational

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68 Ibid., 12.
69 Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 5.
reformer Benjamin Rush, “by ceasing to make Latin and Greek a necessary part of a liberal education, we open the doors for every species of improvement to the female part of society.”⁷⁰ Although precise importance of classical languages in American education after 1800 remains controversial, the influence of the classics continued in English translation and made an important impression on a rising number of both female and male individuals.⁷¹

Female interest in the classics contributed to the success of the Grecian style in the United States. Primarily promoted by women born in the post-Revolutionary generation, women most beguiled by Grecian luxury were elite women. Their husbands or fathers often held important and often powerful positions in society, such as Louisa Catherine Adams, Dolley Madison, and Theodosia Burr Alston. With the Roman matron ideal still in place, these women were able to incorporate their roles as virtuous wives with their social access to powerful men. As Historian Caroline Winterer has argued, “The opulence of the new Grecian aesthetic, with its whiff of Oriental exoticism” conveyed a message “in this age of rising commercialism and consumerism: it displayed elite Americans’ cosmopolitanism, their knowledge of the latest aesthetic trends in Britain and France.”⁷²

The rising interest in Greece also coincided with the rise of romanticism, ideals that placed ancient Greece as the origin of political liberty and democracy and

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⁷¹ Historians such as Linda Kerber suggest that classics played a decreasingly important role in female education while historians such as Caroline Winterer disagree.⁷² Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, 109.
emphasized a longing to revive that tradition.\textsuperscript{73} The popularity of the Grecian style increased in the nineteenth century because the more ornate Grecian style was emblematic of refinement and status.\textsuperscript{74} With the emergence of the middling class in the United States in the early nineteenth century, classically inspired items in homes expanded beyond the spare and stark republican model of the eighteenth century to encompass a more elaborate and luxurious tradition traceable back to ancient Greece. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Americans increasingly began to see their own country as a new Greece. As a result of these sentiments, popular interest in the United States began to shift away from the exclusively Roman Republican tradition and to include a heavy dose of ancient Greece.\textsuperscript{75}

The Grecian style of the early nineteenth century married the older republican style of virtue with the rising desire to display classical knowledge, taste, and consumption of European society.\textsuperscript{76} The Grecian style of dress called Grecian robes as well popular household furniture and even literature also reflected some elements of Oriental flourish, an acknowledgement to the presence of the Ottoman Empire in modern Greece and reflects European and American fascination with the East.\textsuperscript{77} Grecian fashion and furnishings became prevalent in nineteenth-century America in part was an

\textsuperscript{73} Several historians have produced important work on the subject of the Greek Revolution and the philhellenic movement. See the following for further reading on this topic: Herzfeld, \textit{Ours Once More}; Larrabee, \textit{Hellas Observed}; St. Clair, \textit{That Greece Might Still Be Free}; Pappas, “The United States and the Greek War for Independence, 1821-1828.”

\textsuperscript{74} Bushman, \textit{The Refinement of America} Bushman’s argument explored how early Americans came to be more refined. ; For examples of the Grecian style in America, see Cooper, \textit{Classical Taste in America 1800-1840}.

\textsuperscript{75} Larrabee, \textit{Hellas Observed}, 24–25.

\textsuperscript{76} Winterer, \textit{The Mirror of Antiquity}, 109.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 113.
outgrowth of a style made popular by Napoleon’s regime, a style often referred to by modern historians as the Empire style.\textsuperscript{78}

Americans visiting Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century enthusiastically brought back this Grecian influence and incorporated it into their own homes and lives. Grecian robes for women quickly replaced the fashions of the revolutionary period with their voluminous skirts and instead reflected a more slender silhouette, reminiscent of Grecian female statues. While classically inspired household goods in the eighteenth century were often times found only in the homes of the elite, with the emergence of a middle class in the early nineteenth century, Americans desired these items in an effort to take on an elite status.\textsuperscript{79} The increased purchasing abilities of Americans led to the widespread consumption of imported Grecian inspired household goods.\textsuperscript{80}

The arrival of a Grecian inspired classical tradition modified the performance of republican motherhood in the early republic. By integrating Greek as well as Roman elements into their appearance as well as their ideas, women in America could show others that they had incorporated ancient cultures into their new roles as women. As one historian put it, “morality, virtue, refined taste, and a cultivated mind were all admired qualities for a woman, mother, and wife to possess in the early nineteenth century.”\textsuperscript{81} Possessing Grecian-inspired items in one’s home became increasingly popular and widespread and was synonymous with status, education, and breeding. The Grecian style

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{79} Bushman, \textit{The Refinement of America}.
\textsuperscript{80} Winterer, \textit{The Mirror of Antiquity}, 102.
\textsuperscript{81} Cooper, \textit{Classical Taste in America 1800-1840}, 262.
provided the props and costumes for outwardly performing the role of the Republican Mother to the public.

European pattern books were a popular way for Americans to learn about the latest fashions and household items from Europe. The classical tradition combined with an oriental influence came to be part of the Grecian fashion style and the Greek Revival in architecture. Thomas Hope (1769-1831) who is credited with coining the term “interior design,” was an influential figure in European and American popular culture. Hope is best known for his interior and fashion design books including *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807) and *Costume of the Ancients* (1809). The Ottoman Empire governed Greece. As a result Hope’s classical designs also carried a flair for the Orient. The classical tradition combined with an oriental influence came to be part of the Regency period in fashion and the Greek Revival in architecture. Thomas Hope, among other contemporaries, even had his portrait painted depicting him dressed in full Turkish dress. From a modern standpoint, Hope’s portrait as a Turk seems ostentatious, but from the standpoint of Hope and his contemporaries, this portrait shows Hope as well-travelled authority on modern Greece and the classical world. This Turkish flair was adopted by some American men and especially women, but was seen as an exotic, opulent fashion statement that was melded into the more popular Grecian style. Figure 2

Women in both Europe and the United States were especially eager to page through Hope’s interior design books. The books depicted Greeks and Romans posing with various objects and pieces of classical furniture, which inspired people to recreate the classical world in their own homes and daily life. Figure 3 One example is a portrait
of Louisa Catherine Adams painted in 1816. The portrait shows Louisa Adams dressed in a Grecian inspired gown reclining on a klismos. Figure 4 Dolley Madison also was influenced by the opulence of the Empire period of fashion and even came to be known as a trendsetter in the Grecian style of fashion. Dolley Madison’s signature Grecian robe and Turkish inspired turban was one fashion asset she would never give up even at the age of eighty when she sat for her portrait in 1848. Figure 5 The more opulent Grecian classical style in many ways eclipsed the plainer, less embellished republican style. The founding generation and reflected the rising interest among American women to follow European fashion examples as well as their interest in showcasing classicism into their daily lives.

One way of communicating classicism was through an interest in music. Louisa Catherine Adams, for example, was noted for her skills as a harp player. One portrait of Adams painted in the early 1820s portrayed her in a Grecian style gown, holding a harp and wearing an Oriental-inspired turban. Figure 6 The harp was a piece of furniture, often designed with an ornate, Grecian design, featuring a golden, fluted Corinthian column. By showcasing an ornate harp in the family parlor, the family made a statement to visitors: there was a lady of the house who was an accomplished harp player, probably well educated and accomplished in other subjects appropriate for young ladies of the time, and that the family was wealthy enough to afford such an ornate instrument and the lessons to accompany the instrument. Harp lessons were offered through ladies’ academies such as Miss Lyman’s Institution in Philadelphia and were incorporated into

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82 Thomas Hope, *Costume of the Ancients* (London: H. G. Bohn, 1841) A klismos is a Grecian chair, which was made popular by Thomas Hope in his Costumes of the Ancients design book.
the regular curriculum. In some cases, families had their daughters’ portraits painted with their instruments, providing additional testimony to the importance of learning to pay such an instrument while also physically showing the prevalence of the classical style in both the instrument as well as the pose and attire of the young ladies.\textsuperscript{83} Figure 7 By the 1820s educated American women surrounded themselves in a romantic and opulent Grecian aesthetic that influenced many facets of daily life. This awareness of Greece laid the groundwork for future political interest in Greek independence.

*Popular Use of the Classics in the Post Revolutionary Period: Towns and Cities*

The Greek and Roman classical tradition extended beyond elite and middling class women influencing the lives of many ordinary Americans throughout the entire country. Some knowledge of things classical existed in all levels of society. One way in which this widespread interest in antiquity was expressed was through local cemeteries. During the colonial period, gravestones in New England were typically decorated with symbols of mortality, most commonly a skull and crossbones. Figure 8 By 1800, gravestones increasingly began to use classical symbols of mortality, most notably classical urns and weeping willows, and the colonial symbols of death had almost completely disappeared.\textsuperscript{84} Figure 9

One of the earliest and largest examples of local community interest in combining antiquity with death and mourning was the foundation of Mount Auburn Cemetery near Boston, Massachusetts. Mount Auburn as a garden cemetery was designed with ancient

\textsuperscript{83} Cooper, *Classical Taste in America 1800-1840*, 266.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 21 The weeping willow as a symbol of mortality and mourning comes from a number of ancient myths including the story of Orpheus traveling to the underworld in search of his lost love. He carried with him on his journey willow branches.
Greece in mind where “ev’ry mechanic who excelled in his vocation was enabled to eternize his name, which was considered the greatest possible blessing, as the most important prayer which the Greeks addressed to their Gods was for the conservation of their memory.” Modeled in part after the Ceramicus or Kerameikos, a famous pastoral cemetery near the Acropolis in Athens, the founders of Mount Auburn imagined the new cemetery would provide notable Bostonians with a similar opportunity.\footnote{Blanche M. G Linden, Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston’s Mount Auburn Cemetery (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989), 129–130 and 199; Cornelia W. Walter and James Smillie, Mount Auburn Illustrated: In Highly Finished Line Engraving, from Drawings Taken on the Spot (New York: Martin and Johnson, 1848).} Figure 10

Another example of the popular use of the classics appears in the naming of cities. By 1820, at least eighty-two towns in New York were named with classically inspired names. Ohio already had at least thirty-six classically named towns and by midcentury there were more than ninety more. In 1820 there were over 170 towns across the United States that used classical nomenclature and by midcentury there were at least 830 more.\footnote{Wilbur Zelinsky, “Classical Town Names in the United States: The Historical Geography of an American Idea,” Geographical Review 57, no. 4 (October 1, 1967): 472.} This phenomenon took place throughout the United States in both the North and South. The use of such names reveals that many Americans had a familiarity with the ancient classics of Greece and Rome and were eager to appropriate its legacy for their new society.

The initial uses of the classical tradition in place naming were primarily, but not exclusively, in New York between 1790 and 1800. These classically named towns were primarily in central and western New York where Congress set aside two million acres, known as the Central New York Military Tract, for veterans of the Revolutionary War.
This tract of land was eventually divided into twenty-eight different towns, almost all of which bore classical names. One of the first towns named in the military tract was Troy, New York founded in 1789. In classical mythology, Troy was the city embroiled in a war that pitted the Trojans against the Greeks. After Troy fell to the Greeks, one of Troy’s most famous citizens, Aeneas, travelled to Italy and founded what would one day become the city of Rome. Towns that followed included the names of Romans who opposed Julius Caesar and by extension the downfall of the Roman Republic. Using these individuals as inspiration for town names reflects republican sentiments of the period.

Other town names include Cato, New York, referring to Marcus Porcius Cato Utinensis who was a Roman politician that opposed Julius Caesar and was the subject of a popular eighteenth century play; Brutus, New York, which may refer to the Brutus who brought the monarchy in Rome to an end and instituted the republic or the Brutus who was one of Julius Caesar’s assassins; Cicero, New York, referring to Marcus Tullius Cicero, who was perhaps one of the most beloved Romans in eighteenth-century America. In fact, Cicero was so popular that his name was given to two of these towns in New York: Cicero and Tully. Cincinnatus was yet another town name in the New York Military Tract. Since Cincinnatus was also one of the more popular figures many members of the founding generation sought to emulate makes him an ideal figure to commemorate in naming a town intended for Revolutionary War veterans.

Other classical names for towns are numerous and varied. Founded in 1790, Cincinnati, Ohio took its name from the society of the Cincinnati and by extension, the

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87 Ibid., 471.
American Cincinnatus, George Washington. By the early nineteenth century, more towns were given names associated with ancient Greece. Some of these towns include Sparta, Tennessee founded in 1806; Athens, Georgia also founded in 1806; Apollo, Pennsylvania founded in 1816; Corinth, New York founded in 1818, and Delphi, Indiana founded in 1827.

These classically inspired names underscored a perceived connection between American society and the ancient world. American settlers in the early republic were influenced by a tradition that had become uniquely American by the beginning of the nineteenth century. American settlers saw the classical tradition as a legitimizing force. Not only do these towns reflect the desire for respectability, but they suggest that the classics were seen as synonymous with the continuity between the ancient past and the American present.

The classics did not decline in popular use in America as some historians have argued, but instead became more democratic and accessible to the masses. While the average citizen of Carthage, North Carolina when it was founded in 1803 may not have been fluent in Greek or Latin, the appropriateness of using an ancient city name as the namesake of an American town evidently seemed logical to its residents. The prevalence of using classically inspired names reveals that the classical tradition became part of the fabric of early American society.

Classicism in the New National Capital

The design of the nation’s new capital at Washington, D.C. also reflected the popular appropriation of classical ideals into architecture and city planning. What would
become Pennsylvania Avenue was first designated as the Federal City’s equivalent to the Appian Way or Grand Avenue. L’Enfant referred to this as a main communication way, which would run between the President’s Mansion and the capitol and would act as the major hub of communication to the rest of the city and nation. This new seat of government was to be equipped with the ability of informing the rest of the republic with all that went on in its capital city and would “collect the kinetic energy from twelve radiating avenues in a great public space.” Although the layout of the city itself is not specifically classical, the city’s Grand Avenue and its intended function as an active communication way accentuates the importance of informing the people about the government’s decisions. This flow of information would act as another check on the government’s power over the people and hence bolster the idea of a republican form of government.

In some capacity, the layout of the city was meant to create an active capital where the present and the past would meet. Like the Appian Way, Pennsylvania Avenue would come to be ornamented by a multitude of statuary and mementoes of American accomplishment. As L’Enfant himself stated concerning his choice in the layout of the city, it would “perpetuate not only the memory of such individuals whose counsels, or military achievements, were conspicuous in giving liberty and independence to the country; but also those whose usefulness hath rendered them worthy of general imitation; to invite the youth of succeeding generations to tread in the paths of those sages or

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heroes, who this country has thought proper to celebrate.”89 Thus, the layout of the city itself would facilitate the preservation of America’s past while each generation could pave the “Grand Avenue” with memorials to the heroes of bygone generations.

The government buildings that would show the authority vested in the new nation was the next great concern in creating the Federal City. The British brought the Georgian architectural style to the American Colonies. By the time the Constitution was drafted, the importance of the Georgian style was beginning to evolve into a reliance on ancient history instead of the British interpretation of the style. The founding generation’s views on civic virtue translated into the architecture of public buildings by creating a structure that effected a sense of legitimacy, strength, stability, legacy, and frugality. Frivolity was viewed as a distraction; hence the classical influence in public buildings of the late eighteenth century used plain columns and understated ornamentation. The Federal style is symmetrical and executed with an unornamented façade, usually including a small, understated pediment over the top of the front entrance.

The Georgian style was altered into the American Federal style. The reserve and simplicity of the Federal style came to include architectural ornamentation that reflected early American republican views.90 William Thornton, a doctor and amateur architect, submitted his proposed design for the new capitol in 1793. Thomas Jefferson observed: “Thornton’s plan had captivated the eyes and the judgment of all. It is simple, noble,

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beautiful, excellently arranged, and moderate in size."\textsuperscript{91} Thornton’s design was clearly inspired by the Georgian style and yet it included elements that featured American interest in the Roman republic. Most notably, Thornton’s inclusion of a dome deviated from the more the traditional Georgian style. This addition reflects in some ways the rejection of the Federal style as made initially popular by the English and indicates an interest in creating an architectural style still founded in antiquity, but more Roman and less English. The American twist on the Federal style soon became the competing architectural style of the day. As one historian observes, “exactly how great was Jefferson’s influence on the work of Dr. Thornton…we may never know, but his association with them was close.”\textsuperscript{92}

Although William Thornton’s presence remained in the planning and construction of the new capitol, Jefferson appointed British born architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe in 1803. Latrobe, a highly skilled architect, was born and educated in England. After the death of his wife, Latrobe became restless and moved his family to America in search of a new life. Latrobe’s time spent as chief architect to the capitol was during the crucial years of construction and as such his contributions would forever define the ornamentation of the building. Due to the burning of the capitol by the British in 1814, Latrobe’s contribution to the capitol are most notable in the interior of the building and reflects the evolving interest in an increasingly ornate classical style that eventually flowered under the Greek Revival.

\textsuperscript{91} I. T. Frary, They Built the Capital (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1940), 33.
Examples of this ornamentation can be found in the capitol’s Hall of Representatives, now known as Statuary Hall, and the Senate Chamber were both Latrobe’s designs and much of the statuary in the capitol were completed under his direction. Most of the original sculptors to the capitol were from Italy and trained in the classical models of art. Latrobe clashed with his Italian sculptors over how the American Bald Eagle should look since this ornamental feature was dominant in Latrobe’s plan for the interior. When planning the frieze in the Hall of Representatives, Latrobe found that each design put together by the Italians consistently came out as “an Italian, or a Roman, or a Greek eagle, and I want an American Bald Eagle.” The Italian sculptors, since they were not familiar with the American Bald Eagle, relied on the classical model in designing the frieze, but obviously this is not what Latrobe had in mind. Latrobe was familiar with the classical model as one can tell in examining his many contributions to the Capitol, but in the case of the eagles, the American symbol was the only thing Latrobe felt would be appropriate.

Two of the most notable designs by Latrobe that featured American symbols within the classical model are the so-called corncob and tobacco leaf capitals. Figure 11 Instead of choosing to stay faithful to a particular classical order of columns, Latrobe used the classical model as inspiration while fusing American icons into that model to create something distinctly American. The inspiration for the Corinthian model comes from the acanthus leaves of the Mediterranean and it is common in architecture all over

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the world to merely reproduce these Corinthian columns with the acanthus leaves. Latrobe, however, chose to use corn and tobacco leaves in his columns; two staple crops that made the colonies successful in their earliest history as European colonies. Latrobe used the classical model as the foundation for his design, which calls upon the stability and legacy of the ancients. At the same time, he created an American variation on this model, which assists in building an American past based in a humble, agricultural tradition.

Architects to the new capital city used the classics to convey a particular political viewpoint onto the citizenry as well as to capture a sense of refinement and legitimacy that was already popular in public and private buildings of the late eighteenth century. Classical architecture in eighteenth and nineteenth-century America is a visual reflection of political and social ideology steeped in the classical past. Just as the founding generation looked to ancient Rome as an ideal example of a successful republic in the drafting of important government documents, they also used ancient buildings as a foundation for American architecture. In creating the layout of the new federal city and federal buildings, designs were specifically chosen in an effort to reinforce these foundations in the past in an effort to show the world how a modern republican form of government would prove successful. The purpose behind using the classical tradition in architecture was to “look to wisdom embodied in precedent in order to solve contemporary problems.”

Views on government as validated by the ancient past changed as time progressed moving from an almost exclusive focus on plain, austere

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Roman styled buildings that were designed in the Federal style to the more ornate Grecian inspired buildings of the nineteenth century.

**Conclusion**

By 1820, the classical tradition was prevalent in American society touching practically every aspect of everyday life. While reading the classics were initially reserved in the eighteenth century for young men of wealthy families, by the nineteenth century the classics were more accessible and used in English translation for both male and female students from a more varied financial background. While it is undeniable that there were critics of classical languages in school curriculum, these critics were not necessarily in favor of ridding curriculum completely of classical history, geography, literature, and philosophy. Instead the presence of the classics increased during late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and permeated a wide range of elements in American popular culture, evident in women’s fashion, material culture, architecture, and the naming of towns. Expanding beyond a primary focus on ancient Rome, many American men and women increasingly learned about and incorporated elements from ancient Greece.

The presence of the classical tradition in popular culture and politics indicates that to contemporaries, the classics were integral aspects of what it meant to be an American citizen. Americans of the early republic saw themselves as part of an ancient tradition of freedom and liberty as found within a self-governing community. At the same time, Americans saw themselves as different from other nations of the world: they were citizens of a thriving democratic republic. This American identity rooted in a classical
heritage contributed to the development of the American philhellenic movement in the 1820s.
Chapter One Figures

Figure 1: Henry and Robert Burford, "The Panorama of Athens," (Boston: WW Clapp, 1837).
Figure 2. William Beachy, "Thomas Hope," oil on canvas, 1798, London: National Portrait Gallery.
Figure 3. Thomas Hope, Costumes of the Ancients, (London: H.G. Bohn, 1841) plate 228.
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Figure 5. Mathew Brady, "Dolley Madison," Daguerrotype, 1848, Library of Congress.
Figure 6. Charles Bird King, "Portrait of Louisa Adams," oil on canvas, ca. 1821-1825, The Granger Collection, New York.
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Figure 8. Grave of Phineas Pratt, ca. 1690, Phipps Street Cemetery, Charlestown, Massachusetts, Image courtesy of the author.
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Figure 10. Cornelia Walter and James Smillie, “Gossler’s Monument,” Mount Auburn Illustrated in Finely Drawn Line Engravings, 1850.
Figure 11. Benjamin Latrobe, "Cornelius Capitals," United States Capitol, Architect of the Capitol, 1809.
CHAPTER TWO: AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 1783-1820

After the American Revolution, the new nation had endeavored to prove itself to the rest of the world. Many important world powers at the time were reluctant to bestow acceptance on the newly independent republic, especially Great Britain. Yet American travelers and merchants ventured out into the world. The Ottoman Empire made an especially significant impression on those who came in contact with it. Contrasting their western classical tradition with the Muslim origins of the Ottoman Empire, Americans portrayed their nation as the freest country in the world and the Ottoman Empire as the most despotic. An evolving curiosity in the cultural aspects of the Middle East melded with an increasing certainty that the United States was at its core the antithesis of Islamic culture.¹

The classical origins of western government played as an important role in understanding how Americans came to view the Ottoman Empire. The contrast between East and West became synonymous with the struggle between liberty and tyranny by the eighteenth century and through this understanding Americans recognized the Ottoman Empire as the despotic "other." Americans contrasted their own western classical

tradition with the Ottoman Empire, which to contemporaries represented a Muslim threat to the tradition of democracy. The roots of this fear lie in the writings of the ancient Greeks such as Herodotus, Thucydides and Aristotle, which in turn colored American perceptions on Islam and the Ottoman Empire. Aristotle’s opinion that man is an animal who is best suited for living in a self-governing community (the polis) was fundamental to the development of modern republicanism and democracy. Aristotle was critical of foreign powers that did not use the polis, especially the Persians.² To the West the Turks were synonymous with the Persians: both were thought of as large tyrannical Eastern-Asiatic empires.

Historian Caroline Winterer has called for revising the use of the term “classical” as this term is more often than not associated with only Greek and Roman influences and excludes other traditions such as Carthaginian. Ancient Greece and Rome were influenced by other ancient Mediterranean powers. Approaching the classical influence on America is therefore complicated in considering the varied ancient literary and political influences early Americans would have commonly understood.³ This broader, more global take on how ideas mingled and were transmitted to early Americans is an important one in considering the importance of the East in early America.

It is difficult to define where the West in the eighteenth century ended and where the East began in the minds of early Americans. Defining Greece, for example, in the eighteenth century, as being completely part of the West was problematic in that it was

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³ Winterer, “Model Empire, Lost City,” 6.
governed by the Ottoman Empire, which was definitely considered as being Oriental and Eastern. Generally speaking the East was a term that covered an expansive part of the globe and included China, Persia, North Africa, and even Russia. I will refer to the East in the same sense early Americans would have thought of the East: an area of peoples and places not part of Europe or the western tradition. The Oriental stories that I will focus on, however, will be more specifically focused on the Islamic world. This is not to suggest that Americans did not understand there was a multitude of groups of people living in the so-called East. They understood the region to be a diverse one and while their understanding of the East evolved over time, ultimately the East was thought of as very different from the western tradition. Americans’ encounters with the Barbary pirates confirmed the worst of their suspicions about this region of the world.

American Perceptions of East and West Through Classical Sources

The division between the West and the East has a history that is as old as antiquity itself. Ancient Greek historians and philosophers such as Herodotus, Aeschylus, Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle, to just name a few, were familiar to the founding generation and described Greece and Athens in particular as being the cradle of the arts, sciences, and free society. To the east, on the other hand, was one of Greece’s greatest enemies, the Persians. The great Athenian scholars of the day consistently contrasted

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4 Egan, Oriental Shadows, 6.
5 Ibid., 5–6.
6 Please see Herodotus, The Histories, ed. Donald Lateiner, trans. G. C. Macaulay (Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005) Herodotus wrote that the conflict between east and west originated in Greek mythology and declared that “those of the Persians who have knowledge of their stories declare that the Phenicians first began the quarrel.”
Persia with the Greek way of life arguing that it was because of their unique political traditions they were able to avoid despotic rule.

Greek authors who would have influenced the founding generation grappled with questions concerning the best form of government and ultimately sought a balance between the rule of the people and the rule of tyranny, using Persia as a point of contrast.\(^7\) Athenians viewed anyone who was not an Athenian as barbarians, or at the very least inferior. Unlike Athenian attitudes toward Sparta, another great enemy of Athens, Athenians viewed the Persians all the more in this light because the Athenians viewed Persian leadership as despotic.\(^8\) Drawing on these ancient Greek and Roman perspectives, Americans came to see the East as a threat to their own culture and form of government. From the American Revolution onward, Americans continued the ancient debate about how to balance the rule of the people with the fear of tyranny.\(^9\)

When thinking about the eastern world, many educated Americans of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries turned to Herodotus. In his *Histories*, Herodotus contrasts the Persians with the Athenians by describing Athenians as possessing civic strength while the Persians lacked this quality because of their tyrannical form of government.\(^10\) Herodotus described life in Athens prior to democracy and contrasted it with Athens after democracy as a means to specifically point out the superiority of


\(^8\) Ibid., 11–12 and 55–56 Kagan argued that even before Athenian democracy emerged, the Greeks equated absolute rule with Asiatic tyranny.


\(^10\) Sara Forsdyke, “Athenian Democratic Ideology and Herodotus’ ‘Histories,’” *The American Journal of Philology* 122, no. 3 (October 1, 2001): 331–332 Forsdyke took a linguistic approach in unpacking the ways in which Herodotus espoused “fifth-century Athenian political beliefs and values.”
Athenian life and culture by stating: “It is clear that democracy is an excellent thing not just in one aspect but in every way. For the Athenians when ruled by tyrants were not better than any of their neighbors in war, but when they had gotten rid of the tyrants they became first by far.”\textsuperscript{11} Herodotus used similar language to describe the shortcomings of the Persian leaders Darius and Xerxes. He argued to his Greek audience that despotic rule eventually lead to cowardice and weakness among their soldiers and ultimately represented the shortcomings of Persian society. Athenian democracy, however, yielded civic strength, which ultimately played an important role in their triumph over the Persians.\textsuperscript{12}

Many Americans were familiar with the Athenian tragedian Aeschylus who wrote about the Persians in a similar light.\textsuperscript{13} Aeschylus wrote in the fifth century B.C., at a time when Athens was at war with the Persians. These foreign threats to Athenian freedom generated the patriotic themes found in his plays with the most obvious being his play The Persians, but others include the Oresteia trilogy, and Promethus Bound. Through these plays it can be determined that the Athenian victory over the Persians in Aeschylus’ mind meant a victory of freedom of speech and thought which would have been destroyed with the onset of Persian rule in Greece.\textsuperscript{14}

Aeschylus’s portrayal of the Persians placed an emphasis on Otherness in his rendering of the Persians to his Greek audience members, playing on their dislike for the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{11} Quoted in ibid., 333.} 
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 350–352; See also Paul Cartledge, The Greeks: A Portrait of Self and Others (Oxford University Press, 1993); Edith Hall, Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy (New York: Clarendon Press, 1989). 
\textsuperscript{13} Forsdyke, “Athenian Democratic Ideology and Herodotus’ ‘Histories,’” 353; Richard, The Founders and the Classics, 242; Winterer, The Mirror of Antiquity, 143; Winterer, The Culture of Classicism, 92. 
\textsuperscript{14} Kagan, The Great Dialogue; History of Greek Political Thought from Homer to Polybius, 52–55.
Persians and their relief in avoiding destruction at the hands of their opponents in war. Aeschylus’ Persians were an artificial representation of what all of Persian society represented: despotic, defeated, and distant. Aeschylus contributed to the belief in a profound cultural dichotomy between east and west. This idea became a lasting tradition that survived through ancient texts and eventually became a cornerstone of the western tradition. Whether or not the Orient of the great western writers of antiquity is one based in reality or fiction is moot. This is the Orient that lived on in the minds of western peoples and came to inform subsequent generations of literary and political thinkers, including those of early America.

Americans encountered other contrasts between East and West through their understanding of Roman history. Like the Greeks, Romans similarly viewed the East as a threat and antithetical to their culture and traditions. The ultimate rise of Rome came from its military triumph over a former eastern colony that became a major Mediterranean power in its own right. The Punic Wars pitted Rome against Carthage, a city first established by the Phoenicians, a region of modern Lebanon. Perhaps the most well known ancient historian of this war is the Greek historian Polybius. A Roman sympathizer, Polybius argued that Carthage fell because it had passed its zenith as a formidable power and had done so in part to its declining, popularly run government.

Carthage also differed with the rising power of Rome in its use of commercial trade. Caroline Winterer has pointed out that although Carthage argued is not frequently

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16 Ibid., 68.
considered to be an important influence on early America, the founding generation was interested in learning more about Carthage because of its status as a former colony. Carthage surpassed the power of its parent and became a successful, commercializing power. The founding generation cautiously looked to Carthage as an ancient example to follow in the years after independence from Britain.\(^{18}\) Through a familiarity with ancient sources the founding generation believed they could find a path to wealth and stability.

*American Contact with the Ottoman Empire*

Americans did not come to know the East and the Ottoman Empire through ancient sources alone. At the time of the American Revolution, the Ottoman Empire was a formidable, established power whose history stretched back several hundred years. Americans were both intimidated and beguiled by the Ottoman Empire. Although it as a non-Christian, theocratic world power, it also possessed an array of goods held to be desirable luxury items.\(^{19}\) Thus, Americans viewed the Ottoman Empire in both a positive and negative light. They would selectively appreciate and admire certain aspects of Ottoman culture while simultaneously dismissing and condemning others.

The Ottoman Empire first emerged in 1300 with Osman I as sultan. Early Americans often referred to Muslims living within the Ottoman Empire as “Turks.” However, by the eighteenth century the original Ottoman family who founded the empire had intermarried with neighboring groups of people for centuries and were thus no longer

\(^{18}\) Winterer, “Model Empire, Lost City.”

the same Turcic group that had founded the Empire. The word “Turk” came to be synonymous with “Muslim” by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was used by eastern and western Europeans alike. In reality, the Ottoman Empire was multi-ethnic. While the government was an Islamic theocracy, it was also multi-religious. The sultan’s palace was located in Istanbul after the Ottomans overthrew the Byzantine capital, Constantinople, in 1453. As the empire expanded over time, territorial governors or pashas, residing in places such as Egypt, Algiers, and Morocco, managed the power and influence of the Ottoman Empire as regencies.

In the late eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire’s expansive empire had been contracting for about one hundred years. The military defeat at Vienna in 1683 marked the beginning of the initial decline in Ottoman power. The rise of European powers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in Russia, threatened the stability and strength of the Ottoman Empire. After a century of problems, the Ottoman Empire suffered yet another setback when Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt in 1798, beginning a period of an on-going struggle to keep this region under Ottoman control.

There were also internal conflicts within the Ottoman Empire. The janissaries, which had once been a formidable fighting force, became a liability by the eighteenth century and threatened the sultan’s ability to effectively rule. The sultan’s advisors and regional governors, pashas or deys, also threatened the sultan’s authority. Beginning in

20 Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (New York: Cambrige University Press, 2005), 2.
22 Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 38.
23 Ibid., 37.
24 Ibid., 46.
1721, Ahment III and his vizier Ibrahim Pasha negotiated power with the sultan’s pashas in a similar manner Louix XIV had at Versailles.\textsuperscript{25} The sultan invited the Pashas to his palace in Istanbul where they engaged in mass consumption of luxury goods. Ahmet III positioned himself at the center of this consumptive performance. This method of soliciting allegiance worked, at least for the time being, as both the sultan and his pashas sought to both enhance and legitimize their political statuses.\textsuperscript{26} What came to be known as the Tulip Period, the sumptuous consumption and extravagance in the Ottoman court influenced European aesthetic taste in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

During the debates over the ratification of the Constitution, the question of Muslim inclusion emerged. The new Constitution did not require a religion test, allowing for the possibility that future officeholders could be Catholic, Jewish, or “infidel.”\textsuperscript{27} Ultimately deciding that it was “impossible to treat such idle fears with any degree of gravitas,” states such as North Carolina accepted that Muslims or Catholics could in theory become officeholders. For many Americans, Catholics were considered to be no better than Muslims because of their allegiance to the Pope.\textsuperscript{28} Federalists assured skeptical Anti-Federalists that while this was a possibility, it was never likely to occur in

\textsuperscript{26} Quataert, \textit{The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922}, 44.
\textsuperscript{27} James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 17 October 1788, Jefferson, \textit{The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition}.
practice. North Carolinians ratified the Constitution despite the fact Anti-Federalists had fears about the inclusion of Muslims into American society and government.\footnote{Ibid., 158–95.}

The United States became more immediately acquainted with the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim world through contact in the Barbary Wars. The Barbary States of North Africa were founded by the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century and were composed of Algiers, Morocco, Tunis, and Tripoli. The name “Barbary States” was one given by Europeans to the Ottoman-controlled North African provinces, which were in reality a collection of semi-independent regencies within the Ottoman Empire. The word “Barbary” has ancient Greek and Roman origins: when the Greeks and Romans described uncivilized populations of the ancient world they used the word barbaros or barbarus. Scholars have found that over time, this word was applied to Arabs and African tribes.\footnote{Baepler, \textit{White Slaves, African Masters}, 2–3.} Americans shared something in common with the Barbary States even if they did not recognize the connection. Just as the American colonies were governed by Great Britain, the Barbary States were created and managed by a distant imperial power. In fact, the leaders of each of these self-sufficient regencies desired independence from the Ottomans, but remained under the ultimate rule of the sultan.

The Barbary States did not initially set out to make piracy and tribute the center of their economy. This practice developed over time. The contracting power of the Ottoman Empire meant that its regencies also increasingly lost influence in world trade, making piracy an increasingly attractive method of accumulating wealth.\footnote{Lambert, \textit{The Barbary Wars}, 34 and 38–40. Lambert described the progression of the Ottoman Empire’s interaction in global trade and how by the end of the seventeenth century the English and the Dutch}
Barbary States also were required to pay tribute to the sultan. By demanding tribute from Europeans to pass safely through the Mediterranean, these leaders could fulfill obligations to the sultan while also strengthening his own power base at home.\textsuperscript{32} The United States entered this global arena at the end of the eighteenth century.

Prior to independence, American merchants had benefited from British protection in the Mediterranean. After independence, because the United States was no longer part of the imperial system, the British refused to protect American commerce. Operating under a mercantilist understanding of economics, the British viewed trade competition as a potential threat to their balance of power. Therefore, Great Britain hoped to continue to regulate and even diminish American trade by refusing to protect the new nation’s trade.\textsuperscript{33}

The conflict between the United States and the Ottoman Empire began in 1784 when Barbary pirates seized the first of many American ships. By the mid-1790s there were more than a hundred American sailors who had been captured and sold into slavery by Algiers.\textsuperscript{34} Like European powers seeking access to the lucrative Mediterranean trade system, Americans were expected to pay tribute to the Barbary States in the hopes of maintaining safe passage. The United States held that it was against their principles to 

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\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{33} Allison, \textit{The Crescent Obscured}; Lambert, \textit{The Barbary Wars}, 42–43.
\textsuperscript{34} Lambert, \textit{The Barbary Wars}, 119.
pay tribute in order to establish commercial trade in the Mediterranean. Instead, American leaders believed that trade should be open to all nations on an equal basis.\textsuperscript{35}

George Washington viewed the Barbary pirates as “barbarians.” While he would have preferred to punish the Barbary States for imprisoning American sailors, he observed that the new nation lacked the means for inflicting such punishment. In a letter to Marquis de Lafayette, Washington admitted he did not understand “the policy by which the Maritime powers” had acted and thought it reflected the “highest disgrace on them to become tributary to such a banditti who might for half the sum that is paid them be exterminated from the Earth.”\textsuperscript{36} In 1796, the United States finally was able to pay the required ransom of $800,000 to free its citizens from Algiers while also negotiating peace with Tunis and Tripoli.

The Adams administration also encountered trouble in the Mediterranean. Like the Washington administration, Adams managed to avoid war with the Barbary States by paying tribute to its leaders. In the waning days of Adams’s presidency, the pasha of Tripoli had not been paid his annual tribute and claimed that the United States favored Algiers over Tripoli.\textsuperscript{37} Jefferson proposed a different approach to foreign relations in the Mediterranean. Jefferson had been vocal as early as 1784 in his views that the United States should not pay tribute to the Barbary States. Jefferson was convinced that paying tribute would not “render the pirates of Barbary more docile to receive propositions for

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 10–11; Lawrence A. Peskin, Captives and Countrymen: Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785-1816 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).


\textsuperscript{37} Lambert, The Barbary Wars, 121–123.
Peace.” During Washington’s administration, Jefferson had actually recommended that Congress use force. In 1801 the pasha of Tripoli, Yusuf Qaramanli, demanded a greater price to maintain the peace established in the 1796 treaty. After negotiations failed, Yusuf ordered that the flagstaff bearing the American flag at the consulate in Tripoli to be cut down, and declared war on the United States.\(^{39}\)

Newly elected to the presidency, Jefferson decided upon a more aggressive approach than his predecessors. While the pasha requested payment of several hundred thousand dollars to reestablish peace, Jefferson believed that a naval deployment against Tripoli would be less expensive than continuing to pay tribute and run the risk of only perpetuating conflict in the Mediterranean.\(^{40}\) The third president strategized that the United States would ultimately avoid warfare by demonstrating their naval power through an occupation of the Tripoli harbor. Jefferson sent Yusaf a letter on May 21, 1801 informing him that while the United States desired “to cultivate peace & commerce with your subjects” Jefferson “found it expedient to detach a squadron of observation into the Mediterranean sea, to superintend the safety of our commerce there & to excerise our seamen in nautical duties.”\(^{41}\)


\(^{40}\) Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 124.

At least initially the American blockade of Tripoli brought support from Europeans who lauded Jefferson’s effort to overthrow the tribute system.\textsuperscript{42} The blockade, however, interfered with trade between Tripoli and other Barbary States. Tunisia and Morocco had not been openly hostile toward the United States up till this point in time, but with the denial of access to Tripoli the United States faced a larger conflict for which they had originally bargained. After the loss of an important frigate called the Philadelphia, Jefferson’s management of the conflict in the Mediterranean came under fire. Election Day loomed, Americans feared that the pasha of Tripoli would sell the frigate to Algiers, expanding the conflict as well as increasing the amount of tribute to be paid.

The tide in the Tripolitan War turned when the American navy successfully sailed into the harbor of Tripoli, disguised in Turkish costume. On February 16, 1804 under the cover of darkness, American sailors successfully boarded the Philadelphia, set fire to the ship, and ultimately ignited the black powder onboard, destroying the frigate in a grand explosive display. The American navy also gained the respect of at least one British admiral who observed that the fete was “the most bold and daring act of the age.”\textsuperscript{43} In the months that followed, Yusuf became convinced that the United States did indeed have the resources to continue a war against him and that it would be in his best interest to end the conflict. He accepted terms of peace at a fraction of the amount he initially negotiated at

\textsuperscript{42} Lambert, \textit{The Barbary Wars}, 133; David Humphreys and George Washington, \textit{The Miscellaneous Works of David Humphreys: Late Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Madrid} (New York: T. and J. Swords, no. 160 Pearl Street, 1804), 74.

\textsuperscript{43} Lambert, \textit{The Barbary Wars}, 143–144.
the beginning of the conflict. To many Americans, the successful defeat of Tripoli meant the United States had proven to the world it was made of tougher stuff and that their belief in free trade should be taken seriously.

Even though the United States successfully negotiated peace with Tripoli in 1805, conflict with the Barbary States was not at an end. Once again a conflict that emerged in part because of ongoing conflict between the United States and Great Britain. Just one month after war of 1812 began, Algiers demanded a cash tribute from the United States to maintain peace. American trade in the Mediterranean came to a halt for the duration of their war with England. By 1815, England’s war with the United States and Napoleon eventually meant a decreased ability to provide the support promised to Algiers. Algiers itself faced internal political turmoil due to a series of coups and assassinations. Peace was negotiated, Algiers paid restitution to the United States on July 4th, 1815.

The American public did not overlook the fact that the peace with Algiers was signed on July 4th. The celebrated the fact that Americans had successfully established the principle of free trade in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. This confirmed for many Americans that their own republican views would overcome tyranny wherever it was encountered. One American wrote to an Albany paper and stated that the American navy was “now proud to display that insignia of American glory and freedom in every part of

44 Lambert, The Barbary Wars, 154. The United States paid ransom for captured American sailors, but Yusuf’s proposal for money to be paid for peace was rejected.
45 The British assured the Pasha of Algiers that they would provide support for any action against the enemies of Great Britain thus pledging support against the United States in the Mediterranean.
the world.” Although small, the navy had “in one week relieved us from the degradation of paying tribute to barbarian Algiers.” Although small, the navy had “in one week relieved us from the degradation of paying tribute to barbarian Algiers.” Another New York paper observed that the Americans concluded the war with Algiers in a “manner as honourable to themselves, as it must be disgraceful, by comparison, to those might European powers, who have so long remained tributary to the pirates of Africa. Millions for defence, not a cent for tribute.” This motto will be “engraved on the tomb of Algerine pride.” This nationalist fervor originating against the Barbary States would remain vital into the 1820s.

The Barbary Wars proved to be in some ways to be an extension of the American Revolution. The United States desperately attempted to establish itself abroad while also managing tumultuous domestic affairs at home. At the root, Americans saw themselves as the champions of free trade and freedom. In contrast the Barbary States, as well as the Ottoman Empire, represented the antithesis of the new American tradition, imposing restrictions on free trade in the Mediterranean and stealing the very freedom of American sailors.

At the same time, even Americans found reasons to admire and even emulate the Ottoman Empire. While Americans were repelled by the perceived tyranny of the Ottoman Empire, they were fascinated by the culture and aesthetic qualities of Ottoman fashion and luxury goods. A paradox emerged in the United States beginning in the eighteenth century and continuing into the 1820s. Americans contrasted their own culture against that of the Ottoman Empire, seeing their form of government as tyrannical and...
inferior while simultaneously embracing certain exotic aspects of their culture. This dichotomous view of the Ottoman Empire shaped Americans’ future relations with the region.

*Middle Eastern Exoticism in America*

Americans and Europeans would have understood the Oriental style as a term that referred to the Middle East as well as “the far East,” which primarily referred to China. Post-Revolutionary Americans admired Grecian inspired material goods for their aesthetic qualities and associated them with cosmopolitanism and worldliness. Even though political rhetoric promoted frugality in American culture as connected with politics and society Americans increasingly preferred the more opulent and exotic Grecian and Oriental inspired fashion and goods. The desire in American society for things Oriental as well as things classical was almost insatiable by the 1820s. Their use made the consumer appear civilized in both a European and Oriental style. To be Oriental in the aesthetic sense one possessed foreign goods from the East and indicated financial success.

There were several reasons for why the Grecian and Oriental style became popular in the United States. One reason for this was due to the popularity of Eastern material goods such as tea, silk, and porcelain. In early America, these items represented Englishness and gentility, two social traits Americans keenly desired for themselves. Another reason for the popularity of Eastern goods was due to European discoveries of

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51 Egan, *Oriental Shadows*, 81; For more information on the consumption of European goods and refinement see Bushman, *The Refinement of America.*
antiquities in the Mediterranean in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Historically there is a tendency for fashion and material items to be borrowed from centers of perceived power even though the source is an adversary. The Ottoman Empire was a fashion and material trendsetter in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thomas Hope, a fashion and interior design trendsetter of the period popularized the Grecian and Oriental style through his pattern books. 

Hope’s Oriental style drew heavily on Egyptian and Turkish inspired aesthetics. Figure 13 Since Hope came to know Greece as ruled by the Ottoman Turks, Hope’s classical designs also carried a flair for the Orient. The classical tradition combined with an oriental influence came to be part of the Grecian style in fashion and architecture. Thomas Hope, among other contemporaries, even had his portrait painted depicting him dressed in full Turkish dress. While Hope’s portrait shows him as a well-travelled authority of the classical world as well as modern exoticism, most people would have incorporated more subtle Oriental touches to their dress and interior design. The most popular Ottoman inspired fashion trend in the early nineteenth century was the turban. Figure 14 Portraits of women from the early nineteenth century reveal that turbans were a

54 Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann, eds., Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity (Istanbul: Eren, 2004), 238.
55 Thomas Hope, Household Furniture and Interior Decoration (London: Printed by T. Bensley ..., for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme ..., 1807), 24. Islamic-inspired drawing room: “This room was principally fitted up for the reception of four large pictures... representing buildings in India, of Moorish architecture. Some part of the arrangement and decoration of the room were, for this reason, borrowed from the Saracenic style; though, from the unavoidable intermixture of other productions of art, of a totally different character with the pictures aforementioned, it was impossible to adhere to the Moorish style in the greater part of the detail. A low sofa, after the eastern fashion, fills the corners of this room. Its ceiling, imitated from those prevailing in Turkish palaces, consists of a canopy of trellise work, or reeds...”; See also Winterer, The Mirror of Antiquity, 127–131.
57 Faroqhi and Neumann, Ottoman Costumes, 247.
popular and exotic fashion feature. Dolley Madison’s trademark turban and Grecian robe, for example, were fashion assets inspired by the Grecian Style.  

A larger portion of American society came to know the Ottoman Empire through Middle Eastern-inspired literature called Oriental tales. This genre of popular literature can be traced back to at least the colonial era. Cotton Mather, for example, in a letter to John Winthrop indicated that there was some general knowledge in New England about the East and that among the intelligentsia this knowledge was important.  

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the United States had the highest literacy rate in the world with a growing economy that led to an expanding publishing industry. Oriental stories as a genre in early America were so popular that one in ten stories printed in America prior to 1800 could be classified as an Oriental tale, exceeding any other genre. By 1817 a book called Lalla Rookh, an Oriental romance novel, sold more copies than any other book published in the United States that year. The subject matter of plays printed and performed in the United States between the 1780s and the 1820s as well as children’s readers and grammars also reflect the popularity of the Oriental tale.

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58 See Appendix Images for this chapter for examples of Grecian style fashion with a distinctive oriental flair.
59 Schueller, U.S. Orientalisms, 24; See also Baepler, White Slaves, African Masters.
61 Egan, Oriental Shadows, 78.
63 American Plays Printed 1714-1830 A Bibliographical Record (Stanford University Press, 1934) This catalog indicates that many plays printed and performed in America from the 1780s through the 1830s were based on Oriental tales or reflected contemporary attitudes on the East.
One of the most popular and influential Oriental Stories in America in late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* or *The Book of One-Thousand-and-One Nights*. Copies of *The Arabian Nights* were imported into the United States from Europe throughout the eighteenth century. First printed in 1794 in Philadelphia, the book sold over forty thousand copies. Children and adults alike read this book.⁶⁴ *The Arabian Nights* is a collection of stories told by Scheherazade, the daughter of the Vizier, and includes such stories as Aladdin and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. Scheherazade tells a new story every night to the tyrannical Sultan to whom she has been betrothed. The Vizier’s daughter is the next in a long line of virgins the Sultan has vowed to take every night as a new wife. Like his previous wives, the Sultan plans to have his way with Scheherazade then kill her the following morning as revenge for his first wife’s unfaithfulness. The stories include themes that revolve around violence, adventure, opulence, and the supernatural - elements that were often associated with Islamic culture.

The first American edition of *The Arabian Nights* printed in two volumes in 1794 proudly proclaimed it was indeed “The First American Edition, Freely Transcribed From the Original Translation.” The work provided a brief introduction, explaining how Scheherazade came to the occasion of telling her tales to the despotic Sultan. This edition focused on providing readers with adventure-filled, exotic stories. The introduction explained that the Sultan arrived at his plan to kill a long series of virgins as vengeance against his wife after meeting an all-powerful, monstrous genie who was unable to control his own mistress’s wandering eye. The ensuing blood bath eventually brought

Scheherazade to the sultan’s chambers, ready with her stories so that she might see another day of life.  

These stories captured the imaginations of the American public. Demand for the work was clearly high given that it went through multiple editions throughout the nineteenth century. By the 1820s, *The Arabian Nights* was available in illustrated editions, bringing the exotic Middle East to life as well as undoubtedly providing added incentive for readers to purchase the collection. One edition printed in 1822, the sixth American edition from the eighteenth English edition includes a scene from Aladdin on the title page. Aladdin was depicted in a turban and flowing robes bowing before the magical lamp and the mysterious and powerful genie. Figure 16 The opulent clothing and furnishings in the image indicate how American readers might have thought of the East: as being a place of mystery, excitement, and magic, as well as a place inherently “un-American.” Such ideas thus promoted continued interest in Eastern culture while also clearly denoting the East as foreign both literally as well as culturally.

There were many publications of *The Arabian Nights* in a few short years after the first American publication. Some authors viewed the widely popular Oriental literature as a potential threat to western readers and sought to adapt the stories. One edition printed just three years after the first American edition endeavored to produce Oriental tales that incorporated western morals. This edition presented itself as superior to the more

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common translations by providing the familiar tales in a censored format. The author of this edition, Reverend Mr. Cooper, stated to his readers that the French translation that was presented to him needed pruning just as a once “luxuriant garden, neglected and run to waste” might require. Selecting only what the author deemed “most likely to promote the love of virtue, to fortify the youthful heart against the impressions of vice, and to point out to them the paths which lead to peace, happiness, and honour,” the author “expunged ever thing that could give the least offence to the most delicate reader” and “…added many moral reflections, wherever the story would admit of them.”

The Reverend Cooper’s edition was more focused on conveying western ideas clothed in eastern costume, one example being the description of the storyteller herself. Scheherazade was described as being very intelligent, being “infinitely above the generality of her sex” and that nature had given her “beauty of Venus, the wisdom of a Minerva, and the chastity of Diana.” The references to Roman deities to illustrate the virtues of the storyteller suggest that it is through qualities associated with the western tradition this young woman was able to outwit a despotic tyrant. This literary license simultaneously promoted the entertainment value of eastern tales while also elevating western virtues. Young readers were undoubtedly intended to absorb this moral as a point of contrast between their life in the West and how it might be different in the East.

Next to The Arabian Nights, the most popular Oriental story in early America was Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy. Published in England in 1684 and reprinted several times

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in the United States this work was an eight volume collection of supposed letters originally written in Arabic by the story’s main character Mahmut. It was then translated into Italian and later into English. The story, however, was more than likely written by an Italian named Giovanni Marana. This book was so valuable to Benjamin Franklin’s older brother that he “kept [it] in the office of the [news]paper for the use of writers.”69 By the late eighteenth century the book’s sustained popularity was such that the New York Magazine stated that the Turkish Spy was a “book which has delighted us in our childhood, and to which we can still recur with pleasure.”70

This story, and others within the Oriental tale genre, drew on the American conception of the exotic allowing the reader to visit a place where the social norms accepted in the United States did not exist. In the case of The Turkish Spy, the reader was compelled to support the main character Mahmut in his travels throughout the Ottoman Empire. Mahmut found himself eventually drawn to Christianity and the western lifestyle in Europe. At the same time, the reader was drawn to all that the main character experiences in his travels in the East. Printed in 1801, volume three addressed the reader directly and described the newly converted Turk to Christianity as having embraced the English dress and travelled with a cargo “consisting of jewels and other rarities, which are the genuine product of the East…”71 The main character himself had embraced what westerners already knew: that life in the West was better. Yet the character still travelled with items with which westerners would have been most interested.72 The accuracy of

69 Egan, Oriental Shadows, 78.
70 Ibid., 79.
71 Giovanni Paolo Marana, Letters Written by a Turkish Spy (Vernor & Hood, 1801), iii.
these stories in conveying a realistic understanding of life in the East was not the goal. Rather it was to provide readers with a method of escapism as well as show why life in the United States was so much better than life in the East.

Thanks in part to the popularity of the Arabian Nights and The Turkish Spy, there was a quickly rising interest in generating similar stories for American audiences.\textsuperscript{73} For example, one story printed in New York in 1805 called The Beggar and the Angel, an Oriental Story tells the tale of a deformed beggar who must depend upon the charity of travelers entering into the gates of Bagdad to survive.\textsuperscript{74} The beggar is bitter because of all of the misfortunes he has sustained in life, including the loss of several limbs, an eye, his wife, and all of his children. One day a traveler speaks to him and points out that God brought the misfortunes onto the beggar in order to save him from a life of treachery. The traveler turns out to be an angel who helps the beggar to realize that he is in reality favored by heaven and will upon his death be awarded a beautiful wife and children.

The story had a clear moral and is not dissimilar from that of the Old Testament story of Job. The Beggar and the Angel, however, draws on conceptions of life in the Middle East where the once robust and wealthy beggar encountered repeated vicious and barbaric attacks against him on the streets of Bagdad.\textsuperscript{75} The reference to a heavenly reward in receiving a perfect wife and children also suggests that the author has at least an Orientalized knowledge of Islamic theology. What is interesting about this aspect of

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{74} The Beggar and Angel, an Oriental Story (Ballston [N.Y.]: White, Child, and Miller’s print, 1805).
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
the story is that there seems to be at least a general interest in conveying a faithful depiction of life in the East, even though told from a biased perspective.

Yet another Oriental story titled The Reward of Ingratitude also uses western perceptions of life in the East to convey a moral. This story is about a Dervise, or Turkish or Persian monk, who meets a young man, Abdullah, and asks him to help acquire an iron candlestick for him from a cave full of treasures beyond his wildest dreams. The Dervise uses magic to open the cave and Abdullah descends into it only to find that he is unable to exit the way he entered and thus is separated from the Dervise. With the iron candlestick in hand, Abdullah returns home and discovers that if he lights the twelve-branched candlestick then twelve Dervises magically appear and each give him an asper (a Turkish unit of currency). Abdullah feels guilty after a time and returns the candlestick to the Dervise who tells him that if he had beaten each Dervise with a club they would have given to him mountains of gold and jewels. Abdullah is struck with greed and steals the candlestick for himself. When he attempts to obtain his riches from the magical Dervises, he uses the wrong hand to hold his club and thus brings upon himself the wrath and violence of the magical Dervises leaving him penniless.⁷⁶

Stories similar to The Beggar and the Angel and The Reward of Ingratitude were published in American grammars and readers for school aged children. One reader published in 1815 included several Eastern tales that drew on interest in the exotic and opulent East. One such story titled Hamet – A Tale tells the story of a young shepherd living “in the delightful region of Arabia the happy, that country so dear to the

imagination of youth, the birthplace of genii, and romance.” Hamet was corrupted by a genii and rejected his humble life in order to travel to a nearby island filled with wondrous beauty. When he finally is able to reach the island, however, he discovers that the magical place would not allow him to consume any of the amazing fruit or drink from the crystal clear streams. Hamet’s lust for this island ends in his death. The story, like others found in children’s grammar books, carried a lesson for its young readers. This and so many other Oriental tales promoted a Middle East where wealth and mystery abounded. The moral of this story for American children was that the greedy search for riches was sinful.

The rising popularity of Oriental tales reveal a common stereotype of the East. While these stories are clearly intended to be fantasy, the images of magic, wealth, and exotic palaces that emerged from the stories made their way into other types of stories that were intended to reveal a more factual and historical side of that region.

British and American authors merged together the fantastical and the historical creating popular history and travel books of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Americans wanted to learn more about the East, not just through fairy tales, but also through credible, non-fictional, sources. While the authors of these sources sought to bestow knowledge of the East onto their readers, authors also endeavored to prove the superiority of the western world. These sources suggest that American readers were not

78 Ibid., 101–106.
isolated from the rest of the world, but rather preoccupied with knowing about and interacting with other parts of the world, even those far distant from their own continent.

One of the more popular sources on the rise of the Islamic world in the eighteenth century was a chapter in Edward Gibbon’s The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. First published in 1776 and reprinted numerous times, the lengthy history explored the far-reaching boundaries of the Roman Empire in both the East and West. A significant portion of Gibbon’s work focused on the rise of the East specifically speaking to the life and times of Mohammed, the rise of Islam, and how its followers increasingly became a force with which the West must reckon. Gibbon’s work was widely read and admired by Europeans and Americans alike. The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire was considered an unbiased source for the time and an important resource of knowledge. It explained why one of the greatest empires on the face of the earth ceased to exist. Such themes, of course, were of great interest to the founding generation and Gibbon’s work was used alongside the ancient sources as the young United States made its first steps as an independent country.  

Gibbon’s chapter on the life and times of Mohammed was indeed more balanced than many of the Oriental tales that were so common in early America. Gibbon refers to the “genius of the Arabian prophet” while simultaneously discussing how the eastern borders fell due to the rise of Islam. Gibbon discussed at length the geography of the Middle East and the different peoples living in the region and even praised the achievements of the great Islamic nations of history. Gibbon also stated that “the Arab is

80 Richard, The Founders and the Classics, 36 and 97.
81 Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (New York: Modern Library, 1935), 634.
personally free; and he enjoys, in some degree, the benefits of society, without forfeiting the prerogatives of nature.” He qualified this statement by outlining some of the opportunities available within Arabian societies.\(^82\) This was considered high praise for a nation feared by Europeans for hundreds of years.

Gibbon concluded, however, “The talents of Mohammed are entitled to our applause; but his success has, perhaps, too strongly attracted our admiration. Are we surprised that a multitude of proselytes should embrace the doctrine and passions of an eloquent fanatic? … Does it seem incredible that a private citizen should grasp the sword and the scepter, subdue his native country, and erect a monarchy by his victorious arms?”\(^83\) Gibbon made it clear that while there were many achievements peoples of the West could admire in Islamic nations of the East, his readers must also be weary. While Gibbon outlines many contributing factors to the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, the rise of Islam played an important and decisive role in its ultimate demise. Americans would have learned about the East and more specifically the rise of the Islamic world through Gibbon’s lens.

\[\text{Fear and Suspicion of the Ottoman Empire}\]

Even though there was a popular fascination with the East, Americans also believed that their society was fundamentally different from that of the Islamic world. This opposition stemmed from a fear of the Ottoman Empire and revolved around the

\(^82\) Ibid., 643.  
\(^83\) Ibid., 707.
idea that the East was despotic and tyrannical.\textsuperscript{84} The rise of Islam posed a threat to Anglo-American Protestant Christianity.

The Barbary States were a case in point. American attitudes toward the Barbary States evolved over the course of time. During Washington’s administration, the Barbary pirates were thought of as being fierce barbarians who had risen in spite of the efforts of various European powers over several centuries.\textsuperscript{85} American opinion shifted toward more specifically classifying the Muslim world as despotic and tyrannical as Barbary pirates confiscated more and more American ships. Harrowing tales of American sailors being held as captives in far-away jails made their way back the United States. By the late 1790s, Americans increasingly began to view their Muslim adversaries as an ignorant people who were subject to the tyranny of their rulers. This bolstered Americans’ sense of cultural superiority.\textsuperscript{86} The Ottoman Empire went from being more of a theoretical and literary threat to a real threat to Americans. The perceived vices and shortcomings of the Ottoman Empire in general and the Barbary States in particular were contrasted with American virtues.

The conflict that ensued between the United States and the Barbary States was not specifically a religious one. Instead, the religion of their eastern adversaries, in the minds of early Americans, became synonymous with state coerced religious observance. Americans also came to view Muslim societies as violent, prone to corruption,

\textsuperscript{84} Egan, \textit{Oriental Shadows}, 119.
\textsuperscript{85} Linda Colley, \textit{Captives} (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 128–131 The shift I am discussing is similar to the shift Colley noted in British captivity narratives in the eighteenth century. Colley argued that as international relations changed so too did their views toward the Ottoman Empire. Schueller, \textit{U.S. Orientalisms} Schueller also critiques Said’s thesis arguing that Orientalist discourse changed over time.
\textsuperscript{86} Lambert, \textit{The Barbary Wars}, 112.
ostentation, idleness, which among other consequences of these vices yielded economic stagnation. In contrast, the United States had established religious freedom while also guaranteeing other Enlightenment ideals for some. The United States also sought economic progress through trade relations with other world powers in the hopes of bolstering the fledgling American economy. Thus at the core, Islam was viewed as indicative of an established tradition of tyranny and therefore the antithesis of the United States.

Travel narratives were popular in early America as they combined interest in history with the desire to travel to exotic locations while also reflecting an underlying suspicion of the Muslim world. Many newspapers and magazines printed travel stories that played to the fascinations of American audience members desiring information about the far away Middle East. Even though most American readers only made a journey to the East through their imaginations, the interest in absorbing knowledge about the culture, customs, and history of the East resonated among American literary consumers and was fruitful for printers looking for loyal readers. One excerpt of a travel book printed in a Massachusetts magazine 1790 offered an explanation for why these travel stories about the Orient were popular and important to readers stating:

Of all the subjects of observation any country affords, the moral character of its inhabitants is unquestionably the most important… For it is not sufficient to make a barren enquiry into facts; the essential object is to investigate their various causes and relations; to discover the open or secret, the remote or immediate springs, which produce in men those habits of action we call

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89 Nance, How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790-1935, 52 There were thousands of travel narratives printed in the early nineteenth century as books, pamphlets, and stories printed in newspapers.
manner, and that uniform disposition of mind we name character… for have not only to combat
the prejudices we may meet in our way, but to overcome our own…

The author concludes his explanation by stating that only through the assistance of world
travels and an active readership may a population become more familiar with the society
and culture of the East.

An excerpt of a travel narrative printed in 1795 in the New York Magazine
 evaluated some of the manners and customs of the Ottoman Empire, but with less of an
unbiased approach than Edward Gibbon. In an excerpt from a larger source written by
 Thomas Watkins, entitled Travels Through Switzerland, Italy, Sicily, the Greek Islands to
Constantinople, Through Part of Greece, Ragusa and the Dalmatian Isles, the reader
learns some of the customs of the people who call Constantinople home including Greeks
and Turks. Watkins’ portrayal of the Turks is less than favorable. He described each Turk
he encountered as being corrupt or easily corrupted. The city walls were in a state of
mold and decay. The only aspect of the Turkish people Watkins presented for his
Western readers to admire was their devotion to their faith. The piece concluded with the
traveler’s experience in being shown “a room in which are eleven coffins of a late
sultan’s children, who were probably strangled. What innumerable murders has ambition
instigated in the Imperial race of the Moslems!” Such an article would have satiated a
 growing interest in Oriental tales while also confirming to American readers the horrors
of Islamic society.

90 “Manners and Character of the Inhabitants of Syria.: [Extracted from the Second Volume of Volney’s
Travels through Syria and Egypt.],” The Massachusetts Magazine; Or, Monthly Museum. Containing the
Literature, History, Politics, Arts, Manners & Amusements of the Age (1790-1796), April 1790, 209.
91 Thomas Watkins, “An Interesting Description of Constantinople; with Some Curious Particulars of the
Turkish Court,” The New York Magazine or Literary Repository, July 1795, 415.
This article was not unique. Still other examples from the same time period described the Turks as being unable to maintain a good and decent society. Devastating consequences emerged when such people conquered once great ancient western powers. For example, one article claimed that the ancient roads established in Greece were subsequently destroyed due to the “negligence of the Turk.” 92 Another article written a few years later made similar observations stating that the Turks did not possess “one spark” of genius and that they “gaze with unfeeling stupidity” while living “where ignorance, tyranny, superstition, and gross sensuality, only dwell in sad and stupidly-solemn pomp.” At the same time, they keep the once great Greek nation under degradation and servility. 93 And still another article outlined some of the supposed social customs of the Ottoman Empire and argued that the Turks “credulity therefore arises from their ignorance, the imperfection of their education, and the nature of government.” 94

School aged children also learned about the history and culture of the East. The inclusion of the East in early American education indicates that many Americans saw the value in instilling knowledge of the East and the Ottoman Empire especially in the minds of young Americans. Children learned about the history through readers and geography books. Little changed in approach from the revolutionary generation into the early

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92 Mr Maundrell, “Extracts of a Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem,” *The Christian’s, Scholar’s, and Farmer’s Magazine: Calculated in an Eminent Degree, to Promote Religion; to Disseminate Useful Knowledge; to Afford Literary Pleasures and Amusement, and to Advance the Interest of Agriculture (1789-1791)*, March 1790, 156.


94 “Manners and Character of the Inhabitants of Syria: [Extracted from the Second Volume of Volney’s Travels through Syria and Egypt].”
The entertainment of Oriental tales combined with history and geography were a common element in early American curriculum. Their inclusion emphasized the contrast between tyranny and liberty in the minds of a new generation of Americans.

One commonly assigned history textbook in the United States dedicated several chapters to describing the life of Mohammed and the rise of Islam. First published in 1796 and reprinted many times in the United States in the early nineteenth century, The Flowers of Modern History provided a biographical chapter on Mohammed, with additional chapters on the doctrines of Islam, and the reasons for the success of Islam.

The author explained that Mohammed suffered epileptic seizures. Wanting to conceal his condition, he declared that he was receiving instructions from God. The author concluded that “By this strange story, and by leading a retired, abstemious, and austere life, he easily acquired a character for superior sanctity among his acquaintance and neighbors.” According to this author, Mohammed was able to successfully spread the religion of Islam because of three groups of people living in that region of the world. One group denied the importance of Jesus Christ as a co-equal with God the Father. The second were Jews living in Egypt and Arabia. The third were Pagans whose religious principle had become weak and “had given themselves over to pleasure and sensuality or

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95 Educational Research Library and Alvina Treut Burrows Institute, Early American Textbooks, 1775-1900: A Catalog of the Titles Held by the Educational Research Library (Washington, D.C: U.S. Dept. of Education, 1985), 168 This catalog of early American textbooks lists a number of editions ranging over a time period of twenty years from 1800 to 1826. This book was first published in the late eighteenth century.

96 John Adams, The Flowers of Modern History: Comprehending on a New Plan, the Most Remarkable Revolutions and Events, as Well as the Most Eminent and Illustrious Characters, of Modern Times; with a View of the Progress of Society and Manners, Arts and Sciences, from the Irruption of the Goths and Vandals, and Other Northern Nations, Upon the Roman Empire, to the Conclusion of the American War. Designed for the Improvement and Entertainment of Youth (published by Bennet and Walton, 1813), 22.
to the acquisition of riches, in order to be the better able to indulge in the gratifications of sense.”

Mohammed was described as having characteristic traits that would have been appealing to early American society. But because Mohammed desired to conceal his epilepsy he turned to deception and “boldly declared himself a prophet sent by God.”

Mohammed’s character provided an example to American children to avoid such characteristic flaws. The author explained that the foundation of Islam was in Paganism as well as a tendency toward sensuality and greed, all stereotypical beliefs that resurfaced throughout western Oriental tales. Islam was then presented as being a religion created through the seed of deception and brought to fruition because of the perceived inadequacies of that region of the world in the sixth century.

Perhaps the most well known American educational writer in the early republic was Noah Webster who first published his reader, An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking, in 1785. In the midst of carefully chosen stories, references to the Orient can be found. The final portion of the reader provided children with lessons on a number of subjects including cleanliness, which Webster stated is especially important in the East, “where the warmth of the climate makes cleanliness more immediately necessary than in colder countries.” Webster concluded with a story that he states he obtained from “an account of Mahometan superstition.” The story describes how a Dervise was denied blessings on several occasions, even receiving bodily harm from a “holy camel” that was part of a caravan on its way to Mecca because he had forgotten to

97 Ibid., 23–24.
98 Ibid., 23.
wash his hands that morning. This moral lesson simultaneously taught children that Islam employed superstitious tales while also teaching that there are elements of the East that are useful.

Many children’s histories also instilled knowledge of the East through a lens of American or European superiority. One history printed in England that was used for educational purposes in the United States was titled *The Grecian History from The Earliest State to The Death of Alexander the Great with a Summary Account of the Affairs of Greece from that period to the Sacking of Constantinople by the Ottomans.* The author, Oliver Goldsmith, described the history of the Greeks and how “under the influence of foreign councils, and the control of foreign arms, had lost their existence as a nation.” Due to the rise of the Ottoman Empire after the fall of Constantinople, Goldsmith concluded that “the modern Greeks, without the least political importance and sunk in slavery to a military government, retain but little of their original character…. Tyranny too effectually quieted this tumult of passion; the oppressed Greek, humbled to the dust, was forced to kiss the hand that was lifted up for his destruction.”

American readers obtained and read materials that did battle, literarily speaking, with the Barbary pirates. These pieces of literature emphasized that Muslims and their way of life were barbaric, ignorant, vicious, weak, and idle. Such attitudes were not new or necessarily unique to the period, but they climbed in popularity due to the

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99 Webster, *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking....*, 261.
100 Educational Research Library and Alvina Treut Burrows Institute, *Early American Textbooks, 1775-1900*.
One such example that makes this comparison clear was a popular biography on the prophet Mohammed. This biography was written by an Englishman and with the first American edition printed in 1802. The title of the biography puts forth the author’s argument plainly with The Life of Mahomet; or, the History of that Imposture which was Begun, Carried On, and Finally Established By Him in Arabia and Which as Subjugated a Larger Portion of the Globe, Than the Religion of Jesus Has Yet Set at Liberty. The author elaborated on his intent in writing the biography in stating that “Biography… is the glass in which human nature appears without disguise, and in which we behold in some characters such as assemblage of supereminent virtues; and in others so many horrid and detestable vices.” It was through “Viewing things in this light” that the author endeavored to write an accurate depiction of the life of the prophet.

Mohammed’s life was repeatedly contrasted with heroes of the western tradition and compared with the most infamous villains of the western tradition, figures early American readers would have easily recognized. The author contrasted Mohammed’s character with those of ancient Greeks such as Homer, who is hailed as the “prince and father of poets” and whose birthplace is claimed by several famous cities that are “distinguished above others for literature and commerce.” This image was contrasted with Mohammed’s birthplace, which the author declared, “a wonder the place of his

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105 *The Life of Mahomet, Or, The History of That Imposture Which Was Begun, Carried On, and Finally Established by Him in Arabia* (New York: Published by Evert Duyckinek, 1813), iii–iv.
nativity has not been buried in oblivion.”¹⁰⁶ Mohammed was placed in the company of Julius Caesar who was “peculiarly disgusting to unbecloaked reason” and Nero who was forced to stab himself to death because “neither friends nor enemies would be so merciful as to dispatch him.”¹⁰⁷ The author saw Islam as being anti-liberty, anti-reason, but encourages readers in stating with certainty that “the free exercise of reason will, I know, be its [Islam] destruction at last.”¹⁰⁸

Americans Captives in the Ottoman Empire

One type of Oriental tale that especially reflected negative sentiments toward the Ottoman Empire in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century America was the captivity narrative. The captivity narrative became especially popular at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century during the Barbary Wars. Captivity narratives in the European tradition date back to at least the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁹ The tales written at the time of the Barbary Wars portrayed the Turks as part of an ignorant and despotic civilization that Americans, now steeped in the rhetoric of the Revolution, must overcome in order to completely secure the liberty Americans had already achieved domestically. In some ways, the Barbary Wars was a continuation of the American Revolution where they were compelled to secure their liberty abroad.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 2.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid., iv The founding generation especially looked upon Julius Caesar as the ultimate enemy of the Roman Republic.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 54.
¹⁰⁹ Baepler, White Slaves, African Masters Baepler’s discussion, especially in the introduction, provides important insight into how captivity tales influenced Europeans and Americans. Foss’s captivity tale, and others, provides important insight into the ways in which Americans would have come to view the east through literature.
¹¹⁰ Please see Lambert, The Barbary Wars This concept was the crux of Lambert’s argument.
Authors of these captivity narratives wrote from their own first hand experience as captives. Others wrote fictional accounts that drew heavily from pre-existing assumptions about the Islamic world. This captivity narrative illustrated how Americans viewed the Turks at the end of the eighteenth century and how focus was especially directed towards showing the Turks to be fierce and brutal adversaries. John Foss, one of the few surviving members of the brig Polly, which was captured by Algerian pirates in 1793, related his experiences as a slave in Algiers as well as his impressions of the different people he encountered. Published in 1798, his account described the different punishments that could potentially be inflicted on a Christian captive as well as an Algerian who broke local laws. Throughout the narrative Foss juxtaposed his experience and observations with life in the United States.

Foss’s narrative revealed his overall judgment of life in Algiers and intentionally contrasted this strange life, where cruel and unusual punishment was commonplace, with life in the United States. Foss wrote that life in Algiers was directed by the Turks, who “have all the government and power in their own hands, and no man can hold any post of great distinction among them except he is a Turk.”¹¹¹ Foss viewed the Turks as “savage barbarians” and that they were a “well built robust people, their complexion not unlike Americans, tho’ somewhat larger, but their dress, and long beards, make them appear more like monsters, than human beings.”¹¹² Foss presented to his readers a portrait of a Turk, and suggested that based on physical appearance, Algerians and Americans were not completely dissimilar. Foss maintained that the cultural distinctions such as facial

¹¹¹ Quoted in Baepler, White Slaves, African Masters, 87.
¹¹² Ibid., 88 and 92.
hair, dress, and cultural practices, however, rendered the person a monster in the mind of the American captive.

Foss made many other observations that negatively portrayed life in the east. For example, Foss gave an account of the customs surrounding a Turkish wedding where he related that Turkish women were ruled over by their husbands. Foss also wrote that many Turks he encountered only pretended to be devout in their Islamic faith around other Turks. In front of the Christian slaves, they regularly drank wine and ate pork. If caught drinking in excess or eating pork, the Turk was “no more counted a true Mahometan.” To Foss, the dividing line between what it was to be an American living as a free citizen and what it was to be a Turk living in a far away land lay in the society and culture of the Turks.

This distinction resurfaced once again in Foss’s journal where he related the initial efforts of the United States to free the American prisoners in Algiers. Once freedom was negotiated, Foss related how he came to hear that he was set free from his guards. Foss’s guards were astounded at the United States’ dedication to freeing its citizens and wondered that “the American people must be the best in the world to be so humane and generous to their countrymen in slavery.” Foss saw the biggest difference between Americans and the Turks in their different types of government. He even seemed to suggest that if liberty were instituted in Algiers such cruel atrocities against the different people residing there would no longer exist. When Foss finally returned home,

\[113\] Ibid.
\[114\] Ibid., 92.
\[115\] Ibid., 95.
he confirmed what many Americans already believed to be true through his personal account as a slave in Algiers.

Even though former captives wrote the majority of the popular captive tales, some of these tales were fictional. In 1797 an American lawyer and playwright Royall Tyler wrote the most popular of these stories, The Algerine Captive. This novel was reprinted many times and was available in the United States as well as England. The protagonist of the story is a Doctor Updike Underhill, who was described as a well-educated man from New England. In the first portion of the story, Underhill travelled from New England to the south where he encountered southern aristocrats and their institution of slavery, with which Underhill fiercely disagreed. Growing disgusted, Underhill set sail for Africa. He was eventually taken captive by an Algerian ship and was held as a slave for six years. The book was dedicated to David Humphreys, the man who negotiated with the Barbary States. These negotiations eventually led to the freedom for the American captives including John Foss.¹¹⁶

Just as John Foss had concluded in his captivity narrative, Tyler’s fictional character concluded his adventures by declaring that no nation in the world was as free as the United States while contrasting it with his experiences in Algiers. As a captive, Underhill worked under excruciating conditions and eventually had to be sent away for medical attention. While in the hospital, Underhill conversed with a Muslim man who tried to convert him to Islam. Instead, Underhill proudly proclaimed he had held on to

¹¹⁶ Royall Tyler, The Algerine Captive; Or, The Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill, Six Years a Prisoner among the Algerines (1797) (Gainesville, Fla: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1967), xvi.
“The religion of my country…”  

After his release, Underhill returned to “the freest county in the universe” eager to “contribute cheerfully to the support of our excellent government, which I have learnt to adore in schools of despotism…” Both Tyler and Foss’s captivity narratives heavily influenced subsequent additions to the genre.

Men wrote the majority of the captive tales published from the late eighteenth century into the early nineteenth century, but there were a few exceptions. A woman named Mrs. Maria Martin allegedly wrote one of the most popular captive tales published in the early years of the nineteenth century. The authorship and whether the story is non-fiction remains dubious, but readers were intended to believe the story was true. The History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin was first printed in 1807 and reprinted many times in the United States over the next ten years. The nationality of Maria Martin is not clear, but readers might have understood her to be an American given her aversion to the idea of “kingdom” and even declared that it is an epithet that should be “expunged from every human vocabulary.”

For early Americans who saw the moral stability of a nation as originating in the home and with the wife and mother, the harem or seraglio was viewed as the ultimate manifestation of depravity and despotism. Captivity narratives with female subjects were common and especially titillating reads for American audiences at the end of the

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117 Ibid., vol. two, 70.
118 Ibid., 227.
120 Baepler, White Slaves, African Masters, 147.
121 Ibid.; Maria Martin, History of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Maria Martin Who Was Six Years a Slave in Algiers, Two of Which She Was Confined in a Dark and Dismal Dungeon, Loaded with Irons (Boston: W. Crary, 1806), 12.
122 Marr, The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism, 43–49.
eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Early Americans viewed women within
Turkish society as being an exploited sex in the harems or seraglios of the Middle East.
The harem, as it existed within the early American lexicon, was founded upon fantasy
and imagination. American men and women believed that women in these harems
were literally locked up within the Sultan’s palace and kept for his every erotic whim.
Americans perceived this cultural and social practice as the ultimate subjugation of the
female sex. Advocates for women’s rights, most notable Mary Wollstonecraft, frequently
referred to the status of women in Islamic culture as one of complete exploitation that
“kills virtue and genius in the bud.” According to Wollstonecraft, if women could not
pursue reason and respect within society, then they would be condemned to the same
kind of subjected status as Muslim women.

Yet another source sometimes attributed to Thomas Paine said that the status of
women in the Ottoman Empire was no different from slavery. Paine blamed the
“Seraglio” for “the domestic servitude of woman, authorized by the manners and
established laws” of the region and argued that “the excess of oppression” was derived
from “the excess of love.” Although Wollstonecraft, Paine, and others did not
primarily intend to generate interest in Muslim society and culture, their works had that

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123 Baepler, White Slaves, African Masters, 18 Baepler suggests this idea especially through his discussion
of Maria Martin. See also Peskin, Captives and Countrymen.
124 Ruth Bernard Yeazell, Harems of the Mind: Passages of Western Art and Literature (New Haven: Yale
University Press, 2000) This forms the basis for Yeazell’s study on western perceptions of the harem.
125 Ibid., 76–77.
126 Marr, The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism, 43.
127 Myra Jehlen and Michael Warner, The English Literatures of America, 1500-1800 (London: Routledge,
1997), 866.
effect. By comparing the status of women in the west with that of the despotic east, they implied that western women should never be allowed to sink to such degraded depths.

The Maria Martin narrative conveyed the idea that the Turks were unfeeling and bloodthirsty toward women. Martin was faced with years of unspeakable torture. As a captive, she attempted to escape after several years of servitude, but was discovered and carried back into slavery for another two years. Martin viewed her captors as fierce, barbaric, and in many regards, lacking any distinguishable human characteristics. Mrs. Martin was chained in a small cell by the neck, waist, and ankles. The Turkish prison guards provide her only with moldy bread and slimy water. The bashaw was also rendered barbaric and bloodthirsty. A member of the crew on the ship she was first a passenger then a prisoner assisted Mrs. Martin in her failed escape. When sentenced, Mrs. Martin’s benefactor declared to the bashaw, “if I suffer thus inhumanly, it is a consolation that I suffer for no other crime than that of attempting to liberate from unjust and cruel slavery an innocent woman.”

The bashaw was unmoved by such a declaration and sent Mrs. Martin into close confinement.

The Maria Martin narrative provides an important gendered distinction for captivity narratives and aids in defining the differences Americans perceived between life in the United States and in the Ottoman Empire. Martin was presented as the embodiment of feminine virtue, a quality that was desired in republican mothers of the new American republic. American revolutionary rhetoric provided a place for American mothers in society where their role as nurturing wives and mothers was imperative to the

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sustainment of a healthy republic. Early American readers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries would have viewed women in this light. The popularity of Mrs. Martin’s tale provides evidence of this sentiment. While an early American reader would have been horrified at such injustices inflicted onto an American white male, a member of the weaker and more virtuous sex bearing such inhumane conditions was unthinkable. The tale also suggested to American readers that the Turks did not value women in the same way as Americans in post-revolutionary society did.

The gendered theme found in Mrs. Martin’s tale can be found in other similar tales including a play titled The Sultan: A Peep into the Seraglio. The play was performed in New York the first time in 1794 and was revived many times until 1840. The Sultan was originally published in Britain with the central character being the Sultan. An American adaptation of the play changed the title to The American Captive making Roxalana, the female captive in the story, the new central character. Though enslaved by the Sultan, Roxalana prevailed upon the other female characters in the play calling upon them to gather up more self-respect. With this frame of mind, Roxalana insists that the sultan consider her an equal. Freedom prevailed and Roxalana brought about the downfall of the Sultan’s supreme rule, convincing him that he will be happier if he accepts her as his equal.131

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129 For further reading on the role of women in the politics of the early republic, see Kerber, Women of the Republic; Zagarri, Revolutionary Backlash.
130 Allison, The Crescent Obscured, 69 No copies of the American version of The Sultan survive. Copies of the unadapted version printed in the United States do, however, survive.
131 Isaac Bickerstaff, The Sultan; Or, A Peep into the Seraglio.: A Comedy (Georgetown [D.C.]: William Rind, Jr, 1810).
Due to the fact much of the play was set in a harem, early Americans would have usually viewed the tale of Roxalana as inappropriate or socially taboo. In the context of an oriental captive story, however, The Sultan served as a lesson on how the Muslim world’s brand of tyranny oppressed women and employed despotism to effectively rule. When Roxalana was first introduced to the Sultan’s court, she bluntly explained to the sultan and his advisor that in order to be a truly successful leader the Sultan should free the women from the seraglio and “let inclination alone keep your women within it.” She went on to state that women should be made his advisors instead of men because “we women have certainly ten thousand times more sense.” The Sultan’s advisor was shocked, the Sultan himself was at first amused. Even though the Sultan and his advisor did not take her seriously at first, the advisor reflected that her words marked “the first time we have seen in this place a spirit of caprice and independence – I’ll try at least what she’ll say to me farther – there can be no harm to divert myself with her extravagance.” Roxalana’s radical statement immediately began to chip away at the despotic rule of the Sultan. This process continued when she encouraged the women of the seraglio to view themselves as possessing independent thought.

American audiences would have viewed Roxalana’s character as being the personification of American political identity. Evidence of her influence can be perceived in the songs these female characters are forced to sing to the Sultan. The first song in the play sung for the Sultan refers to him as a “blest here, who in peace and war, triumph alike, and raise our wonder; In peace the shafts of love you bear, In war the bolts of

\[132\] Ibid., 8.
Jove’s own thunder.”133 With Roxalana’s influence these women are singing a different tune: “They’re our masters but in name; Let them say whate’er they will, Woman, woman, rules them still.”134 Roxalana’s revolution became complete when the Sultan agrees to take Roxalana as an equal to the throne when she pointed out to the Sultan’s initial misgiving that the emperor of the Turks “May do as he pleases, and should be despotic sometimes on the side of reason and virtue.”135 Through the ideals of virtue and liberty, this young woman successfully “overturned the customs of a mighty empire!”136

This play transmuted a story about a young woman enslaved into the Sultan’s seraglio into a classroom depiction of patriotic virtue.137 American audiences would have agreed with Roxalana’s argument if liberty was introduced into Islamic society it would lead to the downfall of despotism. In addition, Roxalana’s message that women deserved equal roles in society with men would also have resonance to an American audience. The message of this play is a clear one: that free societies are more virtuous and bear a lasting quality that a despotic society, like the Ottoman Empire, cannot enjoy. And without the help of the nurturing qualities republican women have to offer men and their children, this stability will not be realized for future generations.

The assumed perils of the harem and the oppressive status of women under the Ottoman Empire played on the emotions of both male and female readers. Such tales with female protagonists tend to be categorized as part of a larger genre called “literature of

133 Ibid., 6.
134 Ibid., 17.
135 Ibid., 20.
136 Ibid., 21.
137 Baepler, White Slaves, African Masters, 49; Marr, The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism, 50 See note 74.
sensibility” or sentimental literature. This genre endeavored to establish “a code of ethics based on sensibility to compensate for the erosion of traditional notions of social responsibility.” American readers throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries found female captives in Barbary prisons to be captivating and pitiable characters. Captivity narratives played an important role in how American women and men perceived the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century and why they would support the Greek War for Independence.

Conclusion

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Americans used the Ottoman Empire as the antithesis of United States. Americans initially came to know the East through their knowledge of the ancient world. Understood to be despotic and tyrannical, Americans contrasted their society with the Ottoman Empire, further promoting a sense of cultural and political superiority. Americans were conditioned from a young age to think of the Ottoman Empire as a mysterious place full of wealth and wonders beyond their wildest dreams as well as a place governed by tyrants. The theoretical and literary understanding Americans had of the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim world played an important role in how Americans viewed the United States’ involvement in the Barbary Wars and especially the captivity of American citizens during the conflict. Perceived as powerful yet despotic, wealthy yet uncivilized, the United States would wage an internal

struggle over how to balance their preexisting perceptions of the Ottoman Empire with the shortcomings of freedom within their own society.
Chapter Two Figures

Figure 13. Thomas Hope, Household Furniture and Interior Decoration, (London: T. Bensley, 1807) Plate VI.
Figure 15. Gilbert Stuart, "Mrs. Andrew Sigourney," ca. 1820, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Figure 16. The Arabian Nights, (Hartford: Bowles and Francis, 1822).
CHAPTER THREE: THE RISE OF AMERICAN PHILHELLENISM

The romanticization of ancient Greece was initially a European movement that began in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries. It involved a common understanding in both Europe and America that identified Greece as the original cradle of democracy and freedom. This excitement and romantic enthusiasm for Greece’s history and ancient culture expanded after Napoleon’s conquests and was nurtured through a growing interest in literature, fashion, and household items that captured the flavor of ancient and modern Greece. The nostalgic connection to Greece combined with the fact that the modern Greeks were living under Ottoman rule cultivated early nationalist pride in both European and American understanding of their intellectual and cultural past. The Greek cause, as some philhellenes called it, also promoted early notions of humanitarianism, creating the foundation for what would be known as philhellenism.¹ Historians have characterized the development of this movement in the United States as being an extension of the European movement.² However, it is now clear that although the American Philhellenic Movement initially drew some momentum from its European counterpart, it quickly became a separate movement. Americans quickly connected the Greek War with the American Revolution and regarded it as their duty to raise public awareness and support for the cause.

Philhellenism in Europe

The philhellenic movement as a whole does not have a clear origin, but rather was a cause that developed over several hundred years. Some historians have regarded the philhellenic movement as being a European movement that developed primarily in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England with Lord Byron as the leader.\(^3\) Still other historians have written about the importance of philhellenic movements in other European countries such as France and Germany.\(^4\) It has also been argued that the Greek cause was not something that emerged fully developed at one time but rather was a set of ideas that emerged among the Greeks themselves as early as the late Byzantine period. Through Greek intellectuals living in Europe in eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the concepts of philhellenism were transferred onto a sympathetic audience.\(^5\)

American philhellenes developed their own movement largely out of inspiration from similar movements in Germany and Great Britain. The German philhellenic movement influenced Edward Everett, one of the most famous American philhellenes, as he spent several years in Germany completing his education before assuming his post as professor of Greek literature at Harvard in 1820. Required to not only educate the students of Harvard, but also to hold public lectures for the citizens of Boston on the subject of antiquities, Everett’s knowledge of Greece and the German classical tradition

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made a deep impression on how Americans came to identify America’s connection to Greece.\(^6\)

American classicists at the beginning of the nineteenth century were especially interested in a new German pedagogical approach to classical curriculum for students. This new pedagogy was a philological approach to education, meaning the study of classical texts was focused on textual emendation and interpretation.\(^7\) Like classical education in both Britain and the United States, the German pedagogical approach singled out Rome and Greece as the superior ancient civilizations. Any other ancient civilizations were classified as barbarian.\(^8\) Even the Romans were considered second best to Greece. One prominent German classicist, Friedrich August Wolf, wrote that the Romans were “not a people of original talents” and essentially stated that it was because of their interest in Greek culture that they were able to rise to such heights of power and influence.\(^9\)

As the German pedagogical approach gained popularity among American classicists, the desire to invigorate the classical curriculum in America gained a following.\(^10\) It was through this new philological approach to the study of ancient Greece and Rome that the classical tradition in America, at least among educated circles, began to develop a newer, more romantic view on the ancient world. Instead of merely memorizing ancient texts, students were encouraged to study ancient art, literature, and

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\(^6\) Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 40–42.
\(^7\) Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 17.
\(^8\) Ibid., 21.
\(^9\) Ibid.
politics. Students were expected to master these disciplines along with the study of language.¹¹

British philhellenic authors were also influential. Americans widely read the works of Byron, Keats, and Shelley for the romantic settings of the ancient world in the years leading up to the Greek War. This interest intensified when Byron joined the Greek army. American newspapers provided updates on Byron’s adventures as a soldier, contributing to the lasting devotion many Americans felt toward supporting the Greeks as well as their European Philhellenic counterparts. Byron was a notorious character in his time, known for debauchery and scandal. He carried on an incestuous relationship with his half sister for many years. This fact created much turmoil in his short-lived marriage, which ultimately ended in 1816 when Byron left for Italy and Greece for the last time, destined to serve in the Greek army where he would meet his untimely end.¹²

Showcasing the ancient glories of ancient Greece and Italy, Byron almost single-handedly propelled ancient Greece to the utmost importance in British and American cultural and literary identity.¹³ Lord Byron’s poetry, in part, inspired a romantic movement that was furthered by the widespread interest in his poetry as well as his involvement in the Greek Army. Byron as a romantic figure became the ultimate philhellene.¹⁴

Byron visited Greece for the first time in 1809 and stayed for a couple of years, touring many ancient sites including the Acropolis in Athens, the field at Marathon, and

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¹¹ Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 21.
¹⁴ This sentiment that western civilization owed a debt to ancient Greece was essentially the driving force behind the philhellenic movement, both in England and the United States.
the ruins at Delphi. During this time, Byron wrote one of his most popular epic poems titled *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*. This poem was based on Byron’s experiences in the Mediterranean, combining the travel narrative with philhellenic sentiment. The poem repeatedly referred to philhellenic sentiment through observing the loss of ancient Greece to the sands of time and at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. The poem also articulated what many other philhellenes professed with sentiments that included:

Fair Greece! Sad relic of departed worth! Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great! Who now shall lead they scattered children forth, And long accustomed bondage uncreate? … Shades of the Helots! Triumph o’er your foe: Greece! Change thy lords, thy state is still the same; Thy glorious day is o’er, but not they years of shame.  

After the publication of *Childe Harold*, Byron became an almost overnight celebrity.  

The inspiration Byron gathered from his travels nurtured an already existing preference for the Greeks over the Turks. By the time his visit was complete Byron was prepared to advocate for the Greeks as a political cause at home. It was largely because of Byron’s empathy for the Greeks and his desire to make philhellenism an active political endeavor that showing support for the Greeks became a large-scale trans-Atlantic movement. Byron’s poetry sparked a renewed interest in tourism to both Italy and Greece, which only further promoted the romantic sentiments toward the ancient world. In many cases, travelers left home with copies of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* in hand expecting to also experience the ruined former glory of Greece and Rome. When travelers arrived in Greece, Greek nationalists played on these expectations and further

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19 Edward Everett was one such tourist.
promoted the claim that the suffering Greeks were the downtrodden inheritors of the ancients.  

Another way in which philhellenism and Lord Byron came to command attention in both Europe and America was through the acquisition of the Parthenon marbles, a group of large marble statues that once adorned the exterior of the Parthenon in Athens. Byron was ardently against Thomas Bruce, Earl of Elgin’s efforts to remove the Parthenon marbles, now commonly known as the Elgin marbles, from the Acropolis. This debate engrossed many philhellenes at the time primarily because they believed that removing the marbles from their home diminished the connection to the ancients. While it is unclear as to how Lord Elgin acquired the marbles, he claimed that he had appropriately done so from Turkish authorities in Athens. Lord Elgin sought the support of Parliament to purchase the marbles, which he eventually secured despite opposition. The Elgin Marbles were purchased in 1816 and placed in the British Museum where they remain. This debate achieved much attention throughout Europe as well as the United States and contributed to the rising interest in philhellenism in general.

Ancient Greece as the ultimate literary muse loomed in Byron’s mind. Prior to the attention Byron paid to the Greek cause, British sympathy for the Greeks was a widely held sentiment, but was also an abstract one that lacked the proactive urge to support a revolution. Between Byron’s influence and his close friend, Percy Bysshe Shelley, their poetry generated a rising public interest in both Britain and the United States to support

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21 Both Nicholas Biddle and Edward Everett, for example, shared this sentiment.
22 There are numerous books that cover the Elgin Marble controversy, including: Bass, *Freedom’s Battle*, 55.; Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 30.; Marchand, *Down from Olympus*. 
the Greeks militarily, financially, or both.\textsuperscript{23} The philhellenic movement in Britain continued to gain momentum throughout the 1820s.

Despite popular support for the Greek cause in Britain, the members of Parliament were not as easily swayed. Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, was the prime minister at the time, and like his peers, was more concerned over the rising power of Russia than in supporting a Greek revolution. The first priority in Castlereagh’s mind was to avoid the downfall of the Ottoman Empire given the rising threat Russia posed to Europe. The outbreak of the revolt in Greece brought Russia and the Ottoman Empire all the more closer to war due to their common interest in the Balkans as well as the potential violation of the 1774 Treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji, which allowed Russia the right to protect Orthodox Christians living under Ottoman rule.

Castlereagh quickly began diplomatic efforts to avoid an expansive war.\textsuperscript{24} This is not to say that Castlereagh had no sympathy for the Greeks. In fact he wrote to Tsar Aleksandr I in 1821 in an effort to smooth over tensions between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. He stated that he did desire for the Greeks to overthrow the yoke of the Turks at some point in time, however, European sympathy could not “be tempted, nor even called upon in moral duty under loose notions of humanity and amendment, to forget the obligations of existing Treaties, to endanger the frame of long established relations, and to aid the insurrectionary efforts now in progress in Greece.”\textsuperscript{25} Despite the unwillingness

\textsuperscript{23} Bass, \textit{Freedom’s Battle}, 58.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 63.
\textsuperscript{25} Quoted in ibid., 63.
of Parliament to intercede on the Greeks’ behalf, popular public support for the war remained strong.

American Philhellenism

The American philhellenic movement, however, was not a mere imitation of the European movement. Before Byron’s poetry gained popularity there were Americans who saw obvious connections between themselves and the Greeks and advocated for their eventual freedom. Perhaps the first American philhellen was Thomas Jefferson who developed his pro-Greek sentiments while Minister to France in the 1780s.26 While in Paris, Jefferson made acquaintances with several Greek Enlightenment thinkers. Greek-born John Paradise offered to instruct Jefferson in Modern Greek and Adamantios Korais (or Coray as Jefferson often referred to him), was a man who would one day become a leader of the Greek Revolution. Greek expatriates such as Korais and Paradise were an important reason for the rise of philhellenism as a political endeavor, having melded their own love of their homeland to Western Europe’s classical tradition.27 Through these relationships Jefferson’s interest in Greece reflected many of the same sentimental and humanitarian attributes future philhellenes would share.28

In a letter to his long-time mentor and friend George Wythe, Jefferson expressed some of these philhellenic attitudes in stating that he could not “help looking forward to the reestablishment of the Greeks as a people, and the language of Homer becoming a living language as among possible events. You have now with you Mr. Paradise, who can

tell you how easily the modern may be improved into the antient Greek.”

Jefferson also concluded in a letter to yet another friend that contemporary European conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire could mean “we may live to see the Greeks re-established as a people, and the language of Homer again a living language. Little will be wanting to amend the modern into antient Greek.”

Jefferson was also cautious in his hope for Greek freedom. In a letter to Richard Henry Lee in 1785, he commented, “A lover of humanity would wish to see that charming country from which the Turks exclude science and freedom, in any hands rather than theirs, and in those of the native Greeks rather than any others. The recovery of their antient language would not be desperate, could they recover their antient liberty. But those who wish to remove the Turks, wish to put themselves in their places. This would be exchanging one set of Barbarians for another only.”

Jefferson seems to indicate that while freedom for Greece was a possibility in the 1780s, the Greeks themselves were not capable of holding onto their freedom in the face of another neighboring power.

Jefferson and many other philhellenes held that the modern Greeks had been living so long under Turkish rule that they required assistance in regenerating their society to its ancient glory. If the Modern Greeks could overthrow Turkish tyranny and establish a free society then perhaps the once great Greek nation would return in all of its ancient glory. The philhellenic interest in “saving” the Greeks did not stem primarily

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30 Thomas Jefferson to Charles Thomson, September 20, 1787.
31 Thomas Jefferson to Richard Henry Lee, July 12, 1785.
from the fact that the Greeks were Christian; in fact, many Europeans and Americans viewed the Greeks as the wrong kind of Christians given that they were Orthodox. Instead, it was the romantic hope that ancient Greece could somehow be revived through their intercession. This element of condescension was yet another common aspect of the philhellenic movement. It was widely held the Greeks could not obtain freedom without assistance, a belief that fueled a sense of urgency behind the movement’s modus operandi.

A distinctively American philhellenic movement began to emerge at the end of the eighteenth century. Public interest increased in part to the conclusion of the Barbary Wars when public dislike increased toward the Ottoman Empire. American taste for things Greek in many ways followed the same patterns as those in European countries such as England and Germany. The common principle that bound these different philhellenic movements together was the hope of regenerating modern Greece to its former glory. While the United States in many ways lagged behind their European counterparts in terms of sponsoring archaeological expeditions and sending numbers of visitors to Greece, Americans nonetheless were just as devoted to the philhellenic cause due to their own experience in overthrowing tyranny. This sentiment in many ways made the American philhellenic movement all the more successful in terms of popular support throughout the 1820s.

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33 Bass, Freedom’s Battle; Larrabee, Hellas Observed.; St. Clair, That Greece Might Still Be Free; the Philhellenes in the War of Independence.  
34 Larrabee, Hellas Observed, 24.
Three notable American philhellenes were Joseph Allen Smith (first American tourist in Greece), Joel Roberts Poinsett (future politician and first ambassador to Mexico), and Nicholas Biddle (future president of the Second Bank of the United States). Each desired to travel to both Italy and Greece so that they might visit the ruins of the civilizations to which they believed Americans owed the greatest debt. Through their travels these men heightened an already existing romantic and intellectual interest in the United States in ancient Greece. While Smith and Biddle did make their way to Greece, the closest Poinsett came was his visit to the Greek ruins in Sicily in 1802. Ironically enough, despite his enthusiasm for ancient Greece, Poinsett would be one of the many congressmen in the 1820s that stood in the way of congressionally recognizing the Greek War with financial aid.

Joseph Allen Smith was one of the first, if not the first, American tourist to make his way to Greece. Smith travelled extensively throughout Europe and Asia in the 1790s, returning to the United States sometime around 1806. What is known about his visit to Greece can be gleaned from the writings of others who knew him, such as Nicholas Biddle. Contemporary newspapers reported on Smith’s return and observed that they anticipated printing an account of his adventures. There was an overwhelming interest

36 Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 11; McNeal, “Joseph Allen Smith, American Grand Tourist,” 66; “[New York; Europe; Joseph Allen Smith; Williams Loughton Smith, Esq; American; European; Russian],” *Alexandria Advertiser*, January 16, 1808 Originally published in the Charleston Courier: “No American, we may safely say, few, if any Europeans have possessed such means and opportunities of viewing to advantage the various parts of the old world as Mr. Allen Smith...With such means and advantages, it is ardently to be desired that this distinguished traveller may be persuaded by his friends to publish the result of his researches and observations...”
in his travels, not only for those hoping to travel to Greece but also those who wanted to know more about the ancient ruins that remained.

Travelling a short time after Smith, Nicholas Biddle visited some of the same sights Smith had previously visited. In his own travelogue made mention of him: “I began to ascend the hill which overlooks the port & on which are the ruins of the fort of Ulysses. About ½ way up & about ½ an hours walk from the shore thro’ currant & vine fields you come to an ancient well in perfect preservation, every stone of the inside remaining. This is called the well of Ulysses & justly for he no doubt made use of its water. It is excellent water & my pleasure in drinking it was heightening by considering that my countryman Smith of Carolina had discovered it from the benefit of the Ithacans.”

It was the prospect of experiencing a physical connection to an ancient site the philhellenes had only read about in their classical studies that drove an increasing interest in travelling to these places.

Nicholas Biddle made the journey to Greece in 1806. Biddle’s diary was largely devoted to recording his finding sacred locations mentioned in classical texts. Biddle was a great lover of Greek architecture. It is possible the design of the Second Bank of the United States in Philadelphia, of which he was president, was designed in the Doric temple style at his suggestion. Biddle also wrote down his thoughts concerning the modern situation of the Greeks under Turkish rule. Biddle related several instances of Turkish oppression of the Greeks. While he sympathized with their plight, he also condemned their unwillingness to act. Biddle, like many other of his contemporaries,

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38 Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 18.
expressed an inability to understand why the Greeks had not already fought a revolution against the Turks.\textsuperscript{39} This sentiment contributed to the widely held belief that the Greeks were incapable of waging a revolution on their own.

The most important American philhellene was the Harvard classicist Edward Everett. Everett was at first inspired to become a philhellene when still a student at Harvard. In 1814 Everett gave an oration at Cambridge titled “The Restoration of Greece,” reflecting his budding enthusiasm for the Greek cause and his increasing desire to tour that region. Byron’s \textit{Childe Harold} was a favorite of Everett’s. In fact, the young Everett had his copy of \textit{Childe Harold} signed by the author when on a visit to London. Everett admired Byron’s adventures in Athens, supported his opposing opinion on the subject of Lord Elgin’s effort to remove the Parthenon marbles from Athens, and was even given letters of introduction to go on his own trip to Greece by Byron himself.\textsuperscript{40}

Before he could go on an adventure to Athens, Everett delved into his Greek studies at the University of Göttingen in 1815. A close friend of Everett’s named was accompanied by a close friend who also enrolled in Greek studies. Everett’s friend wrote home the professors at Göttingen had convinced him that in America “we do not yet know what a Greek scholar is, nor even the process by which one is made.” This friend also observed that Everett was so determined to prove himself a scholarly equal that he looked “as if he had fasted six months on Greek prosody and the Pindaric metres.” Everett eventually resigned himself to the fact that he would never be able to achieve the


\textsuperscript{40} Larrabee, \textit{Hellas Observed}, 30.
levels of knowledge the Germans had reached, but comforted himself that he had managed an “aesthetical view of the subject, which is more adapted to the American market.” After Everett’s return to the United States, he became one of the greatest advocates of the American philhellenic movement, inspiring many others to join first through his post as professor of Greek literature at Harvard and later through his involvement with the *North American Review*.

*The Outbreak of War*

The combination of increasing international philhellenic support for Greece with internal conflict within the Ottoman Empire precipitated the outbreak of the Greek Revolution. Sultan Mahmud II ascended to power in 1808 and was determined to reverse the decline his empire had long been sustaining. One issue that had plagued the empire was the internal conflict between the Sultan and his pashas, whose roles were to govern various provinces within the empire while still also remaining ultimately under the direction and rule of the Sultan. Many of these pashas were independent and were reluctant, at best, to pay tribute and allegiance to the Sultan in Istanbul. One independent pasha Sultan Mahmud wished to assert authority over was Ali Pasha of Ioannina, the ruler of Albania and northwest Greece. In 1820 the Sultan ordered Ali Pasha to come to Constantinople in person in order to address certain crimes for which he had been accused. Ali Pasha refused and was therefore declared a rebel.

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41 Quoted in ibid., 31–32.
Many philhellenes and Greek intellectuals worried that if the Sultan proved successful in suppressing Ali Pasha then Turkish power in Greece would be strengthened, making a revolution in the future more difficult to achieve. If a rebellion began before a conflict between Ali Pasha and the Sultan was fought, then the Turkish forces would be divided and weak. Support for a Greek Revolution, therefore, began to increase in 1820.\textsuperscript{44} Greek expatriates in Europe, such as Adamantios Korais, intensified their arguments to both European and American philhellenes hoping to obtain monetary and military support for war.

The Turks were very much aware of the increasing tension within their borders. Precautions were taken in the Peloponnese by repairing some of the fortresses that were at that point in a state of disuse and disrepair. Figure 17 Turkish efforts for preparation similarly intensified the Greeks’ awareness of rising tension, causing them to also make necessary preparation should conflict break out. The Greeks knew that the Turkish army lacked resources it needed to suppress a widespread rebellion. They increasingly realized that if they desired to strike out against the Turks then time was of the essence.

In order to diffuse a potential conflict, the Turks ordered the Greeks to turn in their weapons to local authorities and for local Greek leaders to come in person to Tripolitsa, the largest town in the Peloponnese at the time. The Turks’ efforts to avoid conflict had the precise opposite effect on the Greek populace. In February 1821, the Greeks, led by bishops and priests, unleashed a spree of ruthless bloodshed, fueled by centuries of wrongs, both real and imagined. The Turks countered by hanging the

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 10–11.
Patriarch of Constantinople on Easter Sunday, fanning the flames for an extended conflict. For many everyday Greeks, the conflict was a religious one between Orthodox Christianity and Islam. Both the Turks and Greeks engaged in genocide and other atrocities throughout the war.45

After the immediate outset of the conflict, newspapers in the United States enthusiastically reported that the Greeks had engaged in an insurrection “of a most formidable kind.”46 Still other reports detailed that bloodshed had taken place in a city where “all the Turks… who could not save themselves by flight were massacred, and the city itself almost wholly laid in ashes.” In one example alone the Greeks were said to have massacred 26,000 Turks.47 Many philhellenes, however, either dismissed reports that portrayed the Greeks committing gross atrocities against civilians or excused their behavior as a result of so many years living under tyranny.

Many Americans quickly embraced the cause. The first news of the Greek War arrived in the United States in May 1821. Much of the first wave of information was incorrect. One regret the high-ranking philhellenic Russian officer of Greek heritage, Alexander Ypsilantes, had crossed into Greece from the Russian frontier in order to aid the Greeks in their insurrection. While Ypsilantes did indeed attempt to assist the Greeks, it was without orders from the Tsar. The Russians were not providing outright supporting for the insurrection. In fact, Ypsilantes’ efforts proved to be unsuccessful in the long

45 David Brewer, Greek War of Independence: The Struggle for Freedom from Ottoman Oppression and the Birth of the Modern Greek Nation (Overlook Press, 2003), 121; Larrabee, Hellas Observed; St. Clair, That Greece Might Still Be Free; the Philhellenes in the War of Independence, 12.
46 “Two Days Later from Europe,” Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser, May 19, 1821.
Nevertheless, the American people were so inspired by Ypsilantes’ leadership in the Greek War that a community in the Michigan Territory named their town after him. Even on the frontier there existed an interest in the Greek cause among citizens.

While Ypsilantes should have been better preparing his troops for battle, he instead prepared a call to arms address intended to be printed in European newspapers. Directed primarily to a Greek audience, the address was reprinted in American newspapers in May 1821. Ypsilantes used philhellenic language to appeal to Europeans to assist the Greeks:

The civilized people of Europe are busy in laying the foundations of their happiness, and, full of gratitude for the benefits they received from our forefathers, desire liberty of Greece. Showing ourselves worthy of our virtuous ancestors, and of the age, we hope to deserve their support and their aid, and many of them, partisans of our liberty, will come to fight by our sides.49

Ypsilantes’ call to arms was reprinted in multiple newspapers throughout the Union. His linking of the present war with the ancient Greek past indicates that a literary and philosophical movement was being utilized to influence the course of events in modern Greece.

By the end of May 1821 American newspapers noted that English philhellenes had joined the ranks of the Greek army. Hundreds of news reports were printed via intelligence from primarily Europe sources as well as American merchants in the Mediterranean.50 Addresses from other European philhellenes like Ypsilantes were

48 St. Clair, That Greece Might Still Be Free; the Philhellenes in the War of Independence, 24.
50 Larrabee, Hellas Observed, 55–62 Larrabee acknowledges that there were very few Americans in the Mediterranean in the early 1820s, but their knowledge of the conflict did make its way back to the United States.
printed as well. For over a year, hundreds of articles were printed and reprinted in American newspapers throughout the Union outlining the latest news from Greece.

As early as December 1821, newspaper articles shifted from merely reporting the news to pointing out that “many foreigners had arrived in the Morea and joined the Greeks.”\textsuperscript{51} In the months that followed, newspaper editors printed news of the enlistment of European philhellenes, especially Lord Byron, and reported that they were “determined to join the Greeks, and assist them in person and with [their] money in their struggle for independence.”\textsuperscript{52} Recruits from across Europe, including England, France, Russia, and Germany formed whole battalions of volunteers assembled for the purpose of serving in the Greek Army.\textsuperscript{53}

Other Americans encountered the Greek Revolution through their reading of philhellenic literature. One noteworthy American poet named James Gates Percival published his own sentiments regarding the Greek cause. Percival’s books were widely advertised in newspapers, which suggest his popularity as well as widespread access to his works. The first collection of poems Percival published was available in 1821. This volume included the first of many poems Percival would write that heavily drew upon philhellenic rhetoric. In each of these poems, Percival referenced the classical world as a major reason for why the Greeks should ultimately triumph and called upon his American readers to support the Greeks. By aiding the Greek War and “her ancient liberty,” Americans would be fulfilling a philanthropic obligation to their intellectual forebears

\textsuperscript{52} “Lord Byron,” \textit{Easton Gazette}, November 1, 1823.
\textsuperscript{53} “Foreign News.”
and thus might “live immortal.” Percival’s language, like other philhellenic rhetoric of the time, would eventually motivate a widespread effort to support the war.⁵⁴

One of Percival’s first poems on the subject of the Greek War was called “Emancipation of Greece: Greek War Song.” The poem combined ancient and modern history and urged the modern Greeks to take courage in their ancient past. Percival wrote that Greece was undergoing a new beginning at that time where “the demigods of old arose, And, mantled in the patriot’s might, Drove back in shame their myriad foes, And crown’d their brows with civic wreaths of light.”⁵⁵ These “civic wreaths of light” drove out the darkness that had blanketed the Greeks under Turkish control. Now through an awareness of their ancient past, the Greeks could once again be guided by civic duty in order to achieve freedom. Only through the guiding light of civic duty could the Greeks succeed “where tyrants shall make their last stand for their thrones.” At last the Greeks had awakened from their “long, long, dream of prostrate thralldom” and had chosen their moment to rise up against the Turks.⁵⁶

Another way in which Percival employed philhellenic rhetoric was through his portrayal of the modern Turks. Percival referenced the Persian king Xerxes, one of the great foes of the ancient Greeks, and drew connections between them and that of the modern Turks. General audiences of Americans with some knowledge of ancient history would have understood that this comparison portrayed the modern Greek cause as a continuation of ancient Greek efforts to stave off tyranny while simultaneously casting

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⁵⁶ Ibid., 34.
the Turks in a negative light. Percival and other philhellenes would repeatedly employ such comparisons, which in turn generated an overwhelming enthusiasm to assist the Greeks against the Turks.

Those sympathetic to the Greek cause published other works in the early years of the Greek War specifically to promote activism in support of the Greeks. One pamphlet printed in both Philadelphia and New York in 1825 was originally printed in England and written by Leicester Stanhope, fifth Earl of Harrington and Greek Committee of London’s agent to Greece. The pamphlet was a collection of Stanhope’s letters written from Greece in 1823 and 1824 and related his experiences and observations of the conflict.\textsuperscript{57}

While the editor originally intended the publication for a British audience, Americans felt they were just as bound, if not more so, to inform themselves on the recent events of the Greek War. That this pamphlet was reprinted several times in the United States is a reflection of the early interest in the Greek cause. Like the American colonists, the Greeks would free themselves from the chains of despotism – an event American philhellenes had anticipated for several decades.

The editor observed that the greatest achievement of the Modern Greeks to date was that they had finally rebelled against the Ottoman Empire. This feat was all the more monumental in the eyes of the philhellenes given that it was commonly held that “such a Nation, descended from the warriors, the poets, the historians, and the philosophers, who

\textsuperscript{57} Leicester Stanhope Harrington, \textit{Greece, in 1823 and 1824: Being a Series of Letters, and Other Documents on the Greek Revolution, Written During a Visit to That Country} (Philadelphia: A. Small, 1825).
present to us the noblest types of their respective classes, should have sunk so low in the scale of moral energy as to have become the unmurmuring slaves of a race of uncivilized infidels, was a phenomenon too remarkable to be overlooked, and too humiliating not to be universally deplored.” The outbreak of the war was proof that “in this state of apparent moral degradation, the virtues of the Greek people did but slumber.” Ultimately, readers were called to support the cause because modern Greeks had revealed their connection to their ancient forebears and had taken up arms against the Turks in a battle for their freedom.58

What made supporting the Greeks exciting and attractive to the American public was that by supporting the Greeks they were, in a romantic sense, becoming a part of an ancient struggle against tyranny. They connected themselves with a story containing, in their minds, some of the greatest heroes of all time. This is the sort of abstract, romantic enthusiasm that permeated American society at the beginning of the war. However, enthusiasm for the Greek cause in America moved from a sentimental, abstract notion toward organized efforts of philanthropic support as early as December 1822.

One of the first organized efforts to appeal to Congress for financial support to Greece was a memorial submitted on behalf of one hundred and thirty-eight notable citizens of the District of Columbia and Georgetown. Henry Dwight of Massachusetts presented this memorial to the House of Representatives. The memorial pleaded with the House that “should Liberty be now unable to maintain herself in Greece, the country of her earliest temples and longest worship, she would cease to have a footing on either of

58 Ibid., v–x.
three continents, or an existence in the governments of six hundred millions of people.”

The signers of the memorial called for Congress to appropriate two or three million dollars in “provisions, and whatever may be necessary” to the Greeks. The signers of this memorial pointed to Greece’s classical past and its influence on the American Revolution as the primary reason for American support and aid. In this particular case, these signers were not calling for a mere token of support, but several million dollars, a tremendous sum in the early nineteenth century.

In November 1823 there was at least some interest within political circles to formally recognize Greece or at least to send an agent to assist with negotiations. However this topic seemed to be abandoned when on December 2, 1823 President James Monroe delivered his seventh address to Congress. This speech is primarily remembered for outlining a foreign policy that came to be known as the “Monroe Doctrine,” where he warned European powers against new colonization in the Americas.

However, Monroe also addressed the conflict in Greece stating: “A strong hope has been long entertained, founded on the heroic struggle of the Greeks, that they would succeed in their contest, and resume their equal station among the nations of the earth.”

Monroe’s comments reflected Americans’ increasing interest in Greek affairs, but did not extend any kind of monetary or military commitment to the cause. Neutrality would be Monroe’s course on the subject of the Greek question. The president’s non-committal platitudes regarding Greek independence ironically would generate a maelstrom of

support from other Americans, imitating the beginning of a highly active philhellenic movement in the United States.

On December 8, 1823 Daniel Webster pressed the matter of sending an agent to Greece by introducing a proposal in Congress. Webster’s proposal offered up the possibility of the United States recognizing Greece as a free nation and raised the question of direct assistance to its war for independence. Congress addressed the proposal in a series of debates beginning on January 19, 1824 with Webster leading the way in a now famous speech.

Webster directly addressed the president’s statements from the previous month in his speech stating, “If the sentiments of the message in respect to Greece be proper, it is equally proper that this House should reciprocate those sentiments.” Webster proposed an American agent or commissioner to Greece should be dispatched in recognition of American sympathies toward Greece’s plight. Webster emphasized that unless the United States sent an agent to Greece the country would be supporting “principles not only utterly hostile to our own free institutions, but hostile also to the independence of all nations, and altogether opposed to the improvement of the condition of human nature.” Webster tied the Greek cause to the freedom of all Americans. Their struggle was worthy of recognition and action on the part of the federal government.

Webster’s speech stirred much discussion and debate, but resulted in political gridlock in Washington. Congressman Samuel Breck of Pennsylvania wrote to a friend in

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61 As debate on the Greek question unfolded in January 1824 it quickly became clear that while there were a good deal of philhellenes in congress there were also many outspoken members who did not see any clear benefits to American interests if they openly recognized or assisted the Greeks.
62 Daniel Webster, Mr. Webster’s Speech on the Greek Revolution (Washington City: J.S. Meehan, 1824), 37.
January 1824 complaining that public and private business in Congress “is postponed to make room for idle debates in relation to the Greeks, who are no more entitled to our money or sympathy than the hindoos.” Even Joel Poinsett, who as a young man dreamed of traveling to Greece, similarly complained about those who supported the Greek cause stating: “Nothing in my opinion can be more absurd than a romantic statesman, and I am opposed to chivalry in politics.” Although President Monroe himself was pro-Greece, his sympathy was met with negative reception from his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams. Adams thought philhellenism was purely sentimental and not in the best interests of the United States in the long run. Even though the president and Congress would ultimately choose not to offer official assistance to the Greeks, Webster’s words on the House floor made waves in public circles across the country.

As Congress began their debates concerning whether or not to support the Greeks, communities throughout the United States answered Webster’s call for organized support in their own way. Local organizations consciously linked ancient Greece and the Modern Greek War to the American Revolution and used this connection to appeal to others to become involved in the cause. These organizations were varied and included literary, political, community, and religious organizations. These groups organized fundraising

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efforts around patriotic holidays, especially Washington’s Birthday and the Fourth of July, in order to gather support for the Greeks.

One of the first groups was a debate/literary society in Alexandria, Virginia, called the Periclean Society. Founded in September 1821, this organization was comprised of prominent men from the surrounding area. The Periclean Society’s meeting minutes reflect a keen interest in classical Greece as popular literary and debate topics. In December 1823 the society directed its attention toward an organizational movement to support the modern Greeks. In fact, for many months leading up to December, the Society had struggled with a declining attendance record. The philhellenic cause would prove to have, at least for a brief period of time, a rejuvenating effect on the membership of the Periclean Society. In many ways, the Periclean Society represents the shift that took place in the United States from sentimentalism to activism toward Greece.

Like so many other philhellenic societies that emerged in the United States, the Periclean Society used common philhellenic language to first gather support among other like-minded members and then turned this enthusiasm into an organizational effort to appeal to the community. The Periclean Society met the week Daniel Webster first proposed supporting the Greeks on the House floor. The usual order of business was postponed in order to entertain a proposal made by one of the members in the Society. He explained his understanding of the modern Greeks in their conflict with the Turks:

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66 “Periclean Society of Alexandria, Virginia, 1821-1824,” n.d., Library of Alexandria From when the society was formed in September 1821 to when the Grecian Society was organized, meetings largely consisted of writing and rewriting the organization’s constitution. Attendance dwindled considerably and the meeting minutes repeatedly noted the lack of attendance of its members. This changed when the society directed its efforts toward aiding the Greeks.
The Greeks are the descendants of those illustrious statesmen, philosophers, orators, poets, historians, artists, and commanders, who by their writings, works, and actions have conferred immortal honor on themselves, and to whom the world is so largely indebted, for freedom, civilization, and the arts, and whereas they are now governed by the same spirit of valor, independence, and justice which animated the bosom of Aristides, Pericles, and Epaminondas and in their historic struggles for liberty have to encounter the whole undivided power of the Ottoman Empire.

The member proposed that the Society should reinvent itself as the “Grecian Society” and become a philhellenic organization devoted to supporting the Greeks “by contribution of money.” Every member would thus “obtain an increase in friends to the Holy cause in which we are engaged.” The proposal was adopted. By becoming the Grecian Society this literary organization could solve two problems with one stone: the philhellenic appeal to the community would boost their membership numbers but the group would also as well do something more exciting than listen to each other’s poetry.

The first efforts the Grecian Society made in gathering money came by organizing a public debate for January 17th where admission would be charged. The Society also organized a second fundraiser for the Greeks, combining it with the local celebration of George Washington’s birthday. The Society initiated this effort by formally proposing to join their fundraising efforts with “a day consecrated in the sympathy of mankind by the birth of the illustrious Washington, and considering it a suitable period for the collection of funds to aid the cause of the Greeks.” The language of the proposal joined the sentimental philhellenic rhetoric with an activist objective. Their rhetoric decisively linked the causes of the American Revolution with those of the Greek War.

Interest in supporting the Greeks was more widespread and enthusiastic than the Grecian Society initially expected. The Society immediately perceived an opportunity to

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67 Ibid., 215–216.
expand their society’s numbers and influence within the community. Society members quickly organized a public debate on “which of the two should be more admired, Pericles or Epaminondas?” Admission to the event was twenty-five cents. Membership attendance more than tripled for this particular meeting; members of the public were permitted to attend. As a result, the Society continued with their plans to hold a fundraiser connected with Washington’s Birthday celebration in the community. After the fundraiser combined with Washington’s Birthday, the Society had collected fifty dollars, which was sent to yet another emerging philhellenic society, the Greek Fund of New York City.

In the weeks leading up to Washington’s Birthday the Society received letters of support from different organizations, including a group of officers in the 1st Artillerists. This group was selected to escort the Grecian Society to the community festivities on Washington’s Birthday. In thanks for the Society’s efforts, the officers wrote that they claimed “the Greeks as brother patriots in distress, persevering in a cause peculiarly dear to Americans, as it brings to their recollection their own contest for liberty though opposed to a more honorable enemy.”

The Society also received a supportive letter from a local youth debate club called the Ciceronian Society. The Ciceronian Society expressed their enthusiasm for the Greek cause in their pursuit for liberty from the “cruelties excised by the barbarous Turks over the illustrious Greeks.” The society also observed that this sentiment was one excited within “the whole American family.” The letter continued that “Every bosom beats high at the name of Greece and every hand is ready to give her that relief which she so much

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needs.” The youth of their community “felt how much they owed to Ancient Greece for their present felicity and they thought it their duty to aid the descendants of such men as Leonidas, Pericles, Miltiades, and Epaminondas.” This group of fourteen youths had gathered $7.75 and requested that their club president send the money to the Grecian Society to aid the Greek cause.69 These young boys had managed to do this two months after the Grecian Society held their first fundraiser-debate and less than one month after the Grecian Society connected their fundraising with Washington’s Birthday.

The Grecian Society would not have been successful unless their message had resonated within the community. While the Society’s organized efforts ignited an activist approach to philhellenism, it would be safe to say that the Society could not have made such an immediate impression in Alexandria, Virginia, if receptivity to philhellenism had not already existed within popular culture. Linking the Greek War to Washington’s Birthday also suggests that Greece’s war for independence was linked to the tradition of liberty secured by the American Revolution.

Nevertheless, the success of the Grecian Society was limited in comparison with that of the Greek Fund of Philadelphia, New York and Boston. In fact, the Grecian Society sent all of the proceeds of their fundraisers to the Greek Fund of New York.

The New York Greek Fund was formed officially on December 3, 1823 and would serve as a parent society to many smaller societies throughout the United States. The New York Greek Fund resolved that it would appoint a seventy-person committee to “solicit subscriptions from this and neighboring States” as well as “prepare a Memorial to

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69 Ibid., March 8, 1824.
Congress praying that the Independence of the Greek nation be recognized by the American government.”  

The Greek Fund of New York also specifically stated that while they desired to support the Greeks through fundraising and communication with Congress, they had no intention of interfering with the prerogatives of the government should it choose not to recognize the Greeks.

On December 12, the Greek Fund printed a pamphlet stating that the group was formed for the purpose of corresponding “with the Friends of the Greek Cause, in the other Cities and Towns of the Union, and to request them to call Public Meetings, and to take such other measures as may be adapted to promote the success of that Cause.” The pamphlet went on to articulate the shift from philhellenic sentimentalism to activism that took place throughout the United States:

The Citizens of New-York have desired to manifest their sentiments on this subject, by something more substantial than the mere expression of their good wishes and fervent aspirations for the triumph of regenerated Greece; and they now seek the cooperation of their fellow-citizens in every part of the Union, whose hearts are engaged in this noble work… We also request that… the amount of any pecuniary contributions which may be raised in your City, may be remitted to Charles Wilkes, Esquire, the Treasurer of the Greek Fund.  

A few weeks later the Greek Fund sent a memorial submitted to Congress. Read on December 29, 1823, the Greek Fund Memorial requested that the federal government acknowledge the Greek nation, asserting that the Greeks “have proved themselves competent to maintain their independence.” The memorial dismissed previous notions that questioned the modern Greeks’ ability to rise up against the Turks and and defend themselves against tyranny. The document pointed out to Congress that the Greeks had

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70 “Aid of the Greeks,” *American Federalist Columbian Centinel*, December 6, 1823.
clearly proven themselves worthy of liberty and ergo deserving of American support. The Greek Fund’s acknowledgement of the modern Greeks worthiness was something the organization repeatedly emphasized as reason to become engaged in the cause. The Greek Fund of New York remained one of the largest and most successful philhellenic organizations for the remainder of the conflict.

Even though the Greek Fund of New York enjoyed the longest lasting success of the many Greek committees in the U.S. it was not the first in the area. A Greek aid society in Brooklyn predated the Greek Fund of New York and had much success in the early years of the war in generating enthusiasm for the Greek cause. Women played a particular role in the society’s success. The women of Brooklyn organized their own subcommittee in 1822 and endeavored to raise funds for a memorial to be erected to the Greek cause on the Brooklyn Heights. The women published a pamphlet comprised of a collection of newspaper articles that had been published over the course of a year that concerned the acquisition of funds for a “Grecian Cross” to be placed in memorial to honor the Greeks. Calling themselves the Grecian Ladies, a subcommittee of the Brooklyn Greek Committee formed initially in 1822. The women described their efforts in a New York newspaper:

caused a Grecian Cross to be prepared, 40 feet high, which was yesterday conveyed to General Swift at Brooklyn… It is, we understand, to be planted on the Brooklyn Heights, facing the city. Its elevation, however, is delayed until the committee who have it in charge can ascertain of what material the Grecian wreath of victory was composed, as they desire to surmount the Cross with such an one. We are authorized to state that a ‘Golden Token’ will be presented to any ‘Grecian’ who will furnish the requisite information on this subject. 73

The Grecian wreath of victory that is mentioned referred to the material used in ancient Greek victory garlands. The entire pamphlet is focused on this debate as the Grecian Ladies desired to accurately recreate a similar garland for the cross, thus combining symbols of Christian charity and ancient Greece. There was also discussion as to whether include an inscription. One suggestion was to use a line from Byron’s famous pro-Greek poem *Childe Harold*, “Sons of the Greeks arise.”

This debate went on for months. In fact the cross itself was erected on the Brooklyn Heights in 1823, but awaited decorative embellishments from its creators. The pamphlet, published in December 1824, was over one hundred pages long. The essence of the argument boiled down to a desire to commemorate the importance of Greece’s revolution while also connecting the conflict to an American audience. One contributor responded to some who did not think the cross should be adorned with any ancient garlands or classical references. The contributor’s reply was to suggest that the cross itself was an “ensign or banner, and by it we are to recognize modern Greece in the same manner as our own land is to be recognized by an Eagle and star-spangled banner… their Cross, to them, is the banner of freedom… Let the daughters of Columbia decorate it with the wreaths of Victorious Greece.” The author thus suggested that even if modern Greeks might associate their identity more with the cross, American philhellenes saw the Greek War as a potential rebirth of democracy in Greece and therefore viewed the use of classical motifs in the monument as essential.

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74 Ibid., 11.
75 Ibid., 19.
Many others evidently shared the contributor’s opinion. Various citizens argued for the need to have classical motifs on the monument. The pamphlet itself was a publication intended to be sold so that the Grecian Ladies might fulfill their “wish that they might have it in their power to present to the Grecian Senate some memorial of their country’s sympathy, which, whenever it meets their eyes, may remind them of those, who, though parted from them by a wide expanse of waters, are yet with them in their every effort for national deliverance.”76 The Grecian Ladies concluded that they were confident their call for aid would not go unnoticed, as they were certain their countrymen understood the importance of Greece’s success to the “friends of humanity and liberty.”77

Boston’s Greek Committee was yet another leading philhellenic organization. This group collected its own funds as well as received donations collected by smaller New England philhellenic organizations. Created on December 19, 1823, Boston’s Greek Relief Committee immediately began to mobilize fundraising efforts. The committee in Boston gained some of its notoriety from one of its famous members, Edward Everett, the noted philhellene and classical scholar. Due to Everett’s connections, the committee published correspondence from American philhellenes fighting in Greece including George Jarvis, Jonathan Peckham Miller and Samuel Gridley Howe. It was through Everett’s fame as a philhellene as well as his connections both domestic and abroad that he was added to a short list of potential delegates that President Monroe considered sending as an agent to Greece. Everett also corresponded with Greek nationals living in Europe such as Adamantios Korais, members of the revolutionary Greek government, as

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76 Ibid., 4.
77 Ibid., 111.
well as other influential philhellenic groups and their leaders, most notably with Mathew Carey, a Greek supporter living in Philadelphia.

Mathew Carey was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1760 and at a young age entered into the publishing industry. A Catholic, Carey criticized the treatment of Irish Catholics under British rule by printing and distributing pamphlets. Threatened with prosecution, Carey left Ireland for Paris in 1781. It was in Paris that Carey met Benjamin Franklin and became his apprentice. Carey accompanied Franklin to Philadelphia in 1784 and quickly became a noted and well-connected printer, bookseller, philanthropist, and political economist. A well known figure in his time, Carey’s clout was a more than likely an important element to the success of the Greek Fund in Philadelphia. He was able to attract notable figures to continue to serve with him on the committee as well as monetary aid and supplies for the cause.

Initially formed by Dickinson College’s Union Philosophical Society, Philadelphia’s Greek Fund Committee involved many important members of the community, including Mathew Carey. Still other notable members of the Committee included Joseph Hemphill (Congressman from Pennsylvania), Joseph Watson (Mayor of Philadelphia), Roberts Vaux (jurist and philanthropist), William Meredith (president of Schuylkill Bank), James Ronaldson (philanthropist), James N. Barker (playwright), and James C. Biddle (brother of Nicholas Biddle, president of the Second Bank of the United States, and commodore of the U.S. Navy who later would be part of negotiations with the

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Ottoman Empire in 1830). The Greek Fund of Philadelphia was formed at approximately the same time as many other American philhellenic organizations.

By January 1824 the Philadelphia based organization was actively fundraising. In a printed letter sent to Philadelphia citizens, Mathew Carey, then the committee’s secretary, and George M. Dallas, deputy attorney general at the time. Dallas later was elected mayor of Philadelphia and as well as a U.S. Senator. The letter, dated January 5, 1824, requested the recipient’s patronage as well as their friends’ for a benefit theatrical production to be performed the following week. Dallas expressed dismay that such entertainments for charity had not yet proven successful in gathering a substantial amount of funding for the Greek cause “notwithstanding the acknowledged liberality of its citizens.”

It is not possible to know for certain how many of these letters were sent out by the Committee, but the printed letter was intended for a woman, philhellenic leaders sought to mobilize community-based ladies’ societies in the service of the cause. In the coming years of the American philhellenic movement, women would play one of the most important organizational roles in keeping the movement alive.

It is unclear as to whether Dallas’ letter expressing dismay for the slow beginnings of the Greek Fund Committee were indeed genuine or if the sentiment was intended to influence the recipient to donate money where they might have otherwise declined believing the community was already actively providing support. The Greek Fund account books for the last week of December 1823 indicate that more than $400 in donations had been deposited into the Schuylkill Bank; by the end of the following month

79 “Philadelphia, Jan. 5, 1824.: Madam,—We Take the Liberty, on Behalf of the Committee of the Greek Fund” (s.n, January 5, 1824), American Antiquarian Society.
that amount had grown to almost $2,600. If the Philadelphia Greek Fund did get off to a slow start they more than made up for it. The Committee maintained an active membership and constant level of donations for the duration of the war. By 1826 the committee’s treasury books reveal that it was depositing thousands of dollars into the Schuylkill Bank.\footnote{Meredith Family Papers 1756-1964.}

The first few months of 1824 were fruitful for philhellenic groups. In a similar fashion as the Periclean Society in Alexandria, Virginia, committees in many other cities endeavored to pair their Washington’s Birthday celebrations. In Providence, Rhode Island, for example, community festivities were advertised in the local paper, reminding attendees that after the entertainment, “a collection will be taken up, for the benefit of the enslaved and suffering nations whose cause has been a warmly espoused in this land of freedom.”\footnote{Greek Celebration and Washington’s Birth-Day,\textit{ Providence Patriot}, February 21, 1824.}

The people of Petersburg, Virginia held a ball on Washington’s Birthday with “the nett proceeds to go to the benefit of the Greeks.”\footnote{Washington’s Birth-Day Was Celebrated in Petersburg and Norfolk with Enthusiasm, \textit{Richmond Enquirer}, February 26, 1824.} Greek supporters in Cheraw, South Carolina raised $225 in just one evening while yet another group in Savannah, Georgia raised $350.\footnote{The Greeks, January 15, 1824.} In Baltimore, Maryland, a ball was also held on Washington’s Birthday “to give some public expression of the feelings of Baltimore towards the cause of the Greeks, and at the same time to raise a contribution for their aid.”\footnote{Notice - It Is Proposed to Celebrate the Birthday of Washington, \textit{Baltimore Patriot}, January 14, 1824.}

The Baltimore advertisement succinctly described the shift to an activist interest in philhellenism that took place at this time throughout the country during the early
months of 1824. The organizers identified sympathy for the Greeks and activism for their independence as two separate endeavors. As this notice indicates, however, the organizers hoped to combine the two in order to generate wider support for Greek independence.

Like the Greek benefit in Baltimore, newspapers reported instances of private individuals donating funds. These individuals came from all walks of early American life. One such philhellene was a barber in Troy, New York, who pledged that, “he would give the avails of his labor, on Thursday and Friday last, to the committee appointed to receive donations for the benefit of the Greeks.”85 The barber’s donation was reported in newspapers as far away as a Baltimore. Church groups devoted to the Greek cause, predominantly led by women, emerged during this period and their efforts were also widely reported. One particularly successful group gathered one hundred and twelve dollars in one January evening alone.86 Female participation in the Greek cause would prove to be one of the most important contributions to the American philhellenic cause in the years that followed.

A Richmond paper summed up the activist outreach best: “The Greek Fire seems spreading through the U. States. Meetings have been held in a variety of places, resolutions adopted, and contributions made for the Holiest of all causes.”87 “The Greek Fire” indeed began to spread throughout the United States and would enjoy national support for many years. Americans related the cause of Greek independence to their own

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85 “Greek Benefit: Mr. James A. Zander, a Barber,” Baltimore Patriot, January 12, 1824.
86 “At One of the Methodist Churches in New York,” Baltimore Patriot, January 9, 1824.
Revolution. Philhellenism in the United States transitioned into a movement that seemed for so many of its supporters especially suited for their attention. The success of larger Greek Committees came from trade or benevolent groups within the community, such as local church groups, ladies circles, firemen, and ferrymen. Some of the charitable efforts of these groups were ambitious, indicating just how widespread and enthusiastic the cause was early on in the war. Soon the membership would expand even further afield.

88 “Washington Hose Company,” Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser, January 10, 1824 The Washington Hose Company at their annual meeting raised fifty dollars. There are numerous examples of other tradesmen and local interest groups expressing sympathy for the Greeks as well as raising funds.
CHAPTER FOUR: AMERICAN PHILHELLENISM AND PUBLIC ACTIVISM

“The Greek Fire” continued to spread throughout the United States, burning a lasting impression into American men and women wherever it went. The American Philhellenic Movement emerged as fully defined entity separate from its European counterpart by 1824 and enjoyed popular support on a national scale. Greek relief society leaders, especially Mathew Carey and Edward Everett, continued to encourage and organize support from the public by connecting the Greek War to the American Revolution. In order to continue expanding national support, philhellenic leaders began to alter the focus of the Greek cause to encompass a benevolence element. This expanded appeal made participation in the movement an especially appropriate outlet for women.

Instead of merely relying upon philhellenic rhetoric to inspire citizens to donate funds and supplies to the Greek troops, societies turned their focus to Greek citizens, especially Greek women and children displaced by the war. Benevolent societies were popular especially among women in both the northern and southern states by the early nineteenth century. Dedication to Christianity and family justified participation in the public life of local communities.1 Enthusiasm for ancient Greece entwined with dedication to the Greek cause a global outreach for social and religious reform. Perceiving the Muslim Ottoman Turks as the ultimate tyrants, American women answered the call for Greek aid. In addition, the death of Lord Byron and the siege of

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1 Kierner, Beyond the Household, 180; See also Nancy A. Hewitt, Women’s Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Kelley, Learning to Stand & Speak.
Missolonghi, a brutal exchange between Greek and Turkish forces, promoted even greater popular support for the Greek cause among the American people.

The Death of the Famous Philhellen in the Midst of Controversy and Defeat

If not for a series of setbacks sustained by the Greek Army, American philhellenic interest may have fizzled. The first of these setbacks was the death of Lord Byron at the Greek-controlled city Missolonghi in April 1824. From the earliest stages of the war, popular interest in Lord Byron intensified support for the Greek cause. The American public learned about Byron’s life and experiences in the Greek army on a day-to-day basis by reading any newspaper from the time he first enlisted in 1821. Printed in newspapers in a major port city, the articles would then be reprinted throughout the United States. Lord Byron was portrayed as a patriot and hero for the Greek cause not only because of his membership in the army, but also because of his monetary support. Lord Byron’s willingness to seemingly sacrifice everything for the cause inspired Americans’ interest. Given this widespread interest in the news that arrived in June 1824 both shocked and inspired the American public into increased philhellenic activism.

In the weeks prior to his death, Lord Byron was ill. He made a partial recovery, which was happily reported in both European and American newspapers. However, Byron relapsed, developing a serious fever; his physician was unable to save him. Lord Byron died at Missolonghi, a city that was at the time under Greek control and had been the focal point of two sieges, one of which occurred, on April 19, 1824.

News from Greece took about six weeks to arrive in the United States. By mid-June, newspapers began to report that Lord Byron was ill; by the end of June the news of
his death arrived. American newspapers printed the official proclamation of his death reported by the provisional Greek government, stating that, “His munificent donations to this community are before the eyes of every one, and no one amongst us ever ceased, or ever will cease, to consider him with the purest and most grateful sentiments, our benefactor.”

American men and women eulogized Byron at Fourth of July celebrations in 1824. These celebrations were used to memorialize both the Greek and American battles for liberty. In Saratoga, New York toasts were given in honor of the Greeks and Byron, who was described as a Hercules who had “expired in his cradle.” In Washington, D.C., Greece was toasted as “The land of ancient renown, and modern glory” and Byron was eulogized as “The Poet who has immortalized modern Greece by his pen, and defended her liberties by his sword.” In Salem, Massachusetts, Fourth of July celebrants toasted Greece with the sentiments: “Her ancient greatness has been immortalized by the genius of her Homer; her modern glory will be coeval with the fame of her Byron.” And in Boston, Byron was toasted as a “martyr to liberty.” While mourned by Bostonians, they rejoiced “that his heart is left with Greece.” The people of Boston intended this as both a sentimental and a literal observation: it was reported in American newspapers that the

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2 “Death of Lord Byron,” Boston Commercial Gazette, June 28, 1824.
3 “American Independence,” Saratoga Sentinel, July 6, 1824.
5 “Independence,” Salem Gazette, July 6, 1824.
Greeks requested that Byron’s heart be removed from his body and placed in a mausoleum in Missolonghi. The body was then sent back to England for burial.

Byron’s death increased public interest in providing support for the Greek War. By the summer of 1824, philhellenic organizations throughout the U.S. were thriving. Many Greek Committees published and distributed pamphlets that promoted the cause. Newspapers reported that the Greek Fund of New York alone had sent its first contributions in the amount of $6,000 in the early summer and $5,000 more by August. There was some public concern that American donations would be sent abroad and mix with other European donations. Andreas Luriottis, agent of the Greek government in London, assured Americans later that summer that the American contributions were duly noted.

Luriottis also assured American philhellenes that the Greeks desired to create a republic similar to that of the United States. He also acknowledged that “Greece will issue, like the United States, from the honorable struggle which in so many respects resembles their own.” The Greek government informed “the people of the universe of the benevolence of the freemen of the United States, who so kindly co-operated to open the path of Independence to those that seek that flowery way.”

This ongoing assurance from Greek agents in Europe combined with the strong philhellenic zeal for Greece assisted in the continuation of American public support. Many Americans made it clear that they were firmly interested in Greece becoming a

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8 Reported in newspapers in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York to as far south as South Carolina in July and August 1824.
9 “Greek Cause: We Have Great Satisfaction...,” *The Rochester Telegraph*, August 17, 1824.
republic. Jonathan Peckham Miller shared this strong sentiment and informed Alexandros
Mavrokordatos, member of the provision Greek government, upon his arrival in Greece
as a volunteer for the Greek army that the American people would not continue their
support of the Greek cause if Greece accepted the rule of a king.\textsuperscript{10}

At the same time, Lord Byron’s philhellenism and his service in the Greek army
inspired a number of Americans to contribute more than money and supplies.\textsuperscript{11} George
Jarvis was the first American volunteer in the Greek army. Jarvis was the son of a New
York merchant who had established himself in Denmark. After receiving his father’s
permission, both father and son appeared before the American consul in Hamburg in
order for the young Jarvis to acquire the appropriate papers. In April 1822, George Jarvis
arrived in Greece and officially entered into the service of the Greeks.\textsuperscript{12} He served for the
duration of the war only to die of an illness in 1828. While alive, he kept the Boston
Greek Fund Committee informed of the Greeks’ successes and setbacks.

Other important Americans who served in the Greek Army included Jonathan
Peckham Miller and Samuel Gridley Howe who both arrived in Greece with letters of
introduction from the Boston Greek Fund Committee, among others. Miller was a veteran
of the War of 1812 and had attended the University of Vermont prior to his service in
Greece. Byron’s death led Miller to present himself as a volunteer to the Boston
Committee in November 1824.\textsuperscript{13} Samuel Gridley Howe, a member of a well-established
Boston family, was a recent graduate of Harvard in medicine when he left for Greece.

\textsuperscript{10} Larrabee, \textit{Hellas Observed}, 107–108.
\textsuperscript{11} Dakin, \textit{British and American Philhellenes During the War of Greek Independence, 1821-1833}, 5–6.
\textsuperscript{12} Larrabee, \textit{Hellas Observed}, 96.
\textsuperscript{13} St. Clair, \textit{That Greece Might Still Be Free; the Philhellenes in the War of Independence}, 336.
Also influenced by Byron’s philhellenism, Howe desired to follow in the heroic poet’s footsteps. Assuring his father that he desired medical and surgical experience on the battlefield, Howe arrived in Greece in early 1825.\footnote{Ibid., 337; Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 113–114.} These three Americans reported regularly to the Boston Committee where their letters were printed in the local newspapers, which were circulated throughout the United States and reprinted in other local newspapers.

In important ways, the correspondence received from these three men kept the Greek War before the eyes of the American public.\footnote{St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free; the Philhellenes in the War of Independence*, 337.} In March 1825 the first news from Jonathan P. Miller arrived in the United States and was quickly printed in the Boston newspapers. A note of explanation from the Boston Greek Committee was printed alongside Miller’s letter stating that Miller had left for the Mediterranean as a sort of agent from the committee itself. The Boston committee had appropriated a portion of their funds to help Miller with his passage to the Mediterranean and to assist him with the costs he would incur upon arrival. The newspaper admitted that, “these letters are now published, in the belief that they may prove interesting to the friends of Greece and the community at large.”\footnote{“From the Boston Daily Advertiser: Greece,” *American Mercury*, March 3, 1825.} The adventures Miller related in his letter home satisfied the public’s interest and created a demand for more.

Miller and the other American citizens in the Greek army enhanced the philhellenic efforts in Greece in the years to come with their letters home and their calls for aid. Upon arriving in Greece, Miller observed that the Greek soldiers had been
fighting all summer and were “now coming to their commander to beg bread to keep
them alive. But such is the sight to which my eyes are every hour witness.” Miller
continued that European philhellenes were not as devoted to the Greeks as he and George
Jarvis, with whom he met immediately upon his arrival. Instead the Europeans came
“with abounding titles. Most of them I am informed instead of assisting the Greeks, have
only lived upon them, until reduced by poverty, sickness and death; and there now remain
but few of them in Greece.” Miller concluded his letter with “May you gentlemen, and
my beloved country, continue to receive the smiles of heaven… and exhort the friends of
liberty in America to remember Greece.”

Miller’s description of the starving Greeks conveyed several points to his fellow
Americans: that an American presence was needed in Greece; Americans were more
focused on helping the Greeks obtain their freedom than European philhellenes; and the
need for assistance remained. The Boston Greek Committee gathered Miller’s request
and proposed “to make him immediately a remittance of two hundred dollars. Any
contribution toward this object will be gladly received by Nathaniel P. Russell Esq.
Treasurer of the Greek Committee.”

In fact, for the next several years, Jarvis, Miller, and Howe continued to write the
Boston Greek Committee with letters relating the state of affairs in Greece and the needs
of the Greeks requesting support from their fellow Americans. In a letter dated January
21, 1825, Miller wrote: “the misery of the people is so great, that I have often wept to see

17 “To the Greek Committee in Boston, Mass.,” The Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics, April
30, 1825.
18 “From the Boston Daily Advertiser: Greece.”
their extreme distress.”¹⁹ In September 1825, The Essex Register of Salem, Massachusetts printed a letter written by Miller relating the dire situation of the Greek army. General Jarvis and Miller were with the Greeks attacking the Castle at Lepanto for “nearly three weeks; but the delay of the payment of the troops has detained us, till I have the satisfaction to see an American ship anchor in the harbor…”²⁰ Miller then summarized his life in Greece. While his life in the army was difficult “my life is devoted to the overturning of the Turkish empire.” And still in another letter Miller wrote the committee, “I wish to be understood, that I have no claim upon the committee whatever, and wish them to act in this case for the good of Greece and not for me.”²¹

These letters not only kept the American public informed of the events in Greece, but they also served the greater philanthropic purposes of the Greek cause in Boston and elsewhere. While Jarvis, Miller, and Howe were perhaps the most well known Americans serving in the Greek army, other Americans other served abroad. For example, Miller mentioned the presence of a Kentuckian named John M. Allen in the army as well as a distant relation of George Washington by the name of William Townsend Washington.²² Jarvis himself even proposed to the Boston Greek Committee an effort to recruit Americans willing to travel to Greece to serve in the army.²³ By the close of the war, there were at least fourteen Americans who served in the Greek army during the revolution.²⁴

¹⁹ “Interesting from Greece,” Independent Chronicle & Boston Patriot, September 14, 1825.
²⁰ “Salem: Interesting Letter from Greece,” Essex Register, September 5, 1825.
²¹ “Interesting from Greece.”
²² Larrabee, Hellas Observed, 128.
²³ Ibid., 102.
²⁴ Dakin, British and American Philhellenes During the War of Greek Independence, 1821-1833, 245.
Miller, however, made it clear that serving in the Greek army would not be an easy venture. The letters repeatedly made clear that service in the Greek army was not glamorous as the European philhellenes portrayed it to be. In fact, Miller forthrightly stated in one letter: “I hope, gentlemen, to hear from you soon; and in the meantime I beg leave to caution all persons, who have not resources of their own, from coming to Greece. My health is good. I believe that Greece will yet be free, and with this hope I take cheerful part in the war.” Immediately after this warning, Miller continued that the most recent American arrival at that point, Samuel Gridley Howe, “was prompted last summer, not less by a generous zeal for the cause of oppressed and suffering humanity, than by a desire to accomplish himself in his profession, to repair to Greece, and enter her service as an army surgeon.”

Miller informed the American public that while a philhellenic sensibility was certainly important in devoting one’s self to the cause, anyone considering the journey to Greece should understand that life was hard, the Greeks were struggling though hopeful, and if a potential candidate understood these facts then they were welcome. Miller, however, concentrated on appealing for donations for money and supplies. For the next several years, Miller and his countrymen in arms, unfailingly reminded American philhellenes at home: “We would exhort the friends of Greece in America, to exert themselves for this suffering people, remembering that the struggle is not yet over.”

This pleading reminder became increasingly crucial by 1826 when enthusiasm in America for the Greek cause began to plateau.

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25 “Interesting from Greece.”
Another important setback the Greeks sustained was inflicted upon them by an American shipbuilding company – a national embarrassment that incited public outrage and rejuvenated any momentum that had been lost from the initial emergence of popular philhellenism in the United States. In the spring of 1825, Johannis Orlandos and Andreas Luriottis, two deputies of the Greek government, contacted a group of shipbuilders in New York and negotiated the purchase of two new frigates for the use of the Greek navy. These two ships were named the *Liberator* and *Hope* (later renamed *Hellas* by the Greeks). By the fall there were rumors of mismanagement on the part of the shipbuilders. The shipbuilders continued to bill the Greek deputies for the building of the two frigates, but completion was nowhere in sight. In the spring of 1826, an agent from London arrived to go over the accounts only to discover that the frigates were not only not finished, but still required additional expenditures to make them seaworthy. By the height of the controversy, the shipbuilders billed the Greeks for several hundred thousand dollars more than the Greek deputies had originally intended to spend. For the Greek agents, this revelation was a disaster.

At the request of the builders, the naval committee in the House of Representatives contacted the Secretary of the Navy and inquired whether the United States Government could purchase one of the vessels. The *Liberator* was purchased in August 1826 in the amount of $230,570.97 for the United States Navy. This decision enabled the Greek deputies to settle payment for the *Hope*. It was not until October

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26 Several pamphlets were published around the same time as the conflict finally became resolved. Alexander Contostavlos, *A Narrative of the Material Facts in Relation to the Building of the Two Greek Frigates* (New-York: s.n., 1826); Jonas Platt, Abraham Ogden, and Henry C. De Rham, *Report of the Evidence and Reasons of the Award between Johannis Orlandos & Andreas Luriottis, Greek Deputies, of*
1826 that either of these ships set sail for Greece. The Greek Frigate controversy, as it popularly came to be called, joined with news of a military setback at Missolonghi to revitalize the philhellenic movement in the United States.

Although many American philhellenes thought the whole affair was a disgrace, Greek aid societies redoubled their efforts to gather donations. They specifically mentioned the Greek frigate scandal as the basis for their efforts.27 One newspaper article declared that the United States had narrowly “avoided the indelible disgrace which would otherwise have attached to this country.” “Such a blow” it was said “would probably have annihilated the last hopes and hastened the concluding agony of a country more interesting than any other to the scholar, the philanthropist, and the Christian.” It was fortuitous that an amicable resolution had been reached.28 News of the controversy spread from New York to as far south as South Carolina, where similar reactions of dismay and embarrassment were shared with readers. One Charleston paper reported that, “If there be fraud, robbery, disgrace, to any of our own citizens or to strangers, let it be exposed – but let not the Greeks suffer from this abuse of confidence; their cause demands all our sympathy.”29

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27 “The Concern of the People of the United States for the Greek Cause,” National Gazette and Literary Register, October 19, 1826.
28 Ibid.
29 “Greek Ships,” City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser, September 14, 1826.
Greek aid societies advertised meetings and appealed to citizens within their communities to continue their support of the Greeks while also holding out a hope that the United State government would come to officially support the cause. One philhellene even publicly wrote that the frigate should be given as a present, not sold to the Greek government.30 Another newspaper that advertised a Greek aid meeting in New York concluded, “Unless we mistake the feeling and the spirit of this community, the Greeks will not be disappointed in receiving the naval aid from American for which they have paid so dearly.”31

In the midst of the Greek frigate controversy, news arrived that the Greeks had lost control of Missolonghi, a center for the Greek army as well as the seat of the provisional Greek government and the location where Lord Byron had died. By the spring of 1826 when Missolonghi fell to the Turks, the city had become a symbol of the Greek War of Independence and was a focal point of philhellenic sentiment in both Europe and the United States.32 The news of Missolonghi in the United States revitalized interest in the Greek War and generated revenue for the cause well beyond what the American public had donated previously.

Rumors first arrived in the United States that Missolonghi had fallen beginning in June 1826. On June 8 a Boston paper reported that information from William Washington, an American soldier in the Greek army, had been received indicating that the city had indeed fallen to Ibrahim Pasha, son of Mehemet Ali of Egypt and a

30 “We Learn That the Frigate ‘Liberator,’” Republican Star, September 24, 1826.
31 “Greek Meeting,” New York Spectator, October 31, 1826.
commander of Ottoman forces against the Greeks.\textsuperscript{33} A Baltimore paper reported on the same day that Greece was fighting its last battle and that the fall of Missolonghi was imminent. The article further reported that the Sultan had ordered Ibrahim Pasha to “give no quarters to the inhabitants of Missolonghi, no matter what their age, sex, or condition may be.”\textsuperscript{34} Another newspaper, however, played down the battle stating that “Missolonghi had not fallen, but was in jeopardy; our gallant countrymen, Jarvis and Washington were on their way to throw themselves into the besieged city.”\textsuperscript{35} In the weeks that followed reports claimed that the Greeks had successfully defeated the Turks at Missolonghi. But by early July the worst was confirmed: the Greeks had been defeated at Missolonghi and their hopes of independence were in all likelihood lost.

The American public was shocked at the news of the fall of Missolonghi. Ironically, however, this defeat revived the philhellenic cause. Philhellenic interest groups gathered or even reformed defunct committees, and once again began to appeal to the public for support. One newspaper noted that “on an occasion so peculiarly appropriate as the fiftieth anniversary of the day of our Independence, something should be done, however slight it may be, to awaken the remembrance of a heroic people, at this moment engaged in the most devoted manner for their liberty and national existence… we are confident that many would require nothing further than the sight of a subscription and the name of Greece to contribute for their assistance.”\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{33} “Boston, June 8 - From Smyrna,” \textit{Essex Register}, June 8, 1826.
\textsuperscript{34} “The Following Is from the Paris Etoile:,” \textit{Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser}, June 8, 1826.
\textsuperscript{36} “Missolonghi - The Defence of Missolonghi and the Final Catastrophe,” \textit{Essex Register}, July 3, 1826.
Beginning in the summer of 1826, a revitalized philhellenic frenzy spread throughout the country. There was a renewed sense of connection between the modern Greek cause of independence and the ancient Greek spirit of liberty. Poems appeared mourning the loss of Missolonghi and romantically urging readers to share in the dismay. One poem printed originally in the *New-York Evening Post* and then distributed and reprinted in other newspapers recaptured the philhellenic sentiments that had initially charged the movement just three years earlier: “Sons of Greece awake: they come! – The Turk! The foe is near, They come – in thunders loud and far, Rolled on the echoing tide of war.” The author clearly referred to the Greeks residing in Missolonghi as the Turks arrived at the city, but a son of Greece could also reference Europeans as well as Americans. This connection formed the very crux of the philhellenic argument. In fact, the poet condemned the assistance Europe provided suggesting that their devotion was not resolute enough: “They struck in vain – O Europe! Shame upon thy sons, - the cold and tame, where were your sabers then?”

37 Given the widespread distribution of information provided by Americans Jarvis, Howe, Miller, and Washington, it was more than likely a common belief that Americans were more devoted to the cause than were European philhellenes, who had reportedly abandoned the cause and returned home.

Local Greek aid societies rallied to the cause. For example, one young woman specifically used the image of a young Greek maiden to persuade readers to support the cause. In an accompanying poem printed in an Ohio newspaper, she connected American liberty with that of ancient Greece and suggested to her readers that Americans owed a

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debt to the suffering modern Greeks. Expressed through the eyes of a “Grecian
dughter,” the poem portrayed an embattled war zone where the Greeks have fallen to the
Turks with the powerless young woman looking on: “See with what anxious tenderness
she plies, unmindful of the grief that swells her heart, Some healing balm – some kind of
restorative to save a husband, brother, or a sire, On whose joint efforts hang the fate of
Greece.” Not only is this yet another example of philhellenic expression, but the poem
also shows that even on the Ohio frontier there was a keen interest in the Greek War.

In the wake of the Greek frigate controversy, many American philhellenes felt an
increased duty to gather subscriptions for the Greek cause. One publication argued that if
not for the delayed completion of the frigates, “Missolonghi would not have fallen!” Renewed efforts began in the late fall of 1826 and surpassed all previous fundraising
efforts. More people participated and more donations were made.

Many American philhellenes tried to compensate for the shipbuilding fiasco. Mathew Carey of Philadelphia presided over a meeting early in November and called for
a Union-wide effort to raise subscriptions in order to purchase a frigate for the Greeks “as
an indemnity for their loss by the extravagance and inattention of the agents at N.
York.” News of the meeting was reprinted in several states including Massachusetts,
Connecticut, New Hampshire, and New York. A few weeks later, relief societies in
Philadelphia, Boston and New York ultimately decided to focus their efforts on gathering
food and supplies rather than supplies for warfare. A warehouse was secured for the

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39 Contostavlos, *A Narrative of the Material Facts in Relation to the Building of the Two Greek Frigates*.
specific purpose of receiving such contributions.\textsuperscript{42} By the time the decision was made, another scandal had erupted. The Greek Committee of London, which had gathered all the donations had wasted or mismanaged the funds.\textsuperscript{43}

By the end of December 1826, Edward Everett received letters from George Jarvis and Jonathan P. Miller describing the “amount of suffering for want of food” by the Greeks. It was noted that “The Committees for the relief of the Greeks in France, Holland and Geneva have sent twelve cargoes of provisions and an agent to superintend their distribution.” Not to be outdone, Everett made a public appeal: “Let not the United States among so many states and nations be indifferent to the sufferings of this dreadful, but not desperate conflict.”\textsuperscript{44} Everett’s sentiments were not for naught. American philhellenic leaders’ appeal for food and supplies for suffering civilians produced yet another widespread outpouring of support.

\textit{American Philhellenism Blossoms}

In the aftermath of the siege of Missolonghi, Mathew Carey and Edward Everett joined forces in order to revive national interest in supporting the Greeks. Philhellenes continued their efforts through the end of the spring 1827. Mathew Carey published several addresses to the citizens of Philadelphia in the early months of 1827. Concerned over the decreased public interest, the appeals expressed the hope that “the good work is only postponed for a while, and that it will now be promptly and zealously undertaken, so

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{42} “Greek Subscriptions,” \textit{American Mercury}, December 26, 1826.
\footnotetext{43} St. Clair, \textit{That Greece Might Still Be Free}, 338.
\end{footnotes}
Letters from George Jarvis indicated that starvation in Greece had been averted only because of generous donations from France, Holland, and Geneva. Americans serving in the Greek Army especially desired to see supplies arrive from their native country.

Everett suggested to Carey that, “a Great amount of suffering might be relieved, by the despach of a vessel loaded with provisions.” Carey ultimately challenged his readers that if European nations could furnish twelve cargoes of provisions to Greece then surely the United States could furnish twelve more. At the least, Pennsylvania itself could supply two. American philhellenes needed to generate interest in the cause once again in order to meet these new goals. Unlike the early years of the American philhellenic movement, the object of these donations would not be for military purposes, but rather to assist the Greek civilian population.

Carey endeavored to expand the appeal of the Greek cause. One way in which he did this to focus additional attention toward the parallels between the Greek Revolution and the American Revolution. Instead of appealing to “passions or feelings – which frequently lead us astray, and whose effects are generally evanescent,” Carey made his argument from an understanding of liberty and tyranny. “The more severe and grinding the tyranny under which it has groaned, the more imperative the claim for sympathy” he said. Carey’s readers were then reminded about why the American colonies had departed from Great Britain: “taxation without representation is slavery.” Carey contrasted this

45 Philadelphia, March 27, 1827.: Sir, Presuming That, with the Great Mass of Citizens of the State, You Sympathize with the Oppressed Greek Nation (Philadelphia: s.n, 1827), 1.
publicly accepted truism with the Greek War stating that “The whole of the grievances of the British colonies, from their first settlement to the declaration of independence, were not equal to those suffered by Greece in a single month.” The comparison and contrast gave Carey’s readers pause: that the civilized nations of the new and old world “look with heartless indifference… on one of the most heroic nations of ancient or modern times – for no nation ever maintained a more glorious struggle with barbarous oppressors, under such immense disadvantages.”

Relief societies once again sprang up across the country. Even the smallest of communities throughout the country contributed supplies to the cause. In the first few months of 1827, tens of thousands of dollars were collected. While the romanticized philhellenic rhetoric that had dominated the discussion during the early years of the Greek War persisted, the activist urge to assist the Greeks took on a more pronounced humanitarian intent. Taking the lead in these efforts was the Greek Committee of New York.

On January 8, 1827 a large meeting of New York citizens convened by public notice at the City Hotel with the specific purpose to decide how best to harness local and national forces to collect supplies for the Greeks. These supplies were to aid the citizens of Greece, not provide arms or munitions to assist in the war itself. The public nominated new officers for the committee, including Stephen Allen, former New York Mayor and New York State Assemblyman, to the position of chairman. The meeting was reportedly

47 Ibid., 3.
48 St. Clair, That Greece Might Still Be Free; the Philhellenes in the War of Independence, 339; Bass, Freedom’s Battle.
“filled with sentiments of compassion and sympathy towards the Greek nation, in their present extreme suffering of all the complicated evils of war and famine.” These sentiments had “a peculiar claim upon the sympathies and charities of every citizen of this free country.”

Ultimately the main goal that emerged in this meeting was to provide food for the Greeks. The group also supported a resolution written by native New Yorker and representative of Louisiana Edward Livingston requesting $50,000 from the National Treasury to purchase food and clothing for the Greeks. Reports of this meeting were reprinted in multiple states throughout the Union, spreading news of a widespread interest in rekindling efforts to support the Greeks.

The New York Greek Committee’s goals were more than met in just a few months of fundraising. A Richmond paper reported in mid-March that the committee had raised $20,972.40 from citizens throughout the State of New York and other neighboring States. The article also appealed to “fellow citizens who have not yet contributed to this charity.” While the committee had proven phenomenally successful in their efforts, the donations would “go a very little way in feeding and clothing the many thousands of destitute women and children who compose the unhappy population of Greece.” One philhellene speculated, after the initial receipt of donations from across the country had arrived in New York, that the total amount of donations gathered from American citizens in 1827 would reach over $70,000.

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49 “Meeting of the Greeks,” Richmond Enquirer, January 16, 1827.
This first shipment of supplies in 1827, with over 2300 barrels of provisions, clothing, and medicine, was sent off on The Chancellor, along with an agent nominated by the Greek Committee. This agent was Jonathan P. Miller, the same man who had at that time spent several years in Greece serving in the army. Miller and his fellow American comrades in the Greek army had primarily dealt with the Boston Greek Committee, especially Edward Everett. Miller returned to the United States in November 1826 in order to receive supplies from various aid societies. Miller did this not only to expedite the acquisition of the supplies, but also to relieve the uneasiness over the previous mismanagement of funds. Miller issued a statement that circulated widely in newspapers concerning the necessity of supplies and connecting the Greek cause with the American Revolution: “The Greeks are struggling, as our fathers did, for freedom and independence.” Miller’s statement received much attention and contributed at least in part to the success of the fundraising efforts.

For over a year, the New York Greek Committee was more than successful in gathering supplies for the Greeks, especially from New York and Connecticut. Even after the massive collection of supplies dispatched to Greece in March 1827, fundraising continued. The following year, the committee sent more money and supplies. George Newbold, the Committee’s treasurer, deposited any cash received by the committee into the Bank of America. New York and Connecticut communities forwarded their donations

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52 Philadelphia, March 27, 1827.: Sir, We Respectfully Inform You, That an Excellent Brig ... Has Actually Sailed ... for Greece, with Provisions, Clothing, and Medicines (Philadelphia: s.n, 1827) Additional shipments of supplies were sent to Greece in the year that followed.


54 Larrabee, Hellas Observed, 112.
to New York. For example, Catskill, New York forwarded $183.27 in May 1828 and Greenville, New York sent $66.38.

Deposit slips indicate that while much of the money came from various New York and Connecticut Greek aid societies, private citizens donated funds as well. One resident of the small town of Bloomingdale, New York donated five dollars to the Greek Fund. Citizens from various wards of New York donated one or two dollars to the cause. Philhellenic sentiments were so prevalent that one donation of $31 was given by a group of men “belonging onboard the Jersey City Steam Ferry Boats.” What is especially worth noting is that this group of men were apparently not solicited for a donation, but rather they took the collection up themselves and forwarded the money to the bank on their own accord.

Committee members often solicited donations by actually going out into the community to collect from the different wards of the city. In the case of the Philadelphia Greek Committee, subscription collectors were hired and paid a wage to go out into the community. One committee collector from New York wrote in his receipt of deposit to the bank, “The inclosed amount is all I could collect in the 9th district of the first ward, for the benefit of the Greeks, from the following persons….” Small donations from three persons were listed. A receipt written for the first ward, however, lists fifteen individuals who donated cash as well as clothing totaling $76.25.

56 “Meredith Family Papers 1756-1964” Receipts provide wages paid as well as the amount the collector made for the committee.
57 Newbold, “George Newbold Papers, 1801-1858. Greek Committee Records.”
Citizens from farther afield also forwarded their donations to New York. Several residents of Virginia in 1828, for example, sent their personal donations to New York. A struggling businessman and resident of Richmond named Hezekiah Belden, a native of Connecticut whose business brought him to the South, wrote to Edward Everett requesting that his donation of ten dollars be forwarded to the Greek Committee in Philadelphia, New York, or Boston “as you shall think most advisable.” Hezekiah Belden explained to Everett that in Richmond, “Something is said, but nothing is done for the cause, here – Would to God that less was said, & more done, & that benevolence did not dwell upon the tongue alone.” George Newbold received another donation from a resident of Staunton, Virginia who requested that his five dollars be handed to the proper person for the use of the Greeks. He wished to remain anonymous. H.M. Thompson gave $60, a sizeable donation. Although many southerners supported the Greeks, they did not form as many groups or organizations to aid the cause as northerners did.

Through the efforts of Mathew Carey of Philadelphia and Edward Everett of Boston, the Greek Fund Committees of these two cities enjoyed a successful partnership in the final years of the war while also nurturing philhellenic enthusiasm within their own

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58 Franklin Bowditch Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals of the College History (Holt, 1911), 181.
60 While there were certainly exceptions, these receipts indicate that Greek aid societies were primarily focused in urban areas in northern states. These receipts also indicate that the New York Committee was viewed as an established and legitimate group that could be trusted with individual donations. Another detail worth noting is that at least in the case of the donation initially sent to Edward Everett was ultimately forwarded to the New York Committee and not the Boston Committee. This indicates that even though the Boston Committee was one of the larger Greek Fund Committees in the Union, the New York Committee was the society that compiled donations on a national level. The Virginia letters also indicate that even though there was no organized Greek society in Virginia, there was nonetheless the same kind of philhellenic driven humanitarian sentiment in these communities.
respective communities. Mathew Carey assumed leadership of the Philadelphia Greek Fund by January 1827 and began to renew the vigor of the committee through public appeals made through newspapers and pamphlets. Edward Everett continued to correspond with George Jarvis and Jonathan P. Miller and made the news provided to him from Greece public knowledge. Carey and Everett quickly transformed the philhellenic movement in their respective cities into a nationally engaged, humanitarian endeavor with old men, women, and children as the recipients of the aid. They transformed the focus from a romanticized appeal to arms to a grassroots effort to aid civilians in wartime.

Philhellenism Merges with Benevolence

Perhaps the most important way in which Carey and Everett, as well as many other male philhellenes, successfully resurrected the Greek cause in the final years of the war was through their involvement of women in their organizations. As philhellenic efforts had shifted toward a more humanitarian emphasis, Greek Committees openly appealed to women to renew their interest in the cause. The Philadelphia Committee, for example, wrote to the wife of one of the committee members requesting that she use her influence with her friends to rebuild support among the women of Philadelphia. Nonetheless, the women did not respond initially. Mathew Carey penned the letter and expressed the committee’s “great surprize[sic] and regret” the event that had been

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planned “was a total failure.” Carey continued that “the happiness of probably 200,000 adult females” depend upon the action of the ladies of the city and that the committee “cannot allow ourselves to believe that the ladies of our city will be indifferent” to these Greek women. Carey concluded that without the assistance of women, the committee’s success would be greatly reduced.

Emphasizing American patriotism and domestic sympathy, Carey penned and printed countless pamphlets on the subject of the Greek cause. While relying on the usual philhellenic rhetoric, Carey also emphasized the parallels between the Greek Revolution and the American Revolution in making a particular appeal to American women to renew their efforts for the cause. Carey asked his female readers:

And shall we appeal in vain for what is good, to that sanctuary, where all that is good has its proper home, the female bosom? The darkest day of our revolutionary struggle, was cheered by the beams of woman’s benevolence. In this city, the ladies were distinguished for their active beneficence; and it is a part of our annals, of which we are most proud…. Come forth, then, ye who can mould the feelings, and direct the will of the ruggedest nature. Ye chase and tender wives and mothers, ye affectionate daughters and sisters – come forth and exercise your well-deserved influence over those whom you can so easily move. 

Female philhellenes then began to answer Carey’s call for assistance. In every locality where a Greek Committee existed there is convincing evidence to suggest that women were a driving force behind collecting subscriptions and coordinating events for the Greek cause. Many Greek Committees had ladies subcommittees, making women a recognized asset to each organization. In communities where there was no ladies subcommittee, women of the community gathered on their own accord and collected

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62 “Mathew Carey to Mrs. William Meredith,” 1827, Meredith Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
funds. At least in one instance, students of The Female Academy in Lexington, Kentucky joined the efforts of the local male college to raise funds and even issued a pamphlet titled an “Address to the Young Ladies of the West,” which encouraged women throughout the United States to join their efforts at raising donations. With attention focused on aiding Greek civilians, the philhellenic movement would be more than merely interested in assisting the Greeks in achieving a victory; they endeavored to assist Greek civilians, especially allegedly defenseless, uneducated, and starving Greek women and children. This new focus of the philhellenic movement created a large base of female activism. Even though there were female aid societies prior to 1827, even a brief glance at period newspapers reveals that women largely moved from being peripheral members of philhellenic societies to assuring a more prominent place. Some of the Greek societies were now organized and managed by women.

Ladies’ groups primarily directed their efforts at gathering food and clothing for Greek civilians. The ladies of Providence, Rhode Island and surrounding communities alone produced over 3,000 items of clothing, which were sent to the New York

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64 Greek Committee account books and receipts in New York, and Philadelphia repeatedly list donations made or collected by female groups either officially recognized by the local Greek Committee or by independently formed female groups. Newspapers and Committee published pamphlets throughout the Union also list female groups involved in the cause.
65 Larrabee, Hellas Observed, 70; Winterer, The Culture of Classicism, 64.
66 St. Clair, That Greece Might Still Be Free; the Philhellenes in the War of Independence, 339; Bass, Freedom’s Battle; George Bethune English to President James Monroe, August 11, 1824 “Adams Family Papers,” Microfilm, (n.d.), Massachusetts Historical Society It is unclear as to why this transition of sending aid to civilians took place. It is possible that the philhellenic leaders themselves perceived that they would more more likely be able to engage a broader base of interest, especially from women, if they focused their efforts on the Greek populace. There is also evidence, however, that members of the Monroe and Adams administrations were directed by their agents in the Mediterranean that if the United States desired to successfully negotiate a trade treaty with the Ottoman Empire they would have to some how discourage public support of the Greek Army.
Committee. In Hartford, women advertised they were collecting subscriptions in order to purchase materials for clothing and provisions. In Boston, a meeting of ladies designated “four places of deposit… where articles of money contributed for the relief of the Greeks” would be received. Even in smaller communities such as Canandaigua, New York, local ladies set to work with “their needles in making clothing for the Greek women and children.” Even women of color were at least minimally involved in the Greek cause. One paper reported that free ladies and gentlemen of color in New York had given a benefit for the Greek cause. According to the report, these ladies and gentlemen were enthusiastic enough over the benefit that “the company did not disperse until six in the morning.”

Newspapers and pamphlets publicized female efforts at raising funds and supplies. They also show that female organizations from different localities made active attempts to work in coordination with one and other. In Hartford, Connecticut, women were “actively engaging their sympathies in behalf of the suffering Greeks.” Addressing ladies of neighboring towns, the piece requested that “we shall be pardoned for intimating the practicability of a co-operating exertion, as their intercourse with Hartford, or with New York would open to them, and to us, a common channel of communication with Greece.” A Boston a meeting of ladies was so large that its members had to relocate to locate a larger meeting hall. Moving to a nearby church, the building was quickly filled

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70 “About 40 Ladies in Canandaigua…,” *New Bedford Mercury*, February 9, 1827.
71 “The N.Y. Enquirer Mentions a Ball…,” *Essex Gazette*, March 24, 1827.
72 “Relief of the Greeks.”
with ladies who “appeared to be strongly interested in the object of the meeting.”\textsuperscript{73}

Surveying the women’s efforts, one newspaper announced in 1827 that “In other states, individuals, religious and Masonic societies, corporations, &c., have all contributed their aid in various forms; and the ladies have enthusiastically exerted themselves in the same noble cause.”\textsuperscript{74}

Many women were keenly interested in aiding Greek women and children. In one of the Philadelphia Committee’s printed addresses to the public, several examples of organized female support were printed to provide examples of successful donation collections in other parts of the country. The two examples provided were from committees in Buffalo, New York and Baltimore, Maryland. In Buffalo, the ladies were “respectfully invited to solicit donations” in order that the “suffering mothers and daughters of Greece will find zealous friends and able advocates among the sex, who proverbially lend a grace to deeds of charity, while they borrow a charm from the exercise of its duties.” In Baltimore, ladies did not wait to be invited to assist with the cause, but rather formed their own organization for the purpose of “devising measures, to assist as far as may be in their power” to assist the Greeks.\textsuperscript{75}

A resolution from Baltimore stated that it was the duty of the ladies of the United States to “depart from that retired circle, in which a judicious state of society requires the ladies of this country usually move, and use the influence which is allotted them, in relieving from starvation the suffering females of a foreign land, whose sons and

\textsuperscript{73} “Ladies! Greek Meeting.”
\textsuperscript{74} “The Greeks,” \textit{Hallowell Gazette}, May 9, 1827.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Philadelphia, April 3, 1827. Address to the Humane and Charitable Citizens of the United States.}, 4.
husbands are fighting the battles of the cross against the crescent.” The Greek cause gave American women permission to become more publicly active. Among the successes of this Baltimore based relief society was a Ladies Fair, which raised $1,700 for the cause. In fact, one article written on the success of the Ladies Fair pointed out that the women of Baltimore had far outdone their male counterparts and that they should be ashamed of their lethargy.

The New York Committee collected donations of both money and provisions from female groups in New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. Most of these donations came from ladies Greek committees in various localities. Some funds also arrived from ladies’ church groups. With a few exceptions, donations made by women came from organized groups and not from individuals. Women chose to work together in gathering necessary donations, not as individuals.

Female activism was focused in the northern states, but their efforts did not go unnoticed by their southern female counterparts. An article originally printed in a Richmond paper was subsequently reprinted in Macon, Georgia, reported: “The Ladies of the North have again roused themselves in behalf of the suffering Greeks… This is generous design, which we must greatly admire, however little we may imitate it.” The article was printed alongside a letter written by a Mrs. Sigourney of Connecticut, a member of a ladies’ aid society in Hartford. One article indicated frustration that there

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77 Member of the Greek Committee, Sir, the Annexed Resolution and the Appended Papers... (Philadelphia, 1827), 4.
78 Newbold, “George Newbold Papers, 1801-1858. Greek Committee Records” There are a few receipts from married, single, and widowed women, but these are in the minority when compared to the numbers of donations received from female groups.
79 “From the Richmond Compiler. Relief of the Greeks,” Macon Telegraph, April 21, 1828.
was no organized effort similar to those in the North: “Who can read the following effusion… without being penetrated with esteem for the fair authoress?” The letter written by Mrs. Sigourney was addressed to the “Ladies of Greece” and described women’s heartfelt sadness and joy for the women and children of Greece. The letter explained that the contributions accompanying the letter were limited in comparison to the donations given by the ladies of larger cities. However,

> The poor among us, have given according to their ability – and our little children have cheerfully aided, that some of you, and your children might have bread do eat and raiment to put on. Could you but behold the faces of our little ones brighten… while they give up their holidays that they might work with their needles for Greece; could you see those females who earn a subsistence by labour, gladly casting their might into our treasury, and taking hours from their repose, that an additional garment might be furnished for you.  

Mrs. Sigourney’s letter was printed in its entirety, indicating at least some interest in the South in the Greek cause. Such widespread organized efforts in the South, however, did not take place. Individuals living in the South who desired to send aid to Greece sent their donations to northern aid societies. Like many female reform movements of the antebellum era, women were more likely to mobilize in groups in the North and in urban areas.

The widespread efforts of American women were distinguishable enough from those of their male counterparts that the Greeks openly acknowledged their time and support. For example, in January 1829, a letter of thanks was printed in a New England newspaper written by a group of widows from Ipsara, an island that at the center of brutal

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80 Ibid.
81 Newbold, “George Newbold Papers, 1801-1858. Greek Committee Records”; Belden, “Hezekiah Belden to Edward Everett” Receipts written by the New York Committee as well as letters sent to philhellenic leaders reveal that southerns did not have many local outlets for Greek Aid and instead sent their donations north. Timothy James Lockley, *Welfare and Charity in the Antebellum South*, New Perspectives on the History of the South (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007) Lockley also addresses charitable movements in the South.
fighting in 1824. The widows identified the “ladies of America” as their “dear sisters the friend of liberty.” Their efforts, they said, had greatly lifted the Greek women’s spirits.  

Another letter was printed in a Baltimore paper penned by the “Directress of the American Hospital at Poros thanking "the Ladies of America” for their assistance. A “Grecian mother” also offered her thanks,

to the most lively acknowledgements of the whole nation, she dares hope and promise you, ladies, that the sensibility and consolations which you have bestowed upon the unfortunate, will be forever indelibly engraven[sic] upon their hearts, and that the example of a nation so glorious will incite them to imitate your virtues.

A missionary, Reverend Jonas King, who was sent as a missionary to Greece by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and was provided money to assist the Greeks by the Ladies’ Greek Committee of New York, offered another expression of Greek gratitude. Some of King’s journal entries were printed in American newspapers, providing perspective on the conflict as well as the character of the Greek people. In one of these letters, King described an experience he had attending a party in a small village. The locals were especially interested in his being an American, providing expressions of “gratitude for what the Americans had done, and for the sympathy expressed by the American ladies to the females of Greece.” Later in the evening as toasts were offered, one was proposed to “the health of the American Ladies, which was instantly received with three or four loud cheers and clapping hands.” This toast was carried out at length as “for 8 or 10 minutes, nothing was to be heard but long and reiterated cries of ‘Long live the American Ladies!’ – ‘Long live the American Ladies!’ I

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must confess, that the hearing of this…excited in my bosom peculiar emotions of pleasure, and showed me, that the kind and benevolent exertions of my country-women had produced a powerful effect, even among those who had never received a single article of their charities.”

A few Greeks who came to the United States as refugees also lauded the efforts of American female philhellenes. For example, Samuel Gridley Howe, who served in the Greek Army, brought Christophoros Plato Castanis a young boy to the United States. A Boston ladies association at Amherst provided Castanis with an education. He became a well-respected orator, primarily speaking on the subject of Greece. In a memoir he wrote as an adult, Castanis detailed his life in Greece and his experiences in the Greek War. He especially acknowledged American women as being particular patrons of Greece. Dedicating the memoir to the “Ladies of America,” Castanis expressed his gratitude for female philhellenic efforts, requesting that they “accept this work, as a token of the love and gratitude of the Matrons and Maidens who, through yourselves, have taught the heart of Greece to beat in response to the heart of Columbia.”

Another Greek refugee by the name of Joseph Stephanini, who wrote a history of the Greek Revolution, came to the United States after escaping from Turkish servitude. Stephanini’s purpose of writing and publishing a history of the war was to “enable him to return to his own country, and to release from slavery a large and suffering family.” Published in 1829, Stephanini concluded by thanking the people who had assisted him in

85 “From Mr. King’s Journal, Published in Greece,” New London Gazette, July 22, 1829.
87 Castanis, The Greek Exile.
his life in America especially “the ladies who have so kindly interested themselves to obtain subscriptions for my work, my most sincere and respectful thanks are due.”

Female aid societies provided support for Castanis and Stephanini and both men respected female efforts to organize and provide helpful assistance. With this in mind, both men spoke about the need for American education in Greece. Castanis captured the desire to educate the Greeks in his memoir, observing, “Just as primeval Cretans nourished and educated infant Jove, about Mt. Ida, so the strong and refined arm of American philanthropy fed, clothed and educated many an infant descendant of those god-like fathers of the Grecian race.” Such observations encouraged Stephanini and Castanis to regard American women as the special patrons of Greece’s women and children.

Women’s organizations raised an impressive amount of money for the period. It would not be an overstatement to suggest that the women of New York and New England alone assisted in raising thousands of dollars worth of supplies for the Greeks during the final years of the war. Their contributions reflected the degree to which the American people engaged with the Greek cause. Their support revealed the revival of interest in the Greeks not in terms of the war itself but in the effects of war especially on Greek women and children. Women’s involvement added a whole other humanitarian dimensions to American support for the Greek cause.

The Greeks in their final years of fighting for independence received a tremendous amount of supplies and philanthropic interest from both male and female

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89 Ibid., 129.
90 Castanis, The Greek Exile, 212.
philhellenes. Fundraising efforts resonated with Philadelphia residents as indeed donations deposited into the bank and storehouses established by the Greek Fund Committee increased by April 1827. With Mathew Carey at the helm, the committee criticized the dwindled enthusiasm for the cause, pointing out that the citizens of Pittsburg and Brooklyn, both containing a fraction of the population found in Philadelphia, had outraised the citizens of Philadelphia, a city of 140,000 inhabitants.\textsuperscript{91} The public appeal evidently succeeded in persuading Philadelphians to renew their dedication to the cause. At the end of January only $3,700 had been collected by the Greek Fund; by the end of March the committee had collected $16,775.\textsuperscript{92} Carey’s work as a writer and publisher played no small role in keeping the Greek cause in the public eye, printing his addresses not only in English, but in other languages such as German as well.\textsuperscript{93} The Greek Fund Committee of Philadelphia continued to deposit funds into the local bank at least through the end of 1828.

Conclusion

Philhellenism as a romantic and sentimental phenomenon existed in the United States prior to the Greek War of Independence, but evolved over the course of several decades. American identity as being bound to ancient concepts of freedom and liberty was one that also had developed over time and became fused with the popular philhellenic movement. These sentiments provided the initial thrust behind American

\textsuperscript{92} Mathew Carey, \textit{Philadelphia, March 27, 1827: Sir, We Respectfully Inform You...for Greece, with Provisions}. (Philadelphia, 1827).
\textsuperscript{93} “Meredith Family Papers 1756-1964” There is at least one receipt written in 1828 for the printing of one of the Greek Committee’s addresses in German.
support for the war. As an outgrowth of these ideological connections to ancient Greece, American philhellenes identified their own country as possessing an inherent duty to support Greece and as such they could not be outdone by other European nations. This competition with Europe, the seemingly selfless sacrifice of Lord Byron, as well as Americans and Greeks serving in the army continued to engage public support for the cause.

Edward Everett spent much of his time as a nationally recognized philhellene writing to other philhellenes, organizing relief efforts, as well as appealing to the President to send him as a special agent to Greece. Everett was never successful in obtaining the appointment to Greece. He did, however, assist in keeping the Greek War an ever-present issue in Washington through proposals printed in his own publication, *The North American Review*. Everett was also instrumental in advancing George Jarvis, Jonathan P. Miller and Samuel Gridley Howe as a means of favorably discussing American support for the war. In an 1829 issue of *The North American Review*, for example, Everett reviewed Howe’s *Historical Sketch of the Greek Revolution*, his own recollections in the Greek army’s service. He explicitly stated that his object in writing the review was to “convince our readers, if they needed to be so convinced, that the subject of the work before us is of great importance and interest.”

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95 “Edward Everett to the Greek Executive Committee of New York,” February 4, 1827, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
Everett’s public efforts strengthened his connections with other like-minded and politically connected men of his time. His interest also perhaps contributed to the ongoing tension that existed between those congressmen who desired to provide aid to Greece and those who did not. Everett’s enthusiasm as a philhellene and his success in making his opinion on the Greek War known and widely circulated forced politicians as well as private citizens to consider with whom and to what extent the United States should be involved in foreign affairs.

Due to the shift from a romantic and sentimental support to an activist support of the Greek War, Americans began to transfer their attention to assistance for the Greek civilian population. Confronted with reports of the realities of the conflict, especially from Americans serving in the Greek army, American philhellenes not only used traditional philhellenic rhetoric, but also increasingly employed humanitarian rhetoric in their public appeals in order to expand their base of support.

The success of the American philhellenic movement was accomplished in no small part by ladies organizations throughout the country. American women insisted that independence was not won with military victories, but through humanitarian aid. American women could justify their involvement in a very public as well as political cause while also simultaneously expanding their place outside of the home. The experience laid the groundwork for women’s further involvement in future reform movements besides Greece.

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Everett was very much involved in the preliminary conversations concerning whether there should be an American agent sent to Greece. There were several congressmen and advisors to the president who support Everett’s appointment. John Quincy Adams, however, had already sent an American secret agent to the Ottoman Empire to negotiate improved relations in the Levant.
CHAPTER FIVE: FREEDOM AT HOME, FREEDOM ABROAD: INTERNAL CONFLICTS OVER THE SUPPORT OF THE GREEK WAR

After the close of the War of 1812 and the Barbary Wars in 1815, many American men and women hoped that the United States had secured its place as a legitimate nation-state in the world of nations. The enthusiastic endorsement of philhellenism in America, however, brought to the fore issues concerning foreign policy and American identity that had long been brewing beneath the surface of American politics and public life. Concerns over foreign policy, especially in the Mediterranean, plagued American merchants and politicians. They wondered: should the United States pursue improved relations with the Ottoman Empire? Would business in Smyrna, an important Turkish commercial capital in the Levant, prove to have lasting success? To what extent should the United States pursue business and trade abroad? At the same time, popular support for philhellenism combined with an emerging interest in foreign missions in the Middle East posed serious complications for those who desired improved trade relations with the Ottoman Empire. American interest in the Greek War became the impetus for the emergence of a conflict between American supporters of the Greek Independence movement and those who wished to foster better trading relationships with the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire. This conflict ultimately boiled down to differing approaches to developing and preserving an identity that promoted American liberty at home and abroad.

Americans committed to the Greek cause desired a presence in the Mediterranean with the hope of uplifting the Greek culture to its former ancient glory through charity,
promotion of education, and evangelism. The redemption of the Greeks by various pro-Greek organizations assumed a “secularized missionary spirit,” which endeavored to spread an American understanding of freedom and liberty to all parts of the world.¹ At first, Greek relief efforts by philhellenes such as Edward Everett, Mathew Carey, and countless community social groups made up of both men and women were largely responsible for the initial surge of interest and the continuing growth of the movement.

The New England-based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions posed similar issues for pro-trade Americans. First organized contemporaneously with other philhellenic groups, the American Board of Missions sent some of its first missionaries to Greece where their efforts were focused upon aid, education, and conversion.² As a result of their presence in the Mediterranean, missionaries rescued forty orphaned Greek children and sent them to the United States to be educated. These American missionaries of the 1820s became an interesting combination of philhellenes and evangelists, who ultimately desired to redeem the Greeks from their present status as subjects under the Muslim Crescent.

While pro-Greek organizations in the United States had different goals, they all ultimately acted from a common nationalist mindset that had developed from the philhellenic ideology Thomas Jefferson and later Edward Everett and Mathew Carey had professed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Americans who glorified ancient Greece’s significance in the founding of the United States also drew on the emerging nationalist rhetoric of the late eighteenth century, which emphasized American

¹ See Field, America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882, vii.
²
independence as a shining example of freedom to the rest of the world. American philhellenes of the 1820s endeavored to preserve an abstract understanding of national identity by spreading their ideals abroad. These ideals included representative government, liberal education, ancient roots, charity and Christianity. Animated by growing nationalist fervor and the understanding that modern Greeks were the most deserving of any other foreign group of people because of their connection to ancient Greece, pro-Greek Americans set their sights on that part of the world.

Those on the other side of the debate built their case in similar terms. Revolutionaries had argued that an important reason to declare independence was the United States’ potential to enter into the transatlantic trade as an independent and free nation. Americans applied the enlightenment ideal of self-determination to their emerging nationalist view of expanding free trade. Denied access to the Mediterranean by the British, the first several decades of American existence were mired by conflict in this part of the world. This struggle strengthened a growing desire among American merchants and their supporters to conduct business on the basis of diplomacy, not through the paying of tributes.

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5 Thomas Paine’s Common Sense, for example, cited American resources and capacity to enter into foreign trade as part of his basis for why Americans should declare independence.

6 Field, America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882, 7–24 Field examined several facets of American interest in the Atlantic world including the expansion of self-determination among foreign societies as well as Christianity.
With independence definitively secured and the conflict with the Barbary States resolved, commercially minded Americans desired to put their free trade principles to the test, turning their gaze toward the Mediterranean, a trade network they had long been denied from entering. Yet in doing so, they ran straight into the conflict in which the Greek people were struggling to free themselves from the domination of the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire. Navigating a neutral course was difficult enough, but pro-trade Americans found themselves all the more embroiled in conflict when forced to explain to the Turks why many Americans so desired to officially support Greek Independence.

Favorable Trade in Smyrna and the Complications of Greek Independence

The revolutionary generation developed an approach to foreign diplomacy in terms of the American Revolution. They viewed their approach to foreign diplomacy as being different from other European powers, defining it as having a “commercial character” where “our treaties, for the most part, have consisted of arrangements for the regulation of trade and navigation.” Americans viewed English navigation laws viewed as “despotic.” American diplomacy instead sought trade and commerce on “equal terms” with other nations. The author of The American Diplomatic Code, a collection of navigation laws and diplomatic precedents established between the United States and other nations from 1778 to 1834, summed up these views. He observed that other nations who desired to emulate the United States should “look to commerce and navigation, and not to empire, as her means of communication with the rest of the human family. These

7 Lambert, The Barbary Wars.
are the *principles* upon which *our* confederated Republic is founded…”\(^9\) It was within this intellectual framework pro-commercial Americans desired to spread American ideals concerning democracy and free trade to other regions of the world where they desired to conduct business.\(^10\) The Sublime Porte, a term that refers to both the port located at Constantinople as well as the central ruling authority of the Ottoman Empire itself, was one business ally these pro-trade supporters desired to possess.

Colonial merchants desired an established and independent commercial trade in the Mediterranean long before the Revolution. No longer restrained by regulations imposed upon them by Britain it was not long after independence that merchants began to pursue that objective. Raisins shipped from Smyrna, for example, could be found in Boston by the 1780s.\(^11\) The British, however, almost immediately dashed any hopes of continual trade in the Mediterranean. Without the protection of the British navy, Barbary pirates attacked American ships, leading to several conflicts that would last three decades instead of a serious commercial negotiating process with the Ottoman Empire. With Boston merchants leading the way, the full realization of the Revolution’s objectives concerning international commerce became the underlying driving force for the pro-commercial interest camp.

\(^9\) Jonathan Elliot, *The American Diplomatic Code, Embracing & Collection of Treaties and Conventions between the United States and Foreign Powers: From 1778 to 1834, 1834, 653*; Field, *America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882*, 136–137. Field described American views on diplomacy and commerce in terms of the American Revolution discussing that to early Americans the subsequent expansion of commercial interests abroad became the ultimate victory of liberty over tyranny.


\(^11\) Ibid., 113.
In 1811, David Offley, a Philadelphia Quaker, became the first American merchant to establish a commercial house in the bustling Turkish trade city of Smyrna.\footnote{Ibid., 117.} Faced with double duties on American goods in part to the lack of British protection, Offley refused to pay, leading to the confiscation of one of his ships by Turkish authorities. Through his own negotiating prowess, Offley managed to secure a private treaty with the Turks, thus placing American merchants at the status of the “Sultan’s guests.” For the next fifteen years, no other Western nation held such a status. Aside from the interruption in trade due to the War of 1812, business for American merchants in Smyrna excelled. Offley himself handled two-thirds of all American goods arriving in Smyrna until 1820. Offley also cultivated a friendship with the Captain Pasha, the head of the Ottoman navy and advocate for Westernization in Constantinople.\footnote{There are a variety of early American spellings of this title. For the most part, this title was written as “Captain Pasha,” but variations include “Capudan Pasha” and “Kapudan Pasha.” Unless quoted otherwise, I have chosen to use the more common contemporary spelling of the title.} A treaty between the United States and the Ottoman Empire, it seemed, was close at hand by 1820.

Newly elected President Monroe desired to continue relations with the Ottoman Empire with the hope that the country might finally signing a commercial treaty with the Sublime Porte. Under the authorization of his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, an agent by the name of Luther Bradish, a native New Yorker, was dispatched to Constantinople with the explicit purpose of “collecting such information in foreign countries, in relation to the commerce of the United States, as may prove useful and interesting to them.”\footnote{United States Congress, \textit{House Documents, Otherwise Publ. as Executive Documents: 13th Congress, 2d Session-49th Congress, 1st Session}, vol. VI (Washington, DC: Duff Green, 1832), Doc. 250, pg. 4.} Even though American merchants had access to Smyrna,
American vessels were not permitted admittance to other ports. A treaty between the United States and the Sublime Porte, however, would provide merchants with that sanction.\textsuperscript{15}

Bradish’s mission to negotiate a treaty of commerce was intended to be secret, but upon his arrival in Constantinople there were already rumors circulating the United States’ intentions for Bradish’s visit. Desire for agreeable trade relations in the Mediterranean was so great among European powers that competition for the Sublime Porte’s trust and admiration was intense. In Bradish’s first letter to Adams he stated that within a few days of his arrival there was already a “formal and solemn protest against such negotiation, in which she [European nations at Constantinople] has even threatened, in case the Porte should conclude a treaty with the United States, to break off her present relations, and declare war against the Porte.”\textsuperscript{16} Clearly successfully negotiating a treaty between Constantinople and Washington would be a delicate matter.

In addition, Bradish discovered that to secure such a commercial treaty with the Porte would require costly tributes. Tribute was a reality of foreign commerce at the time and one the United States wished to avoid.\textsuperscript{17} Despite this, Bradish advised Adams that a treaty with the Porte would be commercially useful to the United States, provided that they could afford the cost of tributes as well as the likelihood of hostilities from European ships in the Mediterranean. Any hopes of a speedy treaty were dashed when war in Greece broke out in 1821. Bradish returned to the United States without a treaty.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., VI:Doc. 250, pg. 17.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., VI:Doc. 250, pg. 8.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., VI:Doc. 250, pg. 10–11.; “Luther Bradish, Esq; American. A Letter from Gibraltar,” \textit{Connecticut Gazette}, May 23, 1821.
At the same time, popular sentiment toward Greece in the United States quickly energized a public dedicated to supporting the Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire. Beginning in 1822 when American philhellenes began to advocate for federal involvement in the Greek War, American merchants joined the debate. With all of this interest and attention directed toward Greece, Americans desiring to quickly secure an improved relationship with the Ottoman Empire feared that Greek sympathizers would pose a serious threat to their interests abroad.

Like their constituents, politicians were similarly divided. Congressman Samuel Breck of Pennsylvania wrote to a friend in January 1824 complaining that public and private business in Congress “is postponed to make room for idle debates in relation to the Greeks, who are no more entitled to our money or sympathy than the hindoos.”

Even Joel Poinsett, who as a young man dreamed of traveling to Greece, similarly complained about those who supported the Greek cause stating: “Nothing in my opinion can be more absurd than a romantic statesman, and I am opposed to chivalry in politics.” Although President Monroe was in favor of supporting Greek independence and desired to provide assistance, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams thought philhellenism was purely sentimental and not in the best interests of the United States in the long run.

Adams did not anticipate the extent to which pro-Greek sentiment would spread. In January 1823, just weeks after Daniel Webster’s pro-Greek speech on the House floor

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18 Samuel Breck to unknown recipient, January 22, 1824 “Ferdinand J. Dreer Autograph Collection 0175.”
19 Joel R. Poinsett to Joseph Johnson, January 7, 1823 Poinsett, “Joel Roberts Poinsett Papers 1785-1851.”
20 Adams and Adams, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848, 1874, 6:173.
and President Monroe’s December address expressing hope for Greek independence, Adams sent a special agent named George Bethune English to Constantinople to negotiate a commercial treaty with the Sublime Porte.\textsuperscript{21} English would represent those Americans who did not want to support the Greek Revolution, believing that in order to promote free trade and increase commerce in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, sentimentalism for Greece had to be set aside. Only by accomplishing this goal could the United States continue to prosper.

President Monroe found himself caught between the overwhelming popular support for the Greeks on one side of the debate and the pleas from American merchants to deny support on the other. As a result, he did not strongly pursue a treaty. The public support for the Greeks only undermined hopes of commercial alliance with the Ottoman Empire. Turkish officials at the Sublime Porte perceived the popular support in the United States for the Greeks as evidence of the United States’ disrespect of their authority. David Offley reported to John Quincy Adams that the safety of American goods in Smyrna was at great risk due to the pro-Greek financial and military support in the United States.\textsuperscript{22} Even though Monroe was indecisive, John Quincy Adams continued to seek a treaty with the Ottoman Empire. Early in 1823, information from Bradish’s translator arrived indicating that negotiations might be renewed if an agent from the United States were once again sent to Constantinople.\textsuperscript{23} This time, Adams sent a graduate of Harvard who had travelled the Mediterranean and converted to Islam to represent

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\item \textsuperscript{21} Larrabee, \textit{Hellas Observed}, 68.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Field, \textit{America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882}, 127.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 133.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
American commercial interests. The secret agent was George Bethune English, or as he called himself while serving as an officer in the Egyptian Army, Mohammad Effendi.24

Edward Everett vs. George Bethune English

No two individuals better exemplify the diverging mindset over the future of the United States in the Middle East than Edward Everett, who favored support for the Greeks in their War for Independence, and George Bethune English, a U.S. negotiator in the Middle East. These two men knew each other as young men, were Bostonians, classmates at Harvard, and at one time both devoutly Christian. English’s subsequent adventures in the Middle East, however, proved to be the defining moment in his life. The experience would pit him against his former schoolmate and also help him receive a position as American agent to the Mediterranean in the 1820s, a job Everett desperately wanted for himself. The contrasting opinions espoused by these men illustrate the convoluted and complex foreign policy debate that began to unfold in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Everett and English ultimately began their intellectual journeys together at Harvard. George Bethune English studied at Harvard receiving his A.B. in 1807 and A.M. in divinity in 1811. When English graduated in 1807 he was at the top of his class and was selected to provide the salutary oration in Latin at commencement. He was a respected scholar, receiving the Bowdoin Prize in 1812, a prize awarded annually to students who advanced “useful and polite literature among the Residents as well graduates as undergraduates of the University” with the intention of inspiring emulation.

among such residents. Edward Everett attended Harvard at approximately the same time, graduating with his A.B. in 1811. Edward Everett was also awarded the Bowdoin Prize the same year English received that honor. The two young men knew of one another as fellow students.

The paths of these two men began to diverge shortly after English’s graduation. In 1813 English published a work titled *The Grounds of Christianity Examined* where he challenged the legitimacy of Christ’s divinity. Through his work, English seems to beg for a debate from his peers. Even the dedication seeks to inflame debate in addressing his readers with: “To the Intelligent and the Candid who are willing to listen to every opinion that is supported by reason, and not averse to bringing their own opinions to the test of examination.” English further instigated debate through his concluding remarks, challenging anyone to refute his argument stating, “Let him do it like a man” and “not avoid the principal question.” To avoid the principal question, in English’s mind, would be “as if a man prostrate, and bleeding under a lion whose teeth and claws were infixed in his throat, should tear a handful of hairs out of the animal’s mane, and hold them up as proofs of victory.” Everett accepted English’s challenge and replied with his own publication. Both works were widely read especially in the Boston area.

Everett published *A Defence of Christianity Against the Work of George Bethune English* in 1814. Everett dedicated his response to the then president of Harvard, John Thornton Kirkland. Before beginning his response, Everett first addressed allegations of

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plagiarism against English. Everett dismissed the allegations, but continued “He would needs tell us in his preface something about the sources from whence his arguments were derived… Mr. English tells us that a considerable portion of his arguments are from Jews, and a few more from other sources, and then immediately proceeds to transcribing the pages of an infidel writer, though he had just settled the controversy with Deists to his satisfaction!” Everett challenged English’s newly discovered sources which he supposedly undermined Christ’s divinity. Everett was confident that “there is not in all of Mr. English’s work a single argument against Christianity, which has not repeatedly been stated” and defended by previous scholars.27

Needless to say, Everett’s views were widely accepted as winning the argument. In fact, Everett’s Defence contributed to his appointment as the chair of Greek literature and resident philhellene at Harvard. His task was to better “reconcile Greek literature and Biblical criticism.”28 It is important to note that while English’s views were not commonly accepted, his critical work on Christianity was reprinted many times throughout the nineteenth century, indicating that there was at least a curiosity in reading his work. English himself perhaps shed some light on this phenomenon in one of his responses to his many critics. He stated that he believed that “every individual in this country has a legal and rational right to avow his sentiments, and to bring when he can everything asserted to be true, and important, nolens, volens, to the test of

examination.”29 English would spend the next several years travelling the world. Although he espoused religious views that were scandalous in the eyes of New Englanders, he would continually remain a prominent member of the elite.

As a result of the publication of the *Grounds of Christianity Examined*, English was excommunicated from the First Church in Cambridge in 1814 on the grounds that he had proven “himself to be, not merely an apostate from the Christian Church, but an enemy to the Christian Religion.”30 He soon joined the Marines and served in the War of 1812. He later travelled to the Middle East in 1816 with the Mediterranean Squadron, the American naval force that was supposed to protect commercial trade with Smyrna from pirate attacks. Evidently, life as a Marine did not prove to be the life English was searching for. He subsequently resigned his post in 1820, leaving his crew in Alexandria, Egypt. It was at this point English converted to Islam, adopted Turkish dress, changed his name to Mohammad Effendi, and requested to join the Egyptian Army under Mohammad Ali Pasha.31 Mohammad Ali Pasha was one of Sultan Mahmud II’s troublesome pashas, reluctant to swear complete subservience to the sultan. English served as an artillery commander under Mohammad Ali as the pasha continued to expand his power into Sudan. English is believed to be one of the first Americans to travel to that part of the world.32

English’s admiration for Islam and the Ottoman Empire was clearly in the minority, but was not anomalous to early nineteenth-century American society. It is worth mentioning that while in the Egyptian Army English encountered at least two other Americans who had converted to Islam and endeavored to assume a new life in the Middle East. English served with a New Yorker who took the name Khalil Aga and a Swiss-American named Achmed Aga. Another American adventurer was Josiah Harlan, a Pennsylvania Quaker who left the United States in 1819 to travel throughout the Egypt and surround regions for two decades.

Americans in the Mediterranean came to be known for their individualism and skepticism. Ottoman officials perceived David Offley, the American commercial agent at Smyrna, and Luther Bradish, the private citizen visiting on a secret mission from the United States, as possessing admirable individualism. In contrast Europeans were thought to yield “their individual views and interests to the support of a general system.” In a period where the United States government wished to have a more permanent commercial presence in the Mediterranean, American citizens in the Mediterranean played up this enterprising spirit and were admired for it by many Ottoman officials.

Turkish spelling of Mohammed Ali (Mohemet Ali) because Dunn pointed out that Ali never learned Arabic and thus would have preferred the Turkish version. However, early American sources overwhelmingly use the Arabic spelling and thus I have chosen to use the Arabic spelling.


35 Luther Bradish to John Quincy Adams, 20th December, 1820, United States Congress, House Documents, Otherwise Publ. as Executive Documents, VI:Doc. 250, pg. 7.
Since the United States was not part of a Holy Alliance or a “Tutelary Congress of Sovereigns” as were their European counterparts, they could more readily enter into commercial agreements with the Ottoman provinces or engage in negotiation directly with the Ottoman government. American diplomats and politicians perceived this advantage and endeavored to play to this strength by negotiating with Ottoman officials. They emphasized that U.S. commercial independence would prove more advantageous to the Ottoman Empire than a similar agreement with a European power.\footnote{Luther Bradish to John Quincy Adams, 20th December, 1820, ibid., VI:Doc. 250, pg. 7.} George Bethune English, with his military experience in the Ottoman Empire and his dedication to American commerce in the Mediterranean, understood this advantage well.

English’s lifestyle was certainly a source of curiosity and scandal in 1820s Boston. Harvard records noted later on that English was “of an ardent mind and possessing a great thirst for knowledge, he was extremely versatile. He was constantly changing his opinions.”\footnote{Harvard University, “Harvard College Papers, 1st Series, 1636-1825, 1831,,” n.d., Harvard University Archives.} This observation reflects a sense of disbelief in how one of Harvard’s top students could write a dissertation on Christ’s Divinity and then only two years later publish a work questioning the validity of Christianity, and later convert to Islam. Interestingly, English, although seemingly committing an unforgivable offense in contemporary New England society, remained connected to Harvard society. English even published a memoir about his adventures in the Pasha’s army and gave a copy to Harvard’s president in 1825. This was the same person to whom Everett’s response to English’s denunciation of Christianity was dedicated.\footnote{Ibid., vol. 11, item 148.}
English’s surprising ability to remain connected and relevant within widely disparate social circles would prove to be invaluable in eventually obtaining a high-profile position in the government. George Bethune English became perhaps the most well-known and influential American Philo-Turk, as one historian called him, of the 1820s and made significant contributions to American diplomacy with the Ottoman Empire despite popular support for the Greeks. Undoubtedly, English’s eccentric interest in and affinity for things Turkish assisted in his receiving a commission as a secret envoy from the Monroe administration to the Ottoman Empire.

In many ways, the ideas of George Bethune English and Edward Everett capture some of the nuances in the debate over Greek independence and the future of U.S. relations with the Middle East. Edward Everett the philhellene represented the majority opinion, that the United States shared a common intellectual and political heritage with ancient Greece and that this sensibility should be spread throughout the United States. In their sympathy for Greece, Americans could preserve and nurture the ancient roots of American political culture for future generations. George Bethune English the Philo-Turk represented the other side of the debate. Although more extreme than most, English believed that the United States should cultivate a lasting relationship with the powerful Ottoman Empire in spite of the perceived despotism found within its borders. English understood that the United States would benefit from a commercial alliance with the Ottoman Empire and his views aligned with those of many American merchants. They recognized that to cultivate a commercial treaty would mean increased opportunity for

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business and trade for the United States in a part of the world that had many riches to offer.

Both men vied for the job as special agent to the Mediterranean, but with very different goals in mind. Edward Everett’s star rose in the 1820s as a widely known and respected scholar, classicist, and philhellene. He strongly appealed to Webster and the president himself to become the United States’ agent in the Mediterranean with the intent of openly supporting the Greeks in their struggle against the Turks. English, on the other hand, desired to continue commercial negotiations with the Sublime Porte in hopes of opening trade in the Black Sea to the United States. If the United States could acquire such a commercial treaty, they would have achieved a favored status that many other European nations desired for themselves. For Everett, to cultivate a relationship with the Ottoman Empire at the expense of Greece was to forsake the country’s classical tradition going back to the ancient Greek city-states. For English, a commercial treaty with the Ottoman Empire would greatly assist the economic development and prosperity of the United States.

President Monroe and especially his Secretary of States John Quincy Adams ultimately sided with English’s point of view. Even though Adams did desire that Greece achieve independence from the Ottoman Empire, he did not wish to sacrifice the interests of the United States in aid of the cause. In one cabinet meeting in August 1823, Adams recalled that Monroe and many of his cabinet members were in favor of officially aiding the Greeks. When Monroe proposed the question of aiding the Greek cause in the cabinet meeting, John C. Calhoun and William H. Crawford spoke in support of the Greeks.
Adams observed of the scene in his diary that “Their enthusiasm for the Greeks is all sentiment, and the standard of this is the prevailing popular feeling… I told the President I thought not quite so lightly of a war with Turkey.”

Both the Monroe Administration and English saw the struggle between the Greeks and the Turks as one of “Right against Might.” Gradually, American officials came to support American commercial interests in the Middle East over the desire to support Greek independence. English held that America had already succeeded in establishing a free society. In his mind one of the greatest American achievements was the freedom of religion, an opinion he would share with Turkish officials where he attempted to negotiate a treaty. This freedom had allowed for him to publish his criticisms of Christianity, endure rumors of an alleged conversion to Islam, and still be able to have a career in international diplomacy. Pressing forward with current American economic interests instead of dwelling on perceived ancient cultural ties was foremost in English’s efforts as diplomat during the 1820s.

**Negotiating a Trade Treaty in the Midst of the Greek War**

Even though the conflict with the Barbary States was resolved by 1815, trade with the Ottoman Empire was far from ideal for the United States. Luther Bradish’s voyage to Constantinople had not proved fruitful in establishing a treaty with the Ottomans. The

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41 George Bethune English to John Quincy Adams, December 30, 1825 “Adams Family Papers.”
42 Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, 199. Lambert suggests that the United States was able to establish free navigation in the Mediterranean after the Algerine War in 1815. While peace was initially realized, conflict continue leading the United States to seek out a means to once again negotiate trade relations. George Bethune English will take up negotiations for the United States in the years that followed the Algerine War.
desire American merchants and the U.S. government had for such a relationship only continued to grow on the eve of the Greek War of Independence. Honing his knowledge of and experience with leaders and political officials within the Ottoman Empire, George Bethune English wrote to John Quincy Adams in March 1823 expressing a nationalist outlook on the cultivation of American trade with the Ottoman Empire at the same time that he advocated for his appointment to the post of agent to the Sublime Porte. Despite American public support for the Greeks and disdain for the Turks, English would prove to play a pivotal role in eventually acquiring a commercial treaty between the United States and the Sublime Porte.

English listed several reasons why the United States should continue to pursue such a treaty. “It is known to the undersigned “ he said “that the [Sublime] Porte has been long disposed to extend their relations with this country; having experienced the advantages resulting from our commerce with Smyrna, and imbibed from the events of the last war between this country and Great Britain, a very high idea of the growing power and importance of ‘The New Nation’ as they denominate the U.S.” English continued “They are the more disposed to have a good understanding with us having been informed that our government have no religious animosities against them and that by our institutions a mussulmen would be on the same footing in our country as a Christian.”

In other words, the Muslims felt that the Americans treated them more like equals rather than inferiors.

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43 George Bethune English to John Quincy Adams, 26th March, 1823, “Adams Family Papers.”
English offered his services in negotiating such a treaty. He claimed that his experiences “of the last six years of his life give him advantages over every other American citizen as a medium of obtaining such a privilege from the Ottoman government. Having lived among the Osmanli for some years he is familiar with their character and customs – has man acquaintances of high rank among them – has served in their troops, and contributed essentially to the glory of their arms: all which are circumstances obviously calculated to secure a favourable consideration of what he might propose to them.” English proposed that he would communicate with the Captain Pasha, an acquaintance of his, upon his arrival at Constantinople and would urge him to help bring about a treaty between the two governments. English insisted that he “would gain for his country the good will of a people destined to become one day the most powerful of all the nations of the west, and whose amity might hereafter be a value to himself.”

The Captain Pasha at this time favored relations with the United States and was willing to speak on their behalf at the Sublime Porte, a fact that English, as well as other American agents in the Mediterranean would come to observe in the years that followed.

In April 1823, the Monroe administration named English as a special American agent to negotiate the preliminary stages of a commercial treaty with the Sublime Porte. The Philo-Turk first made his way to Marseille, where he was able to network with French seamen familiar with the Mediterranean trade. Through these connections he came to possess copies of various agreements and trade regulations between France and

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44 George Bethune English to John Quincy Adams, March 26, 1823 “Adams Family Papers.”
the Sublime Porte. Desiring as much information as possible before traveling to Constantinople, this stop proved to be advantageous. When English acquired translations of these important documents, he prepared himself for the work ahead of him in Constantinople.46

After arriving in Constantinople in November 1823, English discovered that the Captain Pasha was the same individual who held this post six years earlier, when English first travelled to Constantinople. English wrote to Adams in a private letter that this discovery was “very fortunate, as I shall have occasion to call upon him to pay my respects, and to request his countenance and protection during my stay at Constantinople. The first visit will probably lead to others.” The American agent was correct in this assumption.

English began to execute his plan for negotiations with the Captain Pasha using his knowledge of Turkish social practices. He intended to make every effort toward obtaining navigation privileges of the Black Sea for the United States. One way in which English was able to mingle with Turkish society in Constantinople was by dressing as an “American Mussulman” travelling throughout the East. In the midst of the Greek War, however, he found his situation “full of danger and disquietude and nothing but my determination not to disappoint by my fault your expectations with regard to me is able to countervail the anxiety the singular task I have imposed upon myself occasions me.”47

English found himself in the midst of a dangerous performance where one misstep could call unwanted attention to his motives for travelling to the Ottoman Empire. For idle

46 Ibid., VI:Doc. 250, pg. 13.
47 George Bethune English to John Quincy Adams, December 27, 1823, “Adams Family Papers.”
curiosity seekers wondering why the American was in Turkey, English replied that he was on holiday from the United States. Suspicious Europeans and Turkish officials, however, speculated he was in fact “a Greek spy in disguise.”

Aside from avoiding suspicion as a Greek spy, English had other worries as well. The secret agent later conveyed that he had to be as cautious as possible, careful to not alert European diplomats or merchants that his purpose was to negotiate a treaty. He explained that because “the superiority of the American ships and sailors would give them a great advantage over most of their competitors; and it is the apprehension of this which makes most of the European powers so jealous of our obtaining a participation in the carrying trade of the Ottoman empire, of which the British, French, and Imperialists, have at present the entire monopoly.” English’s observations reflect some of the pro-commercial, nationalist sentiments many American merchants had shared for decades. In English’s judgment, a treaty would not only be beneficial for American commerce, but also boost American fortunes with the Ottoman Empire. Like the development of American commercial trade in the world at this time, the competitive and political climate in the Mediterranean made the subject of treaty negotiations a delicate one.

The Philo-Turk’s efforts were not in vain, however. Early in 1824, English was invited for an audience with the Captain Pasha and was received “according to the customs of the Turks” in a manner of great consideration. Interestingly, English intentionally concealed his position as a secret agent to the Turkish officials. He chose

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48 Ibid. GBE to JQA, December 27, 1823.
49 United States Congress, House Documents, Otherwise Publ. as Executive Documents, VI:Doc. 250, pg. 14 February 8, 1824.
instead to present himself as a tourist who was requested, if an opportunity arose, to discover the general attitude the Ottoman Empire had for the United States, especially with regards to commercial relations. English reported that he attempted to persuade the Captain Pasha to favorably convey the United States’ intention to the Sublime Porte. He noted that the Ottoman Empire had relations with several European nations who had proven to be their enemies on several occasions. In contrast, English pointed out that the United States “was so far from bearing towards them any political or religious prejudices, that, by the laws of the country, a Mussulman citizen of the United States would have precisely the same privileges as a Christian; a great and powerful nation, that was rapidly advancing in the path of prosperity, aggrandizing continually its population, its riches, and its strength.”

Because of his own experiences, English knew better than any other American that it was possible to be a Muslim in the United States. He understood that emphasizing the United States’ religious freedom offered him his best chance at opening a dialogue with the Sublime Porte in a treaty negotiation. The Captain Pasha was impressed enough with what English had to say that he revealed that he had always considered himself a friend of the Americans and promised to immediately investigate whether the Sublime Porte would accept English’s proposal. Just four days later, the Captain Pasha held another audience with the American secret agent and pledged that he would convey U.S. hopes for a treaty to the Sultan himself. In so doing, the pasha requested that “the Government of the United States” should “secretly authorize the commandment of their

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50 Ibid., VI:Doc. 250, pg. 15 February 8, 1824.
squadron in the Mediterranean to meet me in the Archipelago, with instructions to inform me precisely what it is that the United States wish to obtain of the Sublime Porte.” The pasha warned English that if an American ambassador were to instead travel to Constantinople to negotiate with the Divan (privy counsel of the Ottoman Empire), then he would “probably find himself embarrassed by intrigues which he could neither discover nor control.”

In part because of the Captain Pasha’s advice, English determined that he must proceed cautiously and seek counsel with Adams. English was once again in Washington by early May 1824 and met with Adams on several occasions to discuss how to effectively continue the negotiation process. English and Adams exchanged letters during his stay in Washington essentially rehashing what they had discussed in their meetings and exchanging ideas about how to negotiate a treaty with the Sublime Porte. English repeated to Adams that by displaying proper respect for the Captain Pasha, the Pasha would be persuaded to advocate for a commercial treaty to the Sultan. English further suggested that Adams include in his letter to the Captain Pasha a reminder:

> from his own observation he may be aware of the high advantages which might result to the Ottoman Empire from a free commercial intercourse between it and the U.S. – a representation that it would be difficult to imagine a reason which should exclude the U.S. a great and flourishing nation that has no prejudices or enmities political or religious against the Ottomans from the same commercial intercourse accorded by the Sultan to European nations who have been so frequently the enemies of the Empire.

English had previously expressed these nationalist sentiments in an earlier letter.

If Ottoman officials came to understand that unlike their European competition, the United States would respect the Ottoman Empire as an equal nation and would only

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51 Ibid., VI:Doc. 250, pg. 16 February 8, 1824.
52 GBE to JQA, May 14, 1824 “Adams Family Papers.”
concern themselves with the cultivation of free trade, they would be more likely to accept a treaty with the U.S. Such an alliance, in English’s mind, would be beneficial to both nations. In fact, however, the United States as a new nation, struggling to assert its maritime and commercial rights throughout the world also had more to gain from a stable commercial arrangement. In the minds of American merchants and other pro-treaty Americans, the key to securing strong, economic development for the United States was the cultivation of free trade with the Ottoman Empire. The Greek War of Independence, however, posed a major obstacle to the negotiation process.

*The Persistence of Popular Philhellenism*

George Bethune English provided John Quincy Adams and James Monroe with updates on the Greek War throughout his tenure as agent to Constantinople. All of these individuals realized that the outpouring of popular support at home for the Greeks potentially threatened their efforts at acquiring a treaty with the Sublime Porte. Indeed, in order to block the public from discovering that the U.S. government was entertaining the prospect of negotiation with the Sublime Porte, most of the correspondence Adams sent and received on the subject of the treaty was marked “secret” or “confidential,” an unusual practice for matters of state at the time.\(^5^3\) English repeatedly wrote to both men that it was widely known by the Turks that the American people supported the Greeks and had dispatched aid to their shores. English relayed various conversations he had with Turkish officials who asked him “Why are the U.S. disposed to assist our enemies against

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\(^5^3\) Field, *America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882*, 147 Field made this observation about the practice of marking letters as “secret and confidential.” The practice does seem to have been isolated to letters on the subject of the treaty and was not used on other matters of state.
us? Have we shown any enmity towards their United States?" English found that part of his job as agent to Constantinople required the constant repairing of personal relations with the Turks, continually assuring them that despite popular support for the Greeks, the U.S. government would not recognize Greece as an independent nation and they were dedicated to cultivating a treaty with the Sublime Porte.

While Adams did not require convincing on this front, Monroe did. On a brief return to Washington in August 1824, English met with the president and his secretary of state and discussed how to proceed with treaty negotiations. When the men were not meeting, they were writing each other notes rehashing what they had discussed in these meetings. In one of these notes, English wrote to President Monroe, who seriously considered supporting the Greeks, that such an endeavor was a futile, citing that Russia, Britain, and France, were employed in “transporting for the Turks the military means of terminating a struggle against kings which Providence itself seems refuses to favour – except in our own chosen country.” Both Adams and English hastened to convince the President that the United States stood to gain nothing from openly supporting the Greeks, especially if it meant losing an opportunity to seal a commercial alliance with the Ottoman Empire.

English continued to counsel the president, writing:

In this actual state of things it is obvious that the U.S. have now to take measures to preserve uninjured and uncompromised their own interests in the Levant. I flatter myself that the explanations given by me, (and I believe by Mr. Offley also) at Constantinople, as to what would be the character of the aid the Greeks would receive from the U.S. viz. that it would be not national, but individual, will have some influence to preserve our fellow citizens and their

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54 GBE to JQA, August 31, 1824, “Adams Family Papers.”
55 GBE to James Monroe, August 11, 1824, ibid.
property at Smyrna in safety as before until the receipt of the overture from the government of the U.S. suggested and expected by the Capudan Pasha.

English bluntly stated to President Monroe that formally recognizing and supporting the Greeks would prove detrimental to not only the proposed treaty, but also to the commerce already established by Americans at Smyrna. President Monroe therefore had to set aside his own pro-Greek sentiments in favor of a more strategic foreign policy. English’s suggestion that Monroe urge Americans to provide support to the suffering Greeks as individuals rather than for their national war for independence was critical. As a result, in 1826 an important shift in the philhellenic movement in the United States began to take place. Leaders such as Everett and Carey renewed their efforts for the Greek cause but emphasized the importance of private support for the victims of war rather official government efforts to aid the Greek War of independence. James Monroe the philhellenic had come to see the advantages of a commercial treaty over heroic interventions on behalf of the Greek nation.

English was not the only American who pointed out that it was in the government’s best interest to pursue a treaty instead of recognizing Greek independence. Due to the chaotic political arena in Greece and the new government’s need to direct its attention toward the war with the Turks, incidents of Greek piracy increasingly became an issue for both European as well as American ships cruising the Mediterranean. A Charleston paper reported in 1826 that “The Archipelago is now swarming with Greek pirates, that plunder every vessel they meet with, no matter the nation to which they

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56 GBE to James Monroe, August 11, 1824 ibid.
57 “Norfolk Herald,” City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser, August 17, 1826 This is one example of many others where newspapers reported incidents of piracy committed by Greek vessels against European ships.
belong: every vessel coming here should have at least four guns on board.” A letter from a merchant in Smyrna printed in the same paper also pointed to Greek depredations. The merchant stated that Greece was devoid of true patriots and that “the people now suffer so much from Greek tyranny, that they desire nothing more ardently than to return to their allegiance, under their Turkish oppressors.” Such a report was not enough to change the minds of ardent philhellenic supporters in the United States. In fact, many newspapers that did report on incidents of Greek piracy also observed that the pirates “do not appear to respect the power of the Greek Senate.” These reports do, however, reveal the ongoing turmoil in which merchants found themselves during the Greek War and suggest the perilous climate for American commercial interests and philanthropic ventures in that part of the world.

As incidents of piracy increased, merchants put additional pressure on U.S. government officials to negotiate a treaty with the Ottoman Empire and reject popular pleas for aiding the Greek Freedom fighters. Soon after he became president, John Quincy Adams wrote in his diary: “all the commanders of our armed vessels in the Mediterranean, have great abhorrence and contempt for the Greeks.” The public, however, disassociated Greek pirates from Greek patriots. This phenomenon posed additional problems to government officials who hoped to improve the U.S. situation abroad while also maintaining public support for the Greek cause at home.

59 “Greek Pirates,” Columbian Centinel, December 17, 1825.
60 Quoted in Field, America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882, 127.
In December 1825, President Adams presented a public speech arguing in favor of the continued maintenance of the Mediterranean Squadron. Adams pointed out that American vessels were subject to attacks made by “pirates wearing the Grecian flag.” Instead of revealing his true sentiments on this matter as he confided in his diary, Adams maintained that these Greek pirates were “without real authority from the Greek or any other Government. The heroic struggles of the Greeks themselves, in which our warmest sympathies as Freemen and Christians have been engaged, have continued to be maintained with vicissitudes of success adverse and favorable.”

Back in Turkey, English, the treaty negotiator sent officials information concerning Greek pirates and their crimes against American seamen, thus confirming the negative reports on Greek pirates. In August 1825, English told John Quincy Adams that the Greeks were turning against one and other. “The celebrated Greek Chief Odysseus has been strangled by his own countrymen,” wrote English, and “Bobolina [Bouboulina] the distinguished heroine… has been shot by them… The General Vicetas is dead.” The commander at the time was the same man “who some time ago endeavoured to seize by military force the whole body of the Greek Government.” The secret agent reflected upon this grisly state of Greek affairs and concluded “As might be expected in such a state of things, the Greeks have committed several acts of Piracy upon European vessels, and two at least on vessels of our own country.” The portrait English conveyed to both Monroe and Adams was of a chaotic struggle, not a glorious exercise in which liberty would

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62 GBE to JQA, August 30, 1825 “Adams Family Papers.”
triumph over tyranny. To sacrifice a commercial treaty with a valuable trading partner in favor of supporting a losing cause in Greece was not, in English’s mind, worth the risk.

Interestingly, English did privately have some sympathy for the Greek cause. Like so many Americans who supported the Greeks in the 1820s, he too thought of their plight as an “unequal struggle of Right against Might.” This admission to President Adams, however, was quickly followed by an equally strong assertion of American commercial interests: “I hope some influence towards satisfying the executive, that, where the national sympathy and compassion is unavailing to change the fate of those whose destiny we cannot mend, it is at perfect liberty to push forward the interests of the United States in the Levant by bringing to a successful issue what has been commenced.”63

English understood both sides of the debate. He understood the nationalist rhetoric espoused by pro-Greek proponents and even sympathized to some extent with those who shared this outlook. The Philo-Turk, however, ardently argued to both James Monroe and John Quincy Adams that the future strength and stability of the United States lay in forming commercial alliances. Although English might understand why some Americans might support the Greeks, those sentiments were far less important to him than developing a strategic commercial bond that would promote American prosperity.

Education and Evangelization

Even though George Bethune English’s arguments were convincing, neither President Monroe nor President Adams had an easy time making decisions for a treaty between the U.S. and the Ottoman Empire. In addition to pressure from merchants for a

63 GBE to JQA, December 30, 1825 ibid.
commercial treaty with the Turks, they faced increasing popular pressure from vocal Americans who called on the U.S. to provide aid for Greeks in their war against the Turks. They also saw that an increasing number of pro-Greek Americans were travelling to the Mediterranean for evangelical and philanthropic purposes. Just as American merchants hoped to export goods to the Mediterranean, American missionaries desired to export American religious sensibilities to the far reaches of the world. Due to the recent contact with the Middle East during the Barbary Wars, American missionaries began to direct their attention first to this region of the world.64

Late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century New England saw an increase in church membership as well as missionary interest. Religious revival during this time stressed the importance of conversion as something that could transcend social, geographical and ethnic boundaries, energizing the movement to be national, and later, global.65 The Reverend Samuel Hopkins, for example, was a member of the early stages of this movement. Hopkins and other critics of traditional Calvinism believed they had improved upon Calvinist teachings. The doctrine of predestination remained, but instead of emphasizing that Christ died for an elect few, Christians were obligated to secure the happiness of all mankind through bringing the gospel to all the world.66 Hopkins was assigned to a congregation in the Massachusetts frontier in the 1740s where he preached to and educated the native population. An early proponent of abolition, Hopkins also

65 Field, America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882, 71.
viewed slaves prime candidates for conversion.\textsuperscript{67} It was Hopkins who was credited as being one of the first, if not the first, religious figures to conceive of an American foreign mission. This inclusionary missionary urge formed the basis for the first American foreign missions, initially directed toward bringing the gospel to “heathen lands.”\textsuperscript{68}

Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions led the first American mission to Jerusalem in 1819. Their specific mission was called “The Palestine Mission.” The purpose of this mission was to spread this reformed Calvinist viewpoint that had begun to emerge in the United States in the early nineteenth century to the people of the Near East, which included Jews, Muslims, and Catholics.\textsuperscript{69} For months prior to their departure, Fisk and Parsons raised funds throughout the country, even travelling to Savannah, Georgia.\textsuperscript{70} Their travels were widely reported in American newspapers throughout the 1820s, reflecting the widespread interest the public had for their adventures in the East. The two men arrived at Smyrna from Boston late in 1819.

Parsons travelled onward to Jerusalem in 1821, leaving Fisk at Smyrna. Fisk’s daily routine centered upon teaching the English language as well as reading and preaching the gospel to any locals interested in sharing his company. Fisk wrote in his journal that throughout his time in Smyrna he educated mostly Greek Christians, but also encountered Turkish Muslims and Jews. Parson’s efforts in Jerusalem as well as his

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{67}] Field, \textit{America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882}, 74.
\item[\textsuperscript{68}] Alvan Bond, \textit{Memoir of the Rev. Pliny Fisk, A.M.: Late Missionary to Palestine, from the American Board of Missions} (Boston, MA: Crocker and Brewster, 1829), 67; American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, \textit{The Missionary Herald}, vol. XIX (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1823), 66–68.
\item[\textsuperscript{69}] Field, \textit{America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882}, 84–87; Hatch, \textit{The Democratization of American Christianity}, 170.
\item[\textsuperscript{70}] Bond, \textit{Memoir of the Rev. Pliny Fisk, A.M.}, 87.
\end{itemize}
partners teaching in Smyrna were cut short, however, as the Greek revolt sent shock waves throughout the Ottoman Empire.

As a general rule, Christian missionaries could reside in any part of the Ottoman Empire, “so far as appears without the least apprehension of interference from the government.” Fisk worried that because many of his students were Greek, he might be suspected of being connected to the revolt. In July 1821, Fisk told a friend in Vermont that during the early months of the Greek War, “Murders and assassinations have taken place almost daily in this town for three or four months.” The Greek War would have a direct impact on how Fisk’s mission proceeded.

Parsons observed how the Greek War also affected life in Jerusalem. Under the authority of the Ottoman Empire, there were many groups of people with different ethnic backgrounds living in Jerusalem, including Greeks. In 1821, the conflict between the Greek and Turkish populations in the Holy City began to reach a fever pitch. At that point, Parsons abandoned the mission in Jerusalem and returned to Smyrna. Arriving at Smyrna quite ill, both missionaries left for Alexandria in the hopes of improving Parson’s health. This was not to be.

Missionary Levi Parsons died in February 1822. Fisk then travelled to Malta to join Reverend Daniel Temple, who had arrived from Boston with a printing press intended for use by missionaries in the Mediterranean. Interestingly, Fisk crossed paths

71 American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, The Missionary Herald, vol. XVI (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1820), 266.
73 Ibid., 155.
74 Ibid., 168–183 Fisk’s printed correspondence provides details of Parson’s health after his residence in Jerusalem.
with George Bethune English on the ship bound for Malta. English was bound for the United States having completed service with the Egyptian Army and would soon receive his post as secret agent to the Sublime Porte. Fisk labored in vain to reconvert English to Christianity and the two parted ways. Later, the two men would work at cross-purposes. English would assist the United States government in cultivating improved relations with the Ottoman Empire and Fisk would later assist Greek refugees, recommending to the American Board of Missions that Greece was a prime missionary target due to the upheavals of war.

During his travels, Fisk was able to distribute a large number of Christian texts printed on the new press to Greeks throughout the Mediterranean. Fisk reported to the American Board that “We have printed many thousand Tracts in Greek: they have been received with pleasure… To the schools and convents we have free access for the distribution of Scriptures and Tracts, and do not often meet with Greeks who oppose our work.” Fisk also explained to the American Board why Greece was ripe for their missionary efforts, asserting that “The nation is roused – the elements of national and individual character are all in motion.” American missionary efforts would prove successful at that moment. American support for the Greek cause had led many Greeks to believe that “all [Americans] are in their [Greece’s] favor.” Fisk’s understanding of the situation led him to focus his attentions on a related cause, the education of intelligent

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Greek boys, which was yet another component of the American Board’s missionary interests.  

The American Board of Missions had opened a missionary school called the Cornwall Missionary School in Connecticut. First opened in 1817, the Cornwall School’s first class was composed twelve students. Two were from “heathen lands” and another two were “natives of Connecticut. White children living in the United States could be accepted at their own expense and at the discretion of school officials.” The purpose of the school was especially focused upon recruiting promising children from foreign lands so that they could be trained in American religious ideas, foreign languages (including English), and medicine. Once they completed the school they could return to their native lands as “useful missionaries.” Potential students were required to be “of suitable age, of docile dispositions, and of promising talents.”

Turkish officials viewed Greeks throughout the empire with suspicion because of the conflict in Greece. Nonetheless the Palestine Missionaries evidently came to be respected in places such as Malta, Smyrna, and Aleppo. Fisk reported to his superiors in the United States that their “Bible Society” was “known to all” in the regions where they had established a presence. Although Fisk noted Turkish suspicion, he commented that Greek families who needed assistance sought out the Palestine Mission. Once trust was established, Fisk began to recruit foreign young boys, especially Greeks, to travel to the United States where they would receive an education at the Cornwall Mission School.

79 Fisk states this repeatedly in his letters and reports to the Board. American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, The Missionary Herald, 1823, XIX:113.
The American missionary received permission in 1822 for the first recruit who would be educated in the United States. The child, twelve-year old Photius Kavasales, was the only member of his immediate family to escape the plague in Smyrna. His oldest brother, who was away from the city at the time of the plague, was serving in the Greek army at the time of his departure for America. Photius never again saw his brother who was later killed at the front.

According to Photius’ recollections of the event later in life, Reverend Fisk first recruited the Greek youth for a Sunday school program for local boys. After it became clear that Photius was not only bright, but also possessed knowledge of Modern Greek, Italian, and Arabic as well as mathematics, Fisk’s interest in the child grew. Once Photius’ enthusiasm for receiving an education in the United States was established, Reverend Fisk eventually asked the boy’s uncle to allow Photius to travel to the United States for his education. Once the uncle was satisfied that Fisk’s intentions were trustworthy, the uncle penned a letter formally accepting the offer for Photius to be placed under the direction and care of the American Board of Missions. In his letter to Fisk, the uncle noted that his permission rested on his belief that the United States was an “enlightened” and “illustrious” country.

The young Photius travelled to Connecticut with all expenses paid by the American Board of Missions and was enrolled in their missionary school for foreign “heathen youths.” Upon arrival in the United States, Photius took the Reverend Fisk’s

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80 Ibid., XIX:112.
81 Lyman F. Hodge, Photius Fisk: A Biography (Boston, MA, 1891), 17.
82 Ibid., 21–22.
last name and acquired an extensive education. Photius’s uncle had been an ardent supporter of the Greek uprising and had instilled ideals of liberty in his young nephew. These ideals made a deep impression on the boy and would persist into adulthood. He eventually became an ardent supporter of the abolitionist movement in the United States. After he became a pastor himself, Photius Fisk would compare the position of Greeks in the Ottoman Empire to that of an African American slave.⁸⁴

Young Photius was not the only Greek student newly admitted to the Cornwall School. A Greek priest in Malta requested that his son be sent to the Cornwall School for education. The priest stated that if his son could not receive a proper education under Ottoman rule, he preferred that he go to the United States because it was “more enlightened than any other nation” and because it possessed a “benevolent disposition” toward the Greek nation.⁸⁵ By the end of the Greek War, the American Board of Foreign Missions had recruited forty Greek orphans for the Cornwall Mission School. Other educational institutions also sponsored the education of Greek youths at New England colleges, including Yale, Amherst, and Monson.⁸⁶

Many Greeks believed Americans sympathized with their cause and were therefore willing to send their children to be educated there. In addition, the American Board’s interest in education was similar to the philhellenic interest in educating the Greeks on their ancient roots. Through the attainment of knowledge, a society could be lifted up from ignorance and achieve greatness. In the case of the American Board of Missions.

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⁸⁴ Hodge, *Photius Fisk*, 152.
Missions, “The design would be, that these youths might return to their countrymen, with their minds cultivated, enlarged and matured, and their hearts inclined to promote the evangelical exertions of the present day.” Philhellenes and the American Board of Missions also shared the perception that Greeks, due to their understood connection to antiquity, possessed “active and inquisitive dispositions” and that they were “hereafter to exert a powerful influence upon the state of society where they live.”

Although some Greek students did indeed return to their homeland, many others did not. One Greek orphan named Gregory Perdicari continued his studies beyond the mission school, pursuing a classical education at Amherst College in Massachusetts. Perdicari became well known among the philhellenic Boston community. In a letter he wrote in 1828 while studying at Amherst, he publicly thanked the women of Boston for ardently supporting the Greek cause in an insert to the book, *Turkish Barbarity: An Affecting Narrative of the Unparalleled Sufferings of Mrs. Sophia Mazro, a Greek Lady of Missolonghi*. The title alone explains its subject.

American philhellenes in Greece also aided Greek youths, in some cases even adopting them into their families. Samuel Gridley Howe and Jonathan P. Miller both transported Greek children to the United States to give them an American upbringing. Some of these Greek immigrants later recalled the horrors of war. One of these was a Christophoros Plato Castanis, who had been hired as an aide to Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe when he was serving the Greek Army. Castanis and his family were victims of the Greek War. Castanis wrote years later in his memoir that the United States became a “second

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homeland.” The young refugee came to identify America and Greece as “the children of Democracy” and that they “are one and indivisible wherever they go.” In the U.S., he found “traces of his ancestral spirit and fresh mementoes of the indissoluble connexion, he might almost say identity, of the Greek and American character. A Greek here beholds home-like objects, crowding about his path; the government is democratic; the architecture is classic; the people are inquisitive; the society is unprejudiced; and the literature of the country, even some of the highest models of oratory and poetry, are grounded on Greek subjects.”

The success of these young Greeks and the stories they told about their homeland inspired American philhellenes and missionaries alike, reinforcing popular support for the Greek cause. For the philhellenes, these refugees were proof that modern Greeks could become successful, freedom loving, educated individuals who could recapture the glories of the ancient Greeks. For the missionaries, the Greek youths proved that there were many deserving and willing “foreign heathens” in the Mediterranean who would welcome American missionaries in their homeland.

By the end of the Greek War, American missionary efforts and philhellenic aid in terms of supplies and refugee assistance achieved two things: the need for more missionaries in the East and renewed belief in Greece that the United States preferred the Greeks to the Ottoman Turks. Nonetheless, merchants and the U.S. government continued to see a commercial treaty with the Ottoman Empire as the country’s paramount concern, producing ongoing tension within the country.

89 Ibid., 211.
The Military and the Acquisition of a Treaty

The United States bolstered its naval presence in the Mediterranean in the 1820s as a result of popular support of the Greek War in the United States as well as in the hope of expanding American trade in the Levant. In particular the purpose of the Mediterranean Squadron was to protect American merchants and commercial interests against foreign powers and marauding pirates. The U.S. naval presence in the Mediterranean developed into a formidable force that European and Ottoman officials came to admire. For the duration of the Greek War, the Mediterranean Squadron played an intermediary role between the U.S. government and the merchants who desired a commercial trade with the Ottoman Empire and the American philhellenes who supported Greek independence. It protected American vessels and American philhellenes who travelled to Greece. The presence of American philhellenes and missionaries in Greece, however, placed the squadron’s efforts in jeopardy.

In August 1825, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams gave English his instructions. The Philo-Turk was required to travel to Norfolk, Virginia where he would embark on the North Carolina. There he would meet the new commander of the Mediterranean Squadron, Commodore John Rodgers. He was to offer his services to him for the duration of his employment as an agent for the United States. His duties included serving as an interpreter for Rodgers as well as performing any other services that the

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newly named commodore deemed “expedient and proper.”93 With English’s assistance, Commodore Rodgers would be the primary facilitator for a treaty with the Sublime Porte.

Like English, Commodore John Rodgers had extensive experience with affairs in the Mediterranean. Rodgers served in the United States Navy as one of the first commanders of the Mediterranean Squadron during both the First and Second Barbary Wars. He was eventually appointed Secretary of the Navy under Monroe in the early 1820s. Renamed the commander of the Mediterranean Squadron in late 1824, Rodgers would play an important role in the United States’ efforts to maintain a stable presence in the Ottoman Empire. He was central to the treaty negotiation process that would finally come to fruition in 1830.

English left for Norfolk in February 1825 and arrived with the Squadron in Smyrna late in August. The Squadron reached the Levant after spending two months at Gibraltar and the Island of Paros in the Aegean Sea. During this voyage, English busied himself with gathering as much information as he could about the affairs in the Middle East, including the current status of the Greek War. English discovered that while the Greeks had won a number of battles, the provisional Greek government was mired in tension, leading to confusion among the citizens and mismanagement of the war. English came to believe that an imminent victory for the Turks would expedite the negotiation process.

The mission to establish contact with the Sublime Porte was not the only one for which Rodgers was responsible. Another passenger onboard the North Carolina was a

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93 John Quincy Adams to George Bethune English, January 3, 1825 “Adams Family Papers.”
secret agent to Greece dispatched by President Monroe. Estwick Evans, a resident of New Hampshire and an ardent philhellene, left his wife and four children and sailed for the unknown in Greece. Evans’ official orders from the president were to examine and report on the current condition of the Greeks. Evans carried with him letters written by Edward Everett and the Boston Greek Committee, which were intended for various Greek officials.\footnote{Larrabee, \textit{Hellas Observed}, 136; Paul Constantine Pappas, “The United States and the Greek War for Independence, 1821-1828” (Ph.D., West Virginia University, 1982), 177.}

The philhellene’s status as a secret agent did not remain a secret for long. In December 1824, the New Hampshire State legislature in December 1824 wrote to Alexandros Mavrokordatos, a Greek statesman, To say that they were sending their native son to Greece with the hope of securing Greek freedom. Several newspapers also reported Evans’ departure.\footnote{Pappas, “The United States and the Greek War for Independence, 1821-1828,” 177.} In a farewell address, Evans swore to his fellow philhellenes that his role as agent to Greece would “endeavour to infuse into her councils the wise, moderate and progressive nature of our own happy institutions; and to guard her from anarchy on one hand, and from the subtle and corruption influences of neighboring aristocracies on the other. It is my determination never to leave the soil of Greece until her liberties are achieved; - or at least, whilst one Greek banner remains unfurled.”\footnote{Larrabee, \textit{Hellas Observed}, 135.}

Although the Greek War did not end until 1832, Evans’s career as an agent in Greece would not last beyond the following summer.

After arriving in Greece, Evans managed to ingratiate himself to neither his own countrymen serving in the Greek Army nor the Greek officials he swore he so admired.
Evans expected the Greeks to cover his expenses and had no intention of assisting them in a military capacity. To the Greeks, Evans seemed useless. Samuel Gridley Howe’s journal entry from July 18th, 1825 illustrates the general feeling toward Evans:

“Yesterday came from Napoli Jervis in company with Mr. Estwick Evans, an American Philhelle just arrived… He is a lawyer – a theoretical genius who will not be able to do much good to Greece, much as he desires it.”97 Howe’s sentiments proved more correct than he could have imagined. Evans lasted a little more than one month living in war-torn Greece before he insisted upon returning to the United States.

Despite Evans’ short stay, his mission reveals an interesting tension in American foreign policy at the time. Rodgers’ mission to the Mediterranean was to protect American merchants and, with George Bethune English’s assistance, establish negotiations with the Captain Pasha for a treaty with the Ottoman Empire. Simultaneously, however, the Monroe administration dispatched an agent whose purpose was to continue friendly relations with the rebel Greek government.

Neither the American public nor Evans knew English’s true purpose. Upon the departure of the North Carolina, English was reported as sailing to join the Greek forces. Evans himself later wrote: “No nation stands with the Greeks like the United States. She is considered by them as perfectly disinterested, and as regarding Greece solely from the love of freedom, and admiration of the Greek character.” Evans was truly in the dark as to the purpose of Commodore Rodgers’ and English’s mission to the Mediterranean.98 American relief efforts in Greece continued for the duration of the Greek War. As a

97 Howe, Letters and Journals of Samuel Gridley Howe, 87.
98 Quoted in Larrabee, Hellas Observed, 72 and 140.
result, both the Greeks and the Turks constantly received mixed messages about the United States’ intentions. This complexity deterred Rodgers’ ability to achieve his foremost goal of establishing contact with Turkish officials.

Nor did the United States government adopt a different course of action upon Evans’ return. President Adams’ Secretary of State, Henry Clay, gave secret instructions to Evans’ successor, William Clarke Somerville, to assure the provisional Greek government that the United States supported independence and that indifference should not be inferred “from the neutrality which they have hitherto prescribed, and probably will continue to prescribe, to themselves.” Many American philhellenes continued to travel to Greece with large amounts of supplies for the Greek Army and Greek civilians. The Mediterranean Squadron’s mission was to convey these agents to Greece and to provide protection to American vessels when needed. The continuing aid to Greece was a difficult fact to explain to Turkish officials.

When Rodgers’s squadron was not protecting American philhellenes, Rodgers was fulfilling other duties. One of the first issues he addressed upon his arrival in the Aegean Sea was that of Greek piracy. English wrote to President Adams that Rodgers decided it was the Squadron’s immediate duty to “afford protection to the commerce of the U.S. in this sea [the Aegean], whose safety is jeopardized through the desperation of the Greeks.” While the squadron labored to protect American vessels, the Commodore also prepared for the next steps in gaining an audience with the Captain Pasha.

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100 Pappas, “The United States and the Greek War for Independence, 1821-1828,” 182.

101 George Bethune English to John Quincy Adams, August 30, 1825 “Adams Family Papers.”
way in which Rodgers endeavored to do this was through diplomatic hospitality. He made plans for an exposition using the squadron’s warships.

Upon the arrival of the squadron in Smyrna, Rodgers, perceiving that he had an opportunity to impress locals with “such a fine specimen of the American Navy.” He opened the ship the North Carolina to visitors. The ship on which English sailed to Smyrna first achieved notoriety from “both sexes” of a variety of nationalities including Europeans, Turks, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. English observed that “The Great Ship that came from the New World,” as the locals called it, so captivated “the irresistible cravings of female curiosity” that “even the vigour of Oriental reserve has in this instance yielded” to the interest of the fairer sex. After the Commodore’s open house, “Every attention has been lavished upon the Commodore by the Turkish Authorities, and there can be no doubt that the appearance of the Squadron here has contributed in no small degree to aggrandize the national character among the people of the Levant.”102 This was the effect Rodgers was hoping for.

Rodgers hoped to establish immediate communications with the Captain Pasha. At least initially, however, the commodore was disappointed. On August 31, 1825, Rodgers wrote a private letter to Secretary of State Henry Clay, that Captain Pasha and his entire fleet were at “Missilongi, at the entrance of the gulf of Patrasso, engaged in besieging that place by sea.” Realizing the pasha was otherwise engaged, with an ongoing siege, Rodgers determined it would be “impolitic to attempt an interview so long as he continued thus employed.” Rodgers would instead remain at Smyrna “until a more

102 George Bethune English to John Quincy Adams, August 30, 1825 ibid.
favorable moment presented itself of communicating with him.” Several months later, the Captain Pasha would achieve victory in this siege.

During the interim, the Commodore was all too aware of the complexity of his situation he the U.S. representative in the Mediterranean. While Rodgers’ primary goal was to continue negotiations with the Captain Pasha, the pasha’s main concern was to subdue the Greek rebellion. As Rodgers ostensibly aided the Greek cause by delivering American agents to the Greek shores, he realized that only through a careful stance of neutrality could he hope to gain an audience with the Turkish official. The commodore put this point plainly to the Secretary of State. If Americans continued to display confidence and strength through the squadron’s presence in the Mediterranean and exercised “strict neutrality,” then he had “reason to believe” that the United States would eventually prevail in achieving their objective with the Sublime Porte.

The negotiation process was not solely left to Commodore Rodgers and George Bethune English. David Offley, the American merchant turned American commercial agent, was yet another individual who played an important role in the negotiation process. Offley was an invaluable asset to the United States Government who had connections in Smyrna dating back to 1811 when he first established business in the Levant. Rodgers himself upon his arrival at Smyrna in 1825 observed that for the greater part of fourteen years since Offley had arrived in the region “he has discharged the duties of consul; and in a manner, too, judging from the estimation in which he appears to be

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104 Ibid., VI:Doc. 250, pg 42.
held by the public authorities of that place and the different European consuls as well as American merchants residing there, not only creditable to himself, but beneficially to the commercial interests of his country.”

Through the combined efforts of David Offley and Commodore Rodgers, with the diplomatic assistance of George Bethune English, a treaty between the United States and the Ottoman Empire at last seemed possible.

A meeting between the Americans and the Captain Pasha did not take place, however, until after the fall of Missolonghi the following year in 1826. The meeting had been delayed for a number of reasons, including pressure from European powers such as England and France who already enjoyed a commercial agreement with the Ottoman Empire but did not want the competition with the United States.

The ongoing conflict in Greece also occupied much of the Captain Pasha’s time. After the meeting, Rodgers observed that “from the distinguished manner in which he received me,” there should be no doubt that the meeting would eventually lead to the desired treaty.

Along with David Offley and George B. English, the Commodore told the Captain Pasha the U.S. would like to negotiate a treaty that would permit American ships to gain access to the Black Sea. The Pasha assured the American envoy that “not only his own personal feelings were peculiarly friendly towards the Government and people of the

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105 Ibid., VI:Doc. 250, pg 45.
106 Commodore John Rodgers to the Captain Pasha, September 20, 1825 United States Congress House, House Documents, Otherwise Publ. as Executive Documents: 13th Congress, 2d Session-49th Congress, 1st Session, 1832, Doc. 250, pg. 43. Rodgers first endeavored to set a meeting with the Captain Pasha in September 1825. In the letter, Rodgers wrote that “it is believed in America, that nothing but the opposition and jealousy of certain European diplomats at Constantinople, more friendly to their own interests than to those of the Ottoman Empire, have hitherto impeded the accomplishment of the wishes of the Government of the United States to enter into friendly relations with the Porte, the perfecting of which would so obviously be the means of benefitting both countries.”

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Untied States, but that he could confidently add, that, on this subject, his sovereign, (the Sultan,) entertained sentiments similar to these he had just expressed. “

Rodgers assured the Pasha of the U.S. commitment to neutrality in European affairs (likely a reference to the current war in Greece) and that “our Government would regret to take any measures which might possibly tend to disturb the friendly relations at present subsisting…” The Captain Pasha was evidently satisfied with the Americans’ pledge of respect. He assured them that because of his successful campaign against the Greeks at Missolonghi, he was now “a greater favorite than ever with the Grand Seignor” and that he expected to be appointed Grand Vizir upon his return to Constantinople. In four months time, the Pasha assured them, an answer would be conveyed to the commander of the squadron.

Despite Rodgers’ optimism in the summer of 1826, the favorable word he waited for from Constantinople did not arrive. In February, Rodgers wrote to Clay expressing dismay that the squadron had still received no contact from the Captain Pasha. Rodgers offered what he believed to be the primary reason for the delay. Rodgers reported to the Secretary of State that European agents had been intentionally circulating information concerning the Greek frigate controversy. Europeans publicized that the American navy had purchased one of the ships originally commissioned by the provisional Greek army. The federal government had stepped in and purchased this ship gave the impression that

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the U.S. officially sympathized and supported Greek independence. Europeans used this scandal to discredit Americans in the pasha’s eyes.  

One of the American-built ships, The *Hope* (renamed *Hellas*), set sail for Greece in August 1826, roughly the same time Rodgers was attempting to settle plans for negotiating the treaty with the Sublime Porte. An enthusiastic American crew was recruited to deliver the ship to Greece. One Philadelphia newspaper reported that that there was so much enthusiasm in acquiring these positions that “two hundred persons have applied for the office of Captain’s clerk.” When the *Hope* arrived at Nafplio, seat of the provisional Greek government, it was rumored that the captain had been sent to offer his services on behalf of the United States. Both the captain and the crew had a difficult time convincing the grateful Greeks that no such arrangement had been made.

Both Rodgers and Offley had similarly difficult tasks in assuring Turkish officials that the United States had no intention to officially support the Greeks nor that they had plans to recognize Greece as an independent nation. Turkish officials had come to believe that the frigate *Hope* contained a cargo consisting of “large quantities of arms, and naval and military stores” which had been “transmitted to Greece for the use of their enemies, and that this had been done with the knowledge and sanction of our Government.”

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109 The Greek Frigate Controversy dominated newspaper headlines and several pamphlets were printed on the subject. “Papers in Relation to the Greek Ship Liberator,” 746–748; Contostavlos, *A Narrative of the Material Facts in Relation to the Building of the Two Greek Frigates*; Platt, Ogden, and De Rham, *Report of the Evidence and Reasons of the Award between Johannis Orlandos & Andreas Luriottis, Greek Deputies, of the One Part, and Le Roy, Bayard & Co., and G.G. & S. Howland, of the Other Part*; Henry D. Sedgwick, *Refutation of the Reasons Assigned by the Arbitrators, for Their Award in the Case of the Two Greek Frigates* (New York: Printed by J. Seymour, John Street, 1826); “The Concern of the People of the United States for the Greek Cause”; “Greek Meeting.”


Dealing with these rumors was a difficult task for Offley, English, and Rodgers. Offley and English wrote on several occasions that it was difficult to convey to Turkish officials the political complexities of American society. They could not comprehend a place where the public could be strongly in favor of one policy while the government took a completely different course of action. Rodgers indicated in his letter that he had done everything asked of him by the U.S. Government. Through his efforts Rodgers believed he had placed the United States in a prime position to achieve its commercial trade goals. Frustrated by the Greek frigate controversy, Rodgers informed Clay “if I should fail, before my return, in executing the business which led to my communication with the Capudan Pasha, it will not be my fault.”

Despite the fact no letter had been received from the Sublime Porte, Rodgers was still hopeful for continued negotiation. Rodgers commented that the Captain Pasha was more popular than ever; in fact, he had been promoted to Grand Vizir. The Pasha of Smyrna would be appointed the new Captain Pasha. If this intelligence proved to be correct and Rodgers could successfully distance the U.S. government from the frigate Hope, all of these political developments within the Turkish court would only buttress American hopes for a treaty.

Yet back at home, American officials delayed a decision on the treaty due to the continuing popular support for the Greeks. The fall of Missolonghi combined with the Greek frigate controversy increased public enthusiasm for the Greeks to a fever pitch. Donations for Greece poured into New York, Philadelphia, and Boston Greek Relief Societies from all corners of the country. Many communities worked in conjunction with
others with the hope that such a gesture “would open to them, and to us, a common channel of communication with Greece.” National solidarity in support of the Greeks energized the movement, giving it a life of its own.

Given the widespread popularity of the Greek cause, it was difficult to convince the Sublime Porte of the U.S. respect and support for the Ottoman Empire. Around the same time, however, the major thrust of American philhellenic relief shifted from the embattled Greek Army and moved toward providing more aid for Greek civilians. George Bethune English may have encouraged this shift. He hoped that the United States would appear less sympathetic to the enemies of the Sublime Porte. With an emphasis now placed on aiding non-combatant Greeks, primarily women, children, and the elderly, public aid came primarily in the form of clothing and food instead of weapons and supplies for the army.

This was an important moment in the philhellenic movement. Yet it did not necessarily convince the Turks. American agents in the Levant could now convincingly argue to the Sublime Porte that the American Government was acting in a neutral fashion in the Greek Rebellion. Nonetheless, the shift did not expedite the process. Yet another envoy to the Levant returned without definite hope of acquiring a treaty with the Sublime Porte. In 1828 Commodore Rodgers relinquished command of the squadron and George B. English died suddenly shortly before he left Washington on his third mission to the

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112 “Relief of the Greeks.”
113 Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 149 A chart illustrates the extent of public interest in sending food and supplies to Greek Civilians with eight ships leaving the United States for Greece.
Levant. David Offley would be the only familiar face if negotiations indeed went forward. By Spring 1828, however, these negotiations were on hold.

Commodore Rodgers and the crew of the Mediterranean Squadron were demoralized by the popular support of the Greeks in the United States. The fervor had complicated their duties in the Mediterranean and through these experiences they viewed the American Philhellenic Movement as being detrimental to American interests abroad. John Quincy Adams wrote in his diary in March 1828 that he met with Commodore Rodgers, who had recently returned from the Mediterranean. The commodore informed the president of his “bitter contempt of the Greeks, whom he represents as a mere nest of pirates” and conveyed “severe ridicule of the contributions levied in this country to sustain the Greek cause.” Rodgers’ sentiments were understandable given that he had spent over a year in the Mediterranean working toward a commercial treaty for the United States, only to be denied his objective because of blatant popular American support for Greek independence. Adding insult to injury was Rodgers’ incessant encounters with Greek pirates. President Adams, while thanking him for his service, informed him: “the prejudice in favor of the Greeks in this country was so warm that even the attempt to negotiation with the Turks would meet with censure.”

The efforts to secure a treaty frustrated American merchants. Merchants who had been waiting anxiously for almost ten years for improved commercial relations in the Mediterranean knew that the widespread support for the Greek War at home was an important hindrance for why a treaty had not yet been signed. Adding incident to injury

were the occasions of Greek piracy committed against these American merchants.
Labeled “mishellenes” by Henry A. Post, an American agent of the New York Greek Committee, this group of anti-Greeks consisted of naval officers, captains of merchant vessels, and any other person “whose duties call them to the Levant.”¹¹⁵

These “mishellenes” were placed in a difficult situation where they did not profess sentimental views on redeeming modern Greeks to their alleged ancient glory, but nevertheless were entangled in the Greek cause because the American government hesitated to go against popular opinion at home. Many of these men, including Commodore Rodgers and David Offley, saw openly siding with the Turks as being far more advantageous than supporting a rebellion with which they had little connection and stood to gain little commercial advantage.

Some of these mishellenes took matters into their own hands. There is at least once incident where American merchants in the Mediterranean actively supported the Turkish Army in Greece. American diplomat to Algiers, William Shaler, informed Secretary of State Henry Clay in the summer of 1825 that an American ship had reportedly assisted in transporting an Egyptian flotilla under the command of Ibrahim Pasha (the Ottoman general who would lead the Turks to a victory at Missolonghi) to the Morea on two separate occasions.¹¹⁶ There were also reports that one or two American merchantmen had served in the Turkish service in Greece as well. Shaler observed to

¹¹⁶ The Morea was the name associated with the Peloponnese peninsula in Greece from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century.
Clay that such actions “obviously tends to tarnish the purity of our Flags and to injure the national character in this part of the world.”

John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay agreed with Shaler. Clay instructed Somerville, the new agent to Greece, that “If any such instances should fall within your observation, you will acquaint the parties concerned with the high displeasure of the President at conduct so unworthy of American Citizens, and so contrary to their duty, as well as their honour; and that if they should bring themselves, in consequence of such misconduct, into any difficulties, they will have no right to expect the interposition of their Government in their behalf.” The United States trod a thin line of neutrality during the 1820s. While appeasement of the American public was important to the Monroe, Adams, and Jackson administrations given that various forms of aid were permitted to be dispatched to Greece, government officials also did not lose sight of what many of them saw as the most important means of advancing the fledgling nation: foreign commerce with the Ottoman Empire.

The United States finally secured a commercial agreement with the Sublime Porte with the assistance of David Offley in 1830. At last, after over ten years of anticipation, American merchants were permitted access to the Black Sea and were guaranteed equal treatment with that of other European powers who already enjoyed access to this trade network. In just fifty years, one treaty advocate observed, the United States had risen above “Those odious monopolies and impolitic restrictions, which have generally been

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deemed necessary by other nations…” to achieving a commercial trade “exceeded by that of only one kingdom.”

In later years, philhellenic philanthropists, and missionaries, reaped an unexpected benefit from better relations with the Ottoman Empire. Many of those who had supported the Greek cause would travel in increasing numbers to the Mediterranean and would journey more safely as a result. For many of these travelers, Greece would be their destination. The missionary spirit of spreading American ideals through education as well as religion fed the desire to assist Greece and its citizens as a developing independent nation. How these missionaries imagined the identity of the United States as a free and Christian nation played an important role in their mission work.

Conclusion

Henry A. V. Post, a New York Greek Committee agent, travelled to Greece on committee business in 1827. Post wrote a memoir on his travels and characterized the Greek War for Independence as a battle between liberty and tyranny, and Christianity and Islam. American philhellenes and missionaries alike shared a common outlook on the potential redemption of the Greek people. These ideals brought both groups to the shores of Greece in the 1820s. Fueled by American nationalism and an imagined connection between the United States and Greece, these Americans believed that they could assist the embattled Greeks in establishing a free society. They could educate them, convert them to an American Protestant Christian perspective, and help them realize the full

118 H. A. S. Dearborn, Wells and Lilly, and Annin & Smith, A Memoir on the Commerce and Navigation of the Black Sea, And the Trade and Maritime Geography of Turkey and Egypt: In Two Volumes: Illustrated with Charts (Boston: Published by Wells and Lilly, 1819), xv.
potential of their ancient heritage. By bringing knowledge and American Christianity to Greece, pro-Greek enthusiasts believed they could extend American freedoms to foreigners abroad. It was a way of giving back to the land that had given birth to their own political principles.

On the other side of the debate stood those who favored the expansion of American commerce. Even though many of these pro-commercial Americans intellectually sympathized with the Greek cause, they viewed diplomacy and commerce with the Ottoman Empire as being the best means for securing the stability and continued economic growth of the United States. For American merchants, their sense of American identity depended upon their ability to conduct business abroad. As they understood it, vanquishing pirates, keeping the seas free, and clearing the way for a prosperous trade with the Ottomans would produce far more lasting results for the country than a romanticized quest to share American revolutionary ideals.

The United States Government stood in the center of this debate. Early American diplomacy has been frequently couched in terms of neutrality with the Monroe Doctrine playing a pivotal role in the argument. While the U.S. government tried to pursue a neutral stance on European affairs, they were nevertheless drawn into foreign conflict through the will of the people at home as well as sailors and merchants abroad. This complicated the image each presidential administration of the 1820s wished to project to the rest of the world.

The Greek War for Independence forced Americans from many different groups to come to terms with their basic principles. Could the United States really stay neutral in
foreign affairs? Would the United States Government listen to popular opinion in
deciding foreign diplomatic matters or would politicians alone decide? Were
philanthropic and commercial goals so different that they could not co-exist? By 1830,
both sides had achieved a certain amount of success. Both American missionaries and
merchants now had the freedom to travel to the Middle East with their own divergent
visions of how to spread American liberty.
CHAPTER SIX: FROM PHILHELLENISM TO ABOLITIONISM AND WOMEN’S RIGHTS

In 1847, Hiram Powers’ statue, The Greek Slave, arrived in the United States. Displayed throughout the country, the sculpture provoked immense controversy wherever it was shown. Depicting a nude woman in the shackles of slavery, this one image brought together some of the most volatile issues of the day: the question of slavery, of women's rights, and of Greek independence. Figure 18 The statue combined classical artistry and appreciation for ancient Greece with the modern disgust with slavery in the Ottoman Empire. Although the Greek War for Independence had ended fifteen years earlier, Powers’ statue resonated with the American public, evoking Americans’ disdain for slavery in the Muslim world while reminding them that even in their own country, women – both black and white – were systematically oppressed.

Begun in 1821, the Greek War for Independence inspired popular support for a war of liberation, fought in the ancient birthplace of western democracy, against a supposedly despotic foe, the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire. Building on pre-existing dislike and mistrust, the Barbary Wars intensified hostility toward the Ottoman Empire. In the early nineteenth century, Americans characterized Turkish society as despotic to the core, lacking the kind of commitment to freedom and self-government that characterized both the ancient Greek city-states and ultimately the early American

republic. The nostalgic connection to ancient Greece, combined with the fact that the modern Greeks were living under Ottoman rule, played on American pride and led many American men and women to support the cause of Greek independence. Acting not only as individuals but also in organized groups known as philhellenic societies, they collected money, sent goods, and lobbied Congress for government aid to support the Greeks.

Among the many groups to raise funds were women. In the early years of the war, male organizers, such as Mathew Carey and Edward Everett, actively sought out female membership and support. The condition of women and children in Greece, who they claimed had been debased by tyranny for centuries, massacred by “Mahometans” and suffered the “pollution of the women by ferocious conquerors” was particularly persuasive in gathering this female support. American women reformers often focused on the condition of the newly freed Greek women. Their lack of education became a focal point for American education advocates such as Emma Willard and Almira Phelps who sought to rescue their Greek sisters from an oppressive life under tyranny.

As the reaction to the Powers statue suggests American men and women castigated the Ottoman Empire for its treatment of both slaves and women. In poems, books, plays, and public speeches, they repeatedly pointed out that the Ottomans’ customs regarding women and slaves revealed its truly barbarous and tyrannical nature. As public interest in the abolition of slavery grew some abolitionists compared slavery in the United States with that in the Ottoman Empire, calling the South the “Barbary States

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2 See Angelo Repousis, “‘The Trojan Women’: Emma Hart Willard and the Troy Society for the Advancement of Female Education in Greece,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 24, no. 3 (October 1, 2004): 445–76.

3 “Philadelphia, Jan. 5, 1824.”
of America. The Ottomans came to represent the ultimate symbols of tyranny as the oppressors of women and enslavers of Greeks and other people.

In ways that previous historians have failed to appreciate, public support for the Greek cause contributed to the creation of the early anti-slavery societies and women’s rights organizations. By the end of the 1820s, many American women and men began to draw connections between the condition of women and slaves in their own country and those in the far distant Ottoman Empire. Appropriating the critique of slavery and the degradation of women from the philhellenes, anti-slavery supporters and women’s rights advocates employed similar rhetoric to develop their own causes. By the end of the 1820s American advocates for abolition and women’s rights such as William Lloyd Garrison, David Walker, and Emma Willard invoked references to the Greek War and Turkish slavery in arguing for slavery’s eradication and improvement in the status of women in the United States. Long after the Greek War of Independence had ended in 1832, the ideas and tactics of the philhellenic movement contributed to the growing momentum of the American abolitionist movement and spurred increasing interest in the notion of women’s rights.

*Evolving Perceptions of Freedom Through a Turkish Lens*

Long before abolitionism and women’s rights became organized movements within the United States, forces were at work that shaped American perceptions of the Ottoman Empire. These perceptions would, in turn, lay the groundwork for growing

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hostility toward American slavery and a greater receptivity to the notion of women’s rights. Beginning in the 1780s, letters from American captives in Algeria were sent home and printed in local newspapers. Historian Lawrence Peskin speculated that American captives were permitted to send letters home because Algerian officials recognized that their pleas for freedom might eventually persuade their countrymen to pay the required ransoms. In the midst of the crises, the captivity tale surged as a popular literary genre, playing an important and influential role in how Americans came to know the Ottoman Empire.

The popularity of captivity tales which discussed experiences of westerners held as slaves informed and sustained negative feelings toward the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim World. American ideals were juxtaposed with those of Muslim slave masters, providing a rich commentary on American knowledge of slavery in the Muslim World. By the end of the Second Barbary War, a discernable shift had begun to take place within the captivity genre. Some American authors had begun to question the condemnation of slavery within the Ottoman Empire at the same time that slavery persisted within the United States.

Captivity tales at the end of the eighteenth century predominantly portrayed Muslim slaveholders as monsters. American captives desperately longed for the freedom of their homeland. One of the first widely read captivity tales written by an American was published in 1798. Authored by John Foss, one of the few surviving members of the brig Polly, was captured by Algerian pirates in 1793. Foss related his experiences as a slave in

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5 Peskin, Captives and Countrymen, 24.
algiers as well as his impressions of the different people he encountered. foss’s broader focus in relating the horrors of algiers suggests that he was making an overall judgment of life in algiers. he contrasted his strange life, where cruel and unusual punishment was commonplace, with life in america. life in algiers was directed by the turks, who “have all the government and power in their own hands, and no man can hold any post of great distinction among them except he is a turk.”6 foss viewed the turks as “savage barbarians” and that they were a “well built robust people, their complexion not unlike americans, tho’ somewhat larger, but their dress, and long beards, make them appear more like monsters, than human beings.”7 foss presented to his readers a portrait of a Turk, whose cultural differences rendered the person an alien, even a monster in the mind of the american captive.

Although fictional, royall tyler’s the algerine captive had a different message than john foss’s account. first published in 1797, the algerine captive is a tale about a young american scholar and adventure seeker who was enslaved in 1788. a fictional character, doctor updike underhill is hired to serve as surgeon onboard a slave ship bound for africa from london with south carolina intended as the final destination. enslaved by Algerian pirates, underhill related that he was forced to labor under such excruciating conditions that he was finally sent away for medical attention. while in the hospital, underhill conversed with a muslim man who tried to convert underhill to Islam. underhill proudly proclaimed he had held on to “The religion of my country…”8

6 Quoted in baepler, white slaves, african masters, 87.
7 Ibid., 88 and 92.
8 Tyler, the algerine captive; or, the life and adventures of doctor updike underhill, six years a prisoner among the Algerines (1797), vols. II, 70.
After his release, Underhill returned to “the freest county in the universe” eager to “contribute cheerfully to the support of our excellent government, which I have learnt to adore in schools of despotism…”

The author ultimately concluded that the people of the United States should learn from his experiences in Algiers. He asserted what he saw as being the supreme concern of the United States: union. For to no other nation besides the United States “can that ancient saying be more emphatically applied – By United We Stand, By Dividing We Fall.” Not only did Tyler view the Ottoman way of life as being a threat to individual freedom of American sailors, but he also saw the preservation of the American form of government as the guarantor of liberty, preventing the U.S. from succumbing to a similar form of despotism.

Yet even as they read tales about the captivity of American sailors and citizens, Americans themselves were complicit in the institution of slavery. Did it occur to Americans at home and abroad that their condemnation of Ottoman slavery was hypocritical given that African slavery persisted in a nation they labeled as the freest in the world? The answer to this question is both yes and no. Not until the late 19th did they begin to grasp the full meaning of this equivalence. The shift toward this realization began, however, several decades before while the United States was embroiled in the Barbary Wars.

In 1798, American captive John Foss viewed the biggest difference between Americans and the Turks as based in the different types of governments the two nations

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9 Ibid., 227.
10 Ibid., 228.
employed. Foss even seems to suggest, based on his observation that the Turks looked very similar to Americans and then argues that even his own captors were impressed with the American efforts to free their citizens from the Algerian captors, that if liberty were instituted in Algiers such cruel atrocities against the different people residing there would no longer exist. Foss’s sentiments on this subject are best summed up with his description of the reactions from his captors when he and his fellow Americans were finally freed:

The Republican government of the United States have set an example of humanity to all the governments of the world. –Our relief was a matter of admiration to merciless barbarians, They viewed the character of Americans from this time in the most exalted light. They exclaimed, that ‘Though we were slaves, we were gentlemen;’ that ‘the American people must be the best in the world to be so humane and generous to their countrymen in slavery.’

Foss does not, however, make mention of the persistence of slavery in the United States when discussing the people of Algiers. In his mind, he is a citizen of the United States and therefore guaranteed liberty by his country. Slaves in the United States evidently, in John Foss’s mind, were not citizens and therefore lay outside of this guarantee.

The racially ordered social hierarchy of the United States would have made it difficult for even the American captives in the Barbary States to identify their situation with those of African slaves at home. Foss’s failure to draw connections between his experience as a captive and those of African slaves did not necessarily reflect larger attitudes. Historian Lawrence Peskin has observed that Foss lifted a significant amount of text for his own captive tale from a popular history of the time, A Short History of Algiers by Mathew Carey. First published in 1793, Carey observed, “We are not entitled to charge the Algerines with any exclusive degree of barbarity. The Christians of Europe

11 John Foss, A Journal of the Captivity and Sufferings of John Foss; Several Years a Prisoner in Algiers (Boston: Angier March, printer., 1798), 55.
12 Peskin, Captives and Countrymen, 77.
and America carry on this commerce an hundred times more extensively than the Algerines.” Carey continued by admonishing his fellow Philadelphians in pointing out: “Nobody seems even to be surprised by a diabolical kind of advertisements, which, for some months past, have frequently adorned the newspapers of Philadelphia.”

Although Carey was in the minority for his time in making such a connection, Foss undoubtedly read Carey’s work and would have at least been exposed to this sentiment. Nonetheless, in his own work Foss did not pursue the meaning of Carey’s insight about slavery in the two regions.

However, Royall Tyler’s *The Algerine Captive* made an observation similar to Carey’s a few years later. Employed to inspect the bodies of the newly enslaved to determine whether they were suitable for sale, Tyler’s fictional character, Dr. Underhill, lamented that the inspection was “transacted with all that unfeeling insolence, which wanton barbarity can inflict upon defenceless wretchedness.” After he was taken as a slave by Algerian pirates, Underhill was comforted by one of the Africans who he had just days before examined for the slave ship. Underhill was humbled by the gesture. Underhill later was confronted by a Muslim cleric who attempted to convert him to Islam. Underhill could not deny that although the “Christians of your southern Plantations” baptized their slaves as brothers and sisters in the same faith, they continued to keep them in chains. In contrast, under Islamic law, one could not keep fellow

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Muslims as slaves.\textsuperscript{15} Through his experiences Underhill was forced to recognize that the United States, though he loved it and held it to be the freest country in the world, was flawed. Tyler concluded his tale with Underhill pledging that if he should ever be freed he “will fly to our fellow citizens in the southern states; I will, on my knees, conjure them, in the name of humanity, to abolish a traffic, which causes it to bleed in every pore.”\textsuperscript{16}

Perhaps the most famous American of this era, Benjamin Franklin, also criticized American slavery by juxtaposing the enslavement of Americans in Algiers with that of African slaves in the United States. In 1790, Franklin anonymously published an article in \textit{The Federal Gazette} that not only criticized a pro-slavery speech made in Congress, but also suggested that slavery in the United States was no better than slavery in the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{17} Franklin parodied a pro-slavery speech made by Congressman James Jackson by putting Jackson’s words into the mouth of a pro-slavery Muslim, Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, a supposed member of the Divan of Algiers.\textsuperscript{18} Franklin introduced Ibrahim to Jackson by observing that the two posessed “surprising similarity.” To prove it Franklin provided his readers with a mock letter written from the point of view of the pro-slavery Muslim. Ibrahim stated that if Algiers did not continue to enslave Christian sailors,

\begin{quote}
Who in this hot climate, are to cultivate our lands? Who are to perform the common labours of our city, and in our families? Must we not then be our own slaves? … If then we cease taking and plundering the Infidel ships, and making slaves of the seamen and passengers, our lands will
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} Egan, \textit{Oriental Shadows}, 83–84; Lambert, \textit{The Barbary Wars}, 120–122.
become of no value for want of cultivation; the rents of houses in the city will sink one half? And the revenues of government arising from his share of prizes must be totally destroyed. And for what? To gratify the whim of a whimsical sect! who would have us not only forbear making more slaves, but even to manumit those we have…. Nor can the plundering of infidels be in that sacred book forbidden, since it is well known from it, that God has given the world and all that it contains to his faithful Mussulmen, who are to enjoy it of right as fast as they can conquer it.\(^{19}\)

Franklin’s article was a biting one, satirically suggesting that economic and biblical evidence to support for slavery can be placed at the feet of the despotic, tyrannical Ottoman Turks, a society seen as antithetical to that of the United States. Franklin’s use of the Oriental tale transports his readers into the mind of a Turk, an exercise that probably shocked his audience. To early Americans, the Turks were the mysterious “other” in literature, a foil to the heroic and free American citizen found in contemporary literature. Casting Americans as Turkish slaveholders was specifically intended to be a troubling image.\(^{20}\) A more commonplace late eighteenth-century perspective toward slavery would have referred to it as a regrettable institution, but necessary in order to maintain social and economic order. The racially ordered social hierarchy of the United States would have made it difficult for even the American captives in the Barbary States to identify their situation with those of African slaves at home.\(^{21}\)

Anti-slavery literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century often claimed that slavery undermined the social and economic potential of a republic rather than promoting it. A pamphlet authored by Noah Webster, for example, referenced the

\(^{21}\) For further reading on social hierarchy in the early U.S., see Edmund Sears Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975), 381; Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen*, 73; See also Michal Jan Rozbicki, *Culture and Liberty in the Age of the American Revolution* (University of Virginia Press, 2011).
“pernicious effects of Slavery, on the moral character, the industry and prosperity of nations” as the reason for why the modern Greeks were, in his view, lazy, dispirited, and debased at the hands of the “lazy Turks.”22 The African slave, therefore was a reflection of his or her environment rather than a reflection of racial inferiority.

Americans living outside of the northern states also shared Webster’s sentiments. During the ratification debates over the U.S. Constitution in Virginia, the issue of slavery dominated discussion. Participants in the debate included Patrick Henry, George Mason, and Edmund Randolph who all referred to slavery as a weakness that oppressed Virginia “with debts and slaves” and would prove their state to be a “despicable figure in history.”23 Each of these men, while condemning slavery, argued for its continuation on the basis of a paternalist necessity. They were also more concerned with the effects of slavery on white people than on the enslaved people themselves. Patrick Henry interestingly made a passing comment referring to Turkish enslavement of American sailors stating that that “the Turkish Grand Signior, alongside of our President, would put us to disgrace; but we should be as abundantly consoled for this disgrace, when our citizens have been put in contrast with the Turkish slave. The most valuable end of government is the liberty of the inhabitants.”24 Henry pointed to American captives stripped of their liberty by the Turks. He did not portray Americans as slaveholding, barbaric tyrants, or claim denying African slaves citizenship was hypocritical.

22 Noah Webster, *Effects of Slavery, on Morals and Industry* (Hartford, CT: Hudson and Goodwin, 1793), 8.
While most captivity tales of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries did not draw connections between American slaves held captive in the Barbary States and African slaves held captive in the United States, one narrative published at the conclusion of the Barbary Wars did. This overwhelmingly popular and influential captive tale was by James Riley. Born in Connecticut during the American Revolution, Riley came to be the captain of the brig *Commerce* in 1815. After the brig was shipwrecked off the coast of present day Western Sahara, Riley and his crew wandered for quite some time before they eventually made contact with a group of Arabs, who immediately enslaved them. After two years, Riley escaped slavery and returned to the United States. He published his story in 1817. The story was an immediate success in both the United States and England. Riley’s reflection upon his captivity and the persistence of slavery in the United States makes his story stand out from earlier captivity tales.\(^{25}\)

Aided by an Arab who sympathized with Riley as a father of a young family, Riley was delivered into the protection of a British consul in the port city Mogadore in Morocco. Riley’s horrific ordeal was finally at an end, but not without gaining a changed perspective on slavery in general. Not unlike other captivity tales, the freed captain returned home. In his memoir, he wrote “I have drunk deep of the bitter cup of sufferings and woe; have been dragged down to the lowest depths of human degradation and wretchedness… enduring the most excruciating torments, and groaning, a wretched

slave… of barbarous monsters…” Riley deviated from the usual formula. Instead of ending his story there he continued with observing that even though he had been restored to his family and “the comforts of civilized life” where citizens are guaranteed “the greatest share of personal liberty, protection, and happiness… my proud-spirited and free countrymen still hold a million of the human species in the most cruel bonds of slavery, who are kept at hard labour and smarting under the savage lash of inhuman, mercenary drivers, and in many instances enduring besides the miseries of hunger, thirst, imprisonment, cold, nakedness, and even tortures.” He continued in this fashion by explaining that, “I have now learned to look with compassion on my enslaved and oppressed fellow creatures, and my future life shall be devoted to their cause: I will exert all my remaining faculties to redeem the enslaved, and to shiver in pieces the rod of oppression.” As a result of this declaration, Riley transformed his narrative into an anti-slavery tract.

Unlike Royall Tyler’s fictional character who made a similar declaration, Riley had in fact been a slave in northern Africa, providing weight to his conclusion concerning slavery in America. In fact, his captivity was reported widely in newspapers beginning in January 1816. Riley himself had written the reports, which also detailed some of his and the crew’s sufferings in slavery. Even before his memoir was made available, there was a rising interest in Riley’s story. Shortly after its publication, some readers accused the author of being a fraud, arguing that the story was filled with “falsehoods and

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27 Reports of the loss of the Brig Commerce and its captain, James Riley, can be found in newspapers throughout the states, especially in New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, and in towns near Washington.
misrepresentations.” These accusations were quickly quashed as members of the crew came to their captain’s defense by writing and printing reviews of the narrative. Riley himself seemed to be aware that his conclusion would be controversial. He argued that while he was not in favor of immediate emancipation, he did “desire that such a plan should be devised, founded on the firm basis and the eternal principles of justice and humanity, and developed and enforced by the general government, as will gradually, but not less effectually, wither and extirpate the accursed tree of slavery, that has been suffered to take such deep root in our otherwise highly-favoured soil.” In the years after his release, Riley became an active member of the colonization movement.

Captain James Riley’s book did not immediately ignite an awakening among his fellow countrymen in recognizing the parallels between their own institution of slavery and that of the Ottoman Empire. Yet Riley’s narrative enjoyed popularity in northern and southern states alike indicating. At the same time the narrative was not viewed as a threatening piece of literature. The narrative did inspire, however, animosity toward Arabs and their enslavement of Riley and his crew. Jared Sparks, then the editor of the North American Review in Boston, suggested why Riley’s narrative did not generate as much attention to his conclusion as did his wanderings as a slave in Morocco. In his review of the narrative, Sparks defined the purpose and use of a travel narrative. He stated that “the eye of criticism should pass gently over the pages of the traveler.” The facts of a travel narrative more often than not could not be proven completely accurate

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28 “Whereas, a Certain Book, Bearing the Title An Authentic Narrative of the American Bring Commerce,” The National Advocate, November 19, 1817.
29 James Riley, Loss of the American Brig Commerce: Wrecked on the Western Coast of Africa (J. Murray, 1817), 590; See also Allison, The Crescent Obscured, 224.
and were often not written by scholars to begin with. Thus, Sparks dismissed Riley’s reflection on slavery in America by suggesting that authors of travel narratives should “keep in the humbler walks of plain narrative and simple description, and venture to leave the more weighty and less obvious concerns of governments, national character, and historical disquisitions, to statesmen, civilians, and philosophers.”

Despite Sparks’ criticism, Riley’s narrative made a lasting impression. A second edition of the narrative was printed in the United States by 1818 and also enjoyed popularity in Europe. By 1850, more than a million copies of the narrative had been printed, making Riley’s work perhaps one of the most circulated in the first half of nineteenth-century America. A sequel to his narrative was published posthumously in 1851, which detailed his life after he regained his freedom in 1817 to his death in 1840. The sequel included copies of fan mail sent to Riley as well as correspondence between himself and members of the American Colonization Society. His narrative perhaps made a long lasting contribution to the debate on slavery. Future proponents for its abolition, most notably Abraham Lincoln, claimed to have been influenced by the Riley narrative.

That Riley’s captivity narrative received some criticism for its juxtaposition of slavery in the Barbary States and the persistence of slavery in the United States was indicative of the rising tensions over slavery. By the end of the War of 1812, northerners

33 McMurtry, “The Influence of Riley’s Narrative upon Abraham Lincoln,” 135; The publishers of Riley’s sequel observed that many young readers of the first several editions of Riley’s original narrative were greatly influenced by his story Riley and Riley, *Sequel to Riley’s Narrative*, v.
increasingly began to see southern slaveholders as despotic tyrants, dedicated to slavery rather than Union. Just as Riley’s experience as a slave in Algiers, slavery in the United States depended on the use of physical force and coercion.\textsuperscript{34} Sources penned by American philhellenes suggest that it was the popular movement surrounding the Greek War that provided another source through which incipient anti-slavery sentiment might gain momentum.

In many ways, the philhellenic movement in the United States represented a transition between the charitable movements of the first decades of the early nineteenth century and the antislavery and women’s rights movements of the late 1820s. Philhellenic enthusiasm and the popularity of American captivity tales composed the general attitude Americans had toward the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the Greek War, but few Americans connected African slavery in America to the subjugated condition of the modern Greeks. After a few years, there was a distinctive shift in which antislavery and women’s rights advocates began to use American support for the Greek War to point out the lack of interest in supporting such causes at home. The emergence of this shift in rhetoric carried with it a large base of supporters from the philhellenic cause and instilled some of the same attitudes and perceptions into both the antislavery and women’s rights movements of the antebellum era.

Everett and Mathew Carey and many others had relied on the involvement of women and actively appealed to them to join the cause. As the Baltimore Greek aid society had said in recruiting women, females should “depart from that retired circle, in which a judicious state of society requires the ladies of this country usually move, and use the influence which is allotted them, in relieving from starvation the suffering females of a foreign land, whose sons and husbands are fighting the battles of the cross against the crescent.”

Women were able to devote themselves to the Greek cause because of the sentimental and patriotic foundations of the philhellenic movement – that by securing the freedom for the modern Greeks they were working towards a revival of the once great birthplace of liberty and democracy. Moreover, once the movement focused more on humanitarian goals – aiding and educating Greek women and children, women were more comfortable supporting the cause. Female activism in the philhellenic movement would also have important consequences for further activism in the years that followed the Greek War.

In becoming involved in such a movement, these women, like their male counterparts, held that they were extending the benefits of their own revolution to the most deserving of nations. In the most active years of the American support for the Greek War after 1825, philhellenic rhetoric elevated the image of a young, virtuous, defenseless Greek female destined to become enslaved by the Turks as the symbol of the Greek cause – an image that often appealed to women.

Women began to establish the first American-run schools in Greece in 1828. Education efforts in Greece were focused on moving “towards the emancipation of the

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minds of Greece from their long bondage.”

The American Board of Missions worked in conjunction with the Ladies’ Greek Committee of New York. Individuals such as the founder of the first female institution for higher learning in the United States, Emma Willard and her sister Almira Phelps, also participated. One Greek refugee later singled out Willard and Phelps in his memoir. Christophoros Castanis recognized that women had provided crucial support for education of the Greeks. Ongoing female involvement in the philhellenic movement in America developed into an independent philanthropic cause that advocated for the education of their Greek women and children. The primarily goal for the new schools in Athens and elsewhere was to bring intellectual freedom to all parts of the civilized world.

The Greek cause proved to be an important expansion of female benevolence, making it possible for American women to make a difference for the uneducated and exploited both at home and abroad.

American Liberty and Philhellenism Questioned

As a result of the immense success of philhellenic efforts to raise funds for the Greek cause, those who endeavored to gather support for more marginally popular causes, such as the abolitionist and women’s rights movements, began to use the popularity of the Greek cause for their own purposes. While most antislavery and women’s rights literature did not focus on drawing detailed parallels between the inherent

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37 Castanis, The Greek Exile, 212.

38 For further reading on American education offering in Greece, see Repousis, “The Trojan Women”; Winterer, The Mirror of Antiquity, 168.
relationship between the Greek and antislavery causes, their authors did. Such pamphlets began to emerge by 1825 when the Greek cause enjoyed renewed interest after Byron’s death and the fall of Missolonghi. Authors identified the paradox – if not outright contradiction – of seeking to free the Greeks from Turkish slavery while enslaving African-Americans in their own country. Using similar rhetoric as the philhellenes, abolitionist and women’s rights advocates managed to increase support for their own movements, a phenomenon that continued well after the Greek War for Independence concluded in 1831.

Perhaps the most famous white abolitionist of the antebellum era almost made his humanitarian debut as an American philhellenic soldier. William Lloyd Garrison was just twenty years old when the Greek cause in America was at its height of popularity. Caught up in the midst of the pro-Greek fervor, Garrison, like many other youths of the time, aspired to defend the Greeks from the tyrannical Turks by training as a soldier in order to join the Greek Army. Garrison probably read about fellow Massachusetts-born Samuel Gridley Howe and his adventures in Greece in local newspapers. Garrison seriously considered a military education at West Point in order to “join the forces of the revolutionists against Turkish tyranny” after completing his apprenticeship with the Herald newspaper. Whether discouraged by the warnings printed in these newspapers that life in the Greek Army was an arduous ordeal or that his financial or professional career did not allow for it, the budding abolitionist ultimately decided not to join the Greek forces. The young Garrison did go on to write for a newspaper called The Free

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Press and played a small role in the spread of philhellenic literature as the newspaper printed many articles on the Greek War effort.\textsuperscript{40}

Philhellenic rhetoric, however, stayed with Garrison throughout his life and made many appearances in his abolitionist writing. For example, in 1828 Garrison participated in a Fourth of July celebration in his hometown of Newburyport, Massachusetts where he read the Declaration of Independence and also recited an ode he had written for the occasion. Garrison’s ode focused upon the colonists’ successful efforts to cast off British tyranny and referenced the ongoing disagreement on American slavery between the North and South: Despite “plots of division, though artfully done, Will fail on a people whose hearts are but one!” Garrison acknowledged the need to eradicate “tyranny” from American soil, undoubtedly a reference to the persistence of slavery. “Our march” he said, “must keep pace with the march of the mind, progressing in grandeur for ever and ever; our deeds and example are laws to mankind, And \textit{Onward to Glory}! Shall be our endeavor… For the reign of free thoughts and free acts has begun…”\textsuperscript{41}

Garrison made only one specific reference to tyranny outside of the United States and this was to Greek subjugation under the Turks: “A prayer and a tear for the suffering brave - For Greece in this day of her terrible anguish! May the Turkish oppressor be hurled in the grave… and punish the shedders of innocent blood; then peace, hope, and love, like a river shall run, And dwell with a people whose hearts are but one!” Garrison’s ode compares the Greek War to the American Revolution and alludes to the hope that

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 63–64.  
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 96–97.
once the Turks were defeated Greece also establish their own nation as the patriots of 1776 had over fifty years previously.

A few years later, Garrison’s continued to adroitly use Greek War rhetoric as part of his antislavery argument. In 1831, Garrison openly accused his countrymen of being hypocrites for supporting the Greeks and not African slaves. In a piece titled “The Insurrection,” which was printed in Garrison’s publication *The Liberator*, Garrison reprimanded his contemporaries who feared slave insurrection and flatly stated that African slaves did not need to be pushed into insurrection by abolitionist influence. Instead they could find incentive “in their stripes - in their emaciated bodies – in their ceaseless toil.” Garrison continued his accusation of hypocrisy by pointing out that most Americans had applauded the Greek insurrection and observed that African slaves “deserve no more censure than the Greeks.”

In another article written for the New England Anti-Slavery Society, Garrison pushed the Greek War comparison further by pointing out that American tyranny was much more inexcusable than Turkish tyranny, given that the United States was supposed to be a nation of freedom and liberty. Attempting to turn the tables on his readers, Garrison asked his readers to recall that every body had applauded the Greek insurrection against the Turks, “except Mahmoud and his Pachas…Where is the difference between such a case and our own?”

Garrison’s persistent use of the Greek War as a comparison for African slavery in America indicates that it was a rhetorically effective one. For ten

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years, American philhellenes had asked the American public to be reflective about their intellectual origins and support Greece based on this sentimental connection to a people and nation to which most had never – and would never – travel. If Americans could be so engaged in supporting a far away revolution, perhaps they could be made to see that slavery in America was equally tyrannical.

Garrison’s writing, especially his “Insurrection” article, created quite the stir wherever it was reprinted, in both the North and South. One Portsmouth, Maine newspaper reported that North Carolinians were especially up in arms, demanding in 1831 that anyone who circulated The Liberator “ought to be barbecued.” The Portsmouth Journal made a similar historical connection as Garrison had with the Greek War, pointing out that if The Liberator would incite insurrection in the South, then the North Carolina Free Press should also stop publishing pieces about liberty and equality and “rejoicing at the success of the Greeks.”

Something had changed. Ten years before Americans had seldom connected the abolition of Greek slavery with the condition of slavery in the United States. African slaves were not the descendants of the ancient Greeks and the Greeks were certainly not of African descent. The spreading desire for freedom “which will not stop – which cannot be stopped” would eventually come to the American South, predicted the New Hampshire newspaper, and African slaves would, like their Greek counterparts, revolt.

Aside from the literature published by Garrison, the Greek War, as part of an antislavery argument, began to emerge in more mainstream publishing outlets by the

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45 Ibid.
mid-1820s. For example, one article, signed with the pseudonym “Acacius,” was printed in the *Columbian Centinel* in 1825. This article pointed out the hypocrisy of widespread support for the Greeks while ignoring the plight of the African slave. The article was accompanied by a printer’s note that suggested the abolitionist sentiments professed in the article were not yet common in the North as they would increasingly be in the decades to come. “The following communication has been under consideration for several days,” explained the printer, “We are aware how restive some of our southern fellow citizens are whenever the subject of it is discussed, but we cannot believe they can wish to suppress remarks on it…” The printer continued by vouching for the character of the author, while also withholding his name, explaining that he was an honorable and good man and thus despite the controversial subject matter, the editor had determined to print the article.

“Acacius’s” article was a response to a recent address that had been made by Daniel Webster at the dedication of the Bunker Hill Monument. In the address, Webster had referred to the “prosperous state of our country, and the exertions of our fathers for liberty and independence…” The author emphatically pointed out that “I have not observed any expression of sympathy for the millions of slaves in our own country or a word of regret that this land is emphatically a land of slavery as well as a land of freedom.”

The author focused much of his writing on explaining what he viewed as particularly hypocritical in Webster’s speech by mentioning the Greek War with

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46 “General Miscellany,” *Columbian Centinel American Federalist*, August 20, 1825.
reference to Turkish tyranny. “Prior to a resort to arms,” explained the author, “the condition of the Greeks was far less deplorable and degraded than that of the slaves of our country; and the Negroes have far more cause of complaint against our government than the Greeks had against the Turkish despotism. Why then, should we feel more for the Greeks of Europe than for the Negroes of America?” “Acacius” continued to scold Webster and others who had not given a thought to the servitude of the African race in the United States. He concluded that if the new Bunker Hill Monument should accurately convey to future generations the contemporary feeling toward freedom for Americans it should read “In A.D. 1825, Fifty years subsequent to the Battle for Liberty, The Inhabitants of the United States were a FREE PEOPLE, Excepting TWO MILLIONS of Slaves, Whose condition had excited but little sympathy.”

This indictment against Webster’s Bunker Hill Monument speech provided further controversy. One editor wrote that the article written by “Acacius” was more “likely to produce mischief.”47 Another response was printed in the Portsmouth Journal of Literature & Politics and questioned printing the article at all. Criticizing the Columbian Centinel as well as the author of the scathing editorial, the author of the Portsmouth Journal article wrote that:

Should newspaper paragraphs like that to which we have alluded only excite feelings hostile to slavery they would be harmless though at the same time superfluous because all unite in condemning slavery in the abstract; but when they tend merely to produce bitter feelings without pretending to show that the evil can be removed, they certainly do not extend the spirit of benevolence from which they probably spring.48

47 “For the Centinel. Notice of Remarks on a Letter to Mr. Webster,” Columbian Centinel American Federalist, October 22, 1825.
“Acacius” penned a response to his critics in October and defended his reasons for writing with such inflammatory language. “It is not my wish,” the abolitionist wrote, “to excite unpleasant feelings’ between the people of different sections of the country,” but rather to see the execution of plans to remove “from the nation the reproach of being a FREE – but slave holding people!”

Many other anti-slavery reformers began to challenge American support for the liberation of the Greeks while pointing out their comparative silence and inaction on the subject of slavery in the United States. Addressing the success of the philhellenic movement, they pointed to the huge amounts of aid that had been raised by communities throughout the country, especially in Boston and Philadelphia. At the same time, they noted Americans’ failure to devote as much attention to the injustices caused by slavery in their own country. Missionary and abolitionist Samuel Worcester rhetorically quizzed his readers: “Should such gallant spirits as the lamented Bozzaris [hero of the Greek Revolution] fall a sacrifice to the bow-string of the Grand Seignior, would you dress your countenances with smiles of joy? No – your hearts would wring with agonized emotion for the martyrs of liberty… And now you have no tear for the poor slave?”

A minister in Philadelphia similarly used the Greek cause to make his argument for colonization by pointing out, “When Greece, whose sons we had never enslaved, called on us for aid, who refused to contribute, or rather who did not rejoice to contribute? And shall we hold

49 “For the Centinel. Notice of Remarks on a Letter to Mr. Webster.”
50 Samuel M. Worcester, Essays on Slavery: Re-Published from the Boston Recorder and Telegraph (Amherst, MA: Carter and Adams, 1825), 22; Worcester was a missionary particularly known for his work with local Native Americans. American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, The Missionary Herald, 1821, XVIII:234.
back from Africa, when this society would send home her sons, whom we have stolen away?"  

White abolitionists were not the only individuals to use the Greek War as a literary rallying cry for the abolitionist cause. African American publications referenced the Greek War effort with frustration and appealed to their readers to recognize the similarities between the life of a Greek under Turkish rule and the life of an African slave under a southern master’s rule. Several articles were published in the first African American newspaper, *Freedom’s Journal*, at the height of the Greek Cause’s popularity in the late 1820s. One of these authors pointed out “We had many exhibitions of its [slavery’s] character, during the late ardour in behalf of the Greeks. It would be instructive to take any of the addresses, speeches, or resolutions made on that occasion, and to see how many of the most odious features of Turkish slavery may be fairly matched in this free and enlightened country.” The author continued at length to compare Greek servitude under the Turks and given all of the American support the Greeks enjoyed over the African slave the author concluded “What generous mind would not rather be the Greek than the black?”  

Another article written more than a year later similarly referred to the widespread interest in the Greek cause and the lack of public fervor with regard to slavery in their midst. “In the midst of these nations who call themselves the friends of liberty and humanity,” wrote an author from *Freedom’s*  

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Journal, “involuntary servitude is justified while it is even a problem whether the understanding of Negroes be of the same species with that of white men.”

Still another example of an African American abolitionist using the Greek War effort as an important rhetorical tool was David Walker, a former slave and outspoken abolitionist. Printed in 1829, Walker’s radical pamphlet, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular and very Expressing to those of the United States of America*, rallied both free and enslaved African Americans to stand up to the institution of slavery. As others of similar mind had done, Walker referred to the Greek War and the widespread support for it in the United States in contrast to the lack of interest in eradicating slavery from their society. Walker most poignantly stated,

> I saw a paragraph a few years since in a South Carolina paper, which, speaking of the barbarity of the Turks, it said: ‘The Turks are the most barbarous people in the world – they treat the Greeks more like brutes than human beings.’ And in the same paper was an advertisement, which said: ‘Eight well built Virginia and Maryland Negro fellows and four wenches will positively be sold this day to the highest bidder!’

Eventually directing his arguments toward white Americans, Walker warned that they could not hide their hypocrisy from God even though “you can hide it from the rest of the world, by sending out missionaries, and by your charitable deeds to the Greeks.”

Contrasting popular interest in Greece with the lack of interest in the issue of American slavery proved to make for a powerful comparison. If the Turks were indeed barbaric for holding slaves, what made American slaveholders different? Racial differences did not provide sufficient justification. If Americans could see the similarity

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55 Ibid., 45.
between the Greeks and African slaves, then it would be clear that the institution itself was the problem, not the racial characteristics of the slaves. Americans might come to see that both groups were part of the human race and therefore deserving of the freedom and liberty enjoyed by white Americans. The abolitionist movement would be a beneficiary of American support for the Greek war for independence.

Some refugees from the Greek war actually made the case themselves for comparing the plight of the Greeks and American slaves. At least two active members of the abolitionist movement, Photius Fisk and John Zachos, were Greek orphans who had been rescued by American philhellenes and brought to the United States to be educated. Yet another Greek refugee who came to the United States through the financial assistance of the New York Greek Committee and wrote a memoir in which he condemned American slavery and encouraged Americans to see the similarity between the institution of slavery and the conflict that persisted within the Ottoman Empire.

One of the first memoirs published by a Greek refugee was a twenty-six year old who had experienced Turkish slavery first hand. Turkish soldiers captured Joseph Stephanini, a native of Greece born in 1803, while his village was under attack early on in the war. For several years Stephanini lived as a captive, not knowing whether he would ever see his family again. Through a series of fortunate events, Stephanini managed to escape his captors and eventually managed to gain passage on an American ship bound for New York. Arriving in New York, Stephanini was taken under the wing of the New York Greek Committee. The group granted him passage on a ship it was sending back to the Mediterranean stocked with relief items for the suffering Greeks. Stephanini became
a Greek Committee representative of sorts. Almost immediately he returned to the United States on another American ship carrying correspondence for the Greek Committee in Boston.57

On this second visit to the United States, Stephanini remained for several years, visiting supporters of the Greek cause in Charleston, South Carolina. It was on this visit to a southern, slaveholding state that Stephanini saw for himself the American institution of slavery. The former Greek slave attempted to keep his language uncontroversial by observing how much he admired America for their assistance to the Greek Cause. He concluded his memoir, however, by referring to African slavery stating: “The emancipation of a family from the miseries of slavery, - a slavery of whose horrors I can speak from bitter experience, is an enterprise which such a people, I confidently trust, will not refuse to aid.”58 Stephanini’s memoir, written and sold specifically to raise money to help him return to Greece to find his enslaved family, concluded on an abolitionist note. Given his understanding of Americans and their dedication to freedom, he believed that the American people would be moved to eradicate slavery from their borders.

Stephanini was a young, poor refugee who just a few years earlier had not been able to speak a word of English.59 There are questions about how much of his memoir he wrote himself. Nonetheless, the young Greek achieved national notoriety. Through the help of philhellenes in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, he travelled throughout the

58 Ibid., 128.
59 Stephanini stated in his memoir that when he arrived in New York he was completely ignorant of the English language, ibid., 118.
United States. Several newspapers reported on his travels. *The Vermont Gazette* printed that while unwilling to accept charity, Stephanini intended to publish a memoir that would help to raise ransom money to free his mother and sisters. The whole effort would be done in Charleston with the assistance of an unnamed South Carolinian.\(^6\) Published in 1829, Stephanini’s memoir was advertised as being a true story, no doubt intended to aid in selling more copies. To say the memoir was a true story was not enough. Following the preface, several well-known American men included letters of introduction for the young Greek refugee. The only South Carolinian who wrote a letter for the book, or who was thanked by Stephanini in his conclusion, was Thomas S. Grimke.

Thomas S. Grimke was the son of a wealthy South Carolina slaveholder and the brother of Sarah and Angelina Grimke, both of whom would emerge as outspoken advocates of the antislavery movement in the 1830s. Thomas Grimke was a respected lawyer as well as philanthropist, serving as a member of the American Colonization Society and the American Peace Society.\(^6\)

Grimke was not named as the South Carolinian who assisted Stephanini in editing his manuscript for publication. However, Grimke had at least some input: His letter of introduction for the memoir stated that he had examined Stephanini’s letters and therefore recommended him “with great pleasure to all who feel a sympathy for his personal misfortunes.”\(^6\)

That Stephanini’s memoir concluded with an abolitionist message, but was also expected to sell due to its philhellenic appeal, suggests that by the end of the 1820s

\(^6\) “A Young Greek Called Joseph Stephanini,” *Vermont Gazette*, April 7, 1829.
\(^6\) Stephanini, *The Personal Narrative of the Sufferings of J. Stephanini*. 
supporters of the philhellenic cause were beginning to see the connection between Greek slavery and African slavery. In his 1853 pamphlet, Charles Sumner, a Massachusetts politician who was an outspoken advocate of abolition, invoked the Turkish tyranny archetype, referring to the southern slaveholding states as the “Barbary States of America.”63 This was more than twenty years after the Greek War had ended.

Joseph Stephanini managed to collect enough proceeds from his memoir to leave the United States in order to return home to Greece.64 Other Greek refugees who arrived in the United States permanently claimed it as their new home. These Greek refugees were mere children when they came to America to receive an education sponsored by local Greek Committees. Photius Fisk and John Zachos were educated in the United States and carried their experiences from the Greek War into adulthood.

Photius Fisk came to the United States under the sponsorship of the American Board of Missions as well as philhellenic Americans. The only survivor of his family who witnessed atrocities inflicted upon his Greek community, Fisk “was imbued in childhood with that ardent love of liberty, and that undying destation of every form of slavery, which impelled him in his active manhood to persistent and efficient effort to advance the anti-slavery cause in the United States. He was an Abolitionist before he saw America.”65 Fisk became an ordained minister and was named a chaplain in the U.S. navy in 1841, where he frequently worked and conversed with officers who owned

63 Charles Sumner, White Slavery in the Barbary States (Boston: J. P. Jewett and company, 1853).
64 Stephanini’s departure from the United States was reported in local newspapers, “Sailed This Morning Ship Six Brothers,” Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser, October 27, 1829.
65 Hodge, Photius Fisk, 13.
slaves. Photius eventually decided to join the antislavery cause even though he knew that “social ostracism was the penalty of holding anti-slavery views.”

Throughout his life’s work for antislavery and other philanthropic causes, admirers of Photius Fisk recognized the connection between his devotion to the antislavery movement and his experiences in Greece, especially “the wrongs imposed upon the people of his country by the Turkish tyrants.” Fisk became well acquainted with William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Frederick Douglass, and many other members of the antislavery movement. Perhaps the most noteworthy member of the abolitionist movement with whom Fisk became associated was John Brown. Garrison introduced Fisk to John Brown in Boston in 1859 while Brown was in Boston making secret arrangements for his raid on Harper’s Ferry at the time. Holding Brown to be a “true friend of the anti-slavery cause,” Fisk contributed one hundred dollars to Brown’s mission.

Another Greek refugee also became an ardent abolitionist. John (Joannes) Celivergos Zachos was ten years old when he came to the United States under Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe’s care. Born into an affluent and educated Greek family, Zachos’s father served and died early on in the Greek War, leaving his mother to look after two small children in a war-torn country. Zachos spent the early years of his childhood fleeing from “a bloody enemy and a lawless soldiery” of their own people. One of the

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66 Ibid., 56–57.
67 Ibid., 13.
68 Ibid., 116–117.
69 Thomas Burgess, Greeks in America: An Account of Their Coming, Progress, Customs, Living, and Aspirations; with an Historical Introduction and the Stories of Some Famous American-Greeks (Sherman, French & company, 1913), 198.
young Greek’s earliest memories was of playing on the beach with his younger sister. Their nurse discovered them striking white balls with large white clubs. To the nurse’s horror, the white clubs were the “dried and bleached bones of some poor victims of the war.” At the end of the war, Zachos’s mother remarried a man who was acquainted with Samuel Gridley Howe. Fearing her new husband was not astute with their finances, Zachos’s mother agreed to allow Howe to take young Zachos to the United States to be educated. American philhellenic patrons paid for the young boy’s education and living expenses. Zachos graduated in 1840 and became an educator and school principal. During the Civil War, Zachos volunteered to serve on the Educational Commission of Boston and New York, a group organized to send teachers to the South in order to educate the newly freed slaves.\(^7^0\)

Zachos penned various pamphlets that revealed his interests in education as well as slavery. Zachos wrote several instructional pamphlets including a reader published in 1855 titled *The New American Speaker*, a title advertised by booksellers throughout the country. This work included a number of literary excerpts on the subject of Greek independence.\(^7^1\) In 1864, Zachos published a pamphlet entitled *An Appeal to the Friends of Education for the Immigrant, and the Freed-People of the South*, which was intended to raise money for the purpose of printing the Bible into phonetic English for distribution. Zachos’s own experience as a foreigner and his professional experience of educating freed slaves in South Carolina during the war compelled him to believe that “All these

\(^7^0\) Ibid., 200.
\(^7^1\) Zachos would have been a household name throughout the 1850s and 1860s as his readers were advertised everywhere from Connecticut to Texas to California.
ought to be taught to read as the first step towards the higher and broader life of American institutions.”

Late in 1862, Zachos volunteered with the Educational Commission of Boston and New York and was part of the Union presence in South Carolina. Zachos’ primary objective was to provide education to the newly freed slaves of the South. A news report printed in a New York newspaper related the arrival of the Union forces as well as the presence of “three to four thousand” freed slaves who had assembled to celebrate emancipation day. The “plentiful supply of abolition speeches” included an ode written by John C. Zachos declaring the African slaves finally free.

These Greek refugees made an impression on the American public in different ways, but their common identity as Greeks who had fled Turkish tyranny was the basis for public interest in their thoughts and lives. Their voices, like those of former African slaves such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Harriet Tubman, were similar in that what they had in common was the loss of their liberty and families at the hands of servitude. Greek refugees who began life under Turkish rule demonstrated that they too were valuable asset to the abolitionist cause.

Greek Women and American Women’s Rights

In addition to abolitionism, the cause of women’s rights would also benefit from the philhellenic movement. American women came to be involved in the Greek War
effort as an extension of other benevolent movements of the period. The Greek War effort was another important way in which women could be involved in public organizations with ideals and goals that society considered appropriate for female participation. Women connected the ideals of the philhellenic movement to other female reform societies such as temperance, anti-prostitution and Bible societies. These organizations built upon women’s domestic and familial roles within society and extended women’s reach beyond the home. Aiding Greek women and children, as we have seen, was an important way in which women came to be involved in the Greek War effort. Unlike previous benevolent movements, female participation in the Greek cause grew into an international movement, expanding female participation in the public sphere to not only include American women, but Greek women as well. Through their participation American women were able to expand their influence within “civil society” well beyond individual towns and communities.

Female access to education in the United States was a movement that had developed simultaneously with the American philhellenic movement. First gaining momentum in the post-Revolutionary era, female education reform in the United States had achieved popular support as a result of the spread of the idea of republican motherhood. As early as the 1780s, Benjamin Rush advocated for education reform for American women, founding the Young Ladies’ Academy of Philadelphia. Woman’s influence over children as well as their husbands made female education, in Rush’s view,

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75 Kelley, Learning to Stand & Speak Kelley’s work specifically addressed this topic.
an important reform to cultivate. Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* also influenced some of these education reforms, stating that educating young girls was important in order to “render women truly useful members of society” while also improving society as a whole. With the rise of the “middling classes” by the 1820s, more young girls were able to receive an education at female academies and were educated with curricula similar to that of their male counterparts.

Female education by 1820 was associated with uplifting and preserving feminine virtue. Women began to connect education with benevolence. Historian Mary Kelley has linked organized benevolent societies from 1797 to 1820 to the first generation of women who acquired advanced education at female academies. She also noted that these women legitimized their involvement in benevolent organizations through an emphasis upon a female moral superiority. This first generation of educated women influenced the next generation of young girls, who would incorporate this sense of feminine moral superiority to the emerging interest in aiding the poor and spreading moral reform.

By the 1820s, interest in providing access to education for women in the United States came to include an international dimension. Female interest in the Greek War had become increasingly concentrated toward aiding Greek women and children through sending aid and supplies. There is evidence that indicates that women from communities large and small, especially in the northern states, organized sewing circles and donation

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79 Ibid., 29.
drives to aid the Greeks. In the town of Utica, New York, for example, women made over five hundred garments with the help of their sisters from neighboring villages, sending the garments to Greece along with gifts and other donations.\textsuperscript{81} By the end of the 1820s, some women began to direct their attention toward assisting Greek women by raising money and dispatching teachers to Greece. American women believed that by providing education to Greek women they would not only uplift those who were educated, but also Greek families and eventually Greek society as a whole. The woman perhaps most involved in advocating the importance of female education reform on a global scale was the founder of the Troy Female Seminary, Emma Willard.

Emma Willard, born in 1787 in Connecticut, became devoted to the advancement of women’s education in the United States early in life. As the founder of the Troy Female Seminary in New York, Willard wrote to the New York State legislature in 1819 arguing that the ladies of America “have the charge of the whole mass of individuals, who are to compose the succeeding generation… How important a power is given by this charge! Yet, little do too many of my sex know how, either to appreciate or improve it.”\textsuperscript{82} Willard pointed out: “Civilized nations have long since been convinced, that education, as it respects males, will not, like trade, regulate itself… but female education has been left to the mercy of private adventurers.” Willard believed that the status of female


\textsuperscript{82} Emma Willard, \textit{An Address to the Public; Particularly to the Members of the Legislature of New-York, Proposing a Plan for Improving Female Education}, Second edition (Middlebury [Vt.]: Printed by J.W. Copeland, 1819), 5.
education in any nation reflected how civilized the society was as a whole. With hopes high the Greeks would prove successful in their revolution, Willard expressed concern for the immediate and long-term success of Greece as a stable nation. Associating education of both men and women with the success of any society, Willard applied these notions to a desire to educate the Greeks.

Willard was especially interested in educating Greek females. Her devotion to establishing a school at Athens was piqued after meeting a young Greek refugee. This individual had been so moved by Willard’s dedication to education that he wept “to see these American ladies and think of my own countrywomen. Yet nature has made them equal. Would that they too could be instructed!” Willard entered into negotiations with members of the American Board of Missions. She persuaded some of her former pupils to journey to Greece to establish the school. Willard observed, “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.”

Willard connected the issue of female education in Greece with her interest to spread female education not only throughout the United States, but the world. Ever the advocate for the advancement of female rights, Willard argued that it was imperative to establish schools in Greece while it was still a new nation in order to establish the roots of a successful and free nation where “half of these are females.”

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84 Emma Willard and Troy Society for the Advancement of Female Education in Greece, Advancement of Female Education: Or, A Series of Addresses, in Favor of Establishing at Athens, in Greece, a Female Seminary, Especially Designed to Instruct Female Teachers (Troy [N.Y.]: Printed by Norman Tuttle, 1833), 4.
85 Ibid., 9.
education in America had long argued that the success of the American Republic depended upon virtuous and enlightened mothers; Willard sought to extend this concept to other parts of the world. Through female education, Willard actively extended women’s influence abroad into a realm previously reserved for men only.\(^86\)

Many ladies’ benevolent organizations especially in northern states supported Emma Willard’s education reform for Greek women and children. Women from communities such as New Haven, New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia followed Willard’s organizational efforts through newspapers and ladies’ magazines, sending donations to advance the cause. One Philadelphia magazine reported that both men and women had organized a committee for the advancement of education in Greece. Appealing to the community for “Money, Books, Globes, Maps, Mathematical Instruments, Slates, &c.,” a public notice read: “Now is the time – they are leaving the manners of the East, and adopting those of Europe… If America does nothing now to form the character of this interesting people, the time for exertion will soon be past.”\(^87\)

The Troy Female Society raised 500 dollars to enlarge the building occupied by the Episcopalian Mission School at Athens. In response, a Boston women’s committee “formed themselves into a society co-operative with the Society in Troy for the ‘Advancement of Female Education in Greece.’”\(^88\) The New Haven Ladies’ Greek Association joined forces with a local mission, sending a Miss Mary Reynolds under the

\(^86\) Repousis, “The Trojan Women,” 461 Repousis made the interesting connection between Willard’s advocacy of education and nineteenth-century foreign affairs and imperialism.


\(^88\) “Female Education in Greece,” Ladies’ Magazine and Literary Gazette (1830-1833), September 1833, 424.
care of Reverend Josiah Brewer in December 1829 to commence “their benevolent labours on one of the Grecian islands.” The success of the society’s goal in educating Greek women and youths depended upon the aid of “those ladies who have heretofore taken an active interest in relieving the wants of the distressed families of Grecian patriots.”

While their focus continued to be on education, advocates for female education could not help but connect the denial of education to women to the status of slaves. One organization appealed for support on the basis that Greek civilians had formerly been slaves under the Turks and now must be aided in establishing a free society. Recalling the previous success of the American philhellenes, the public address stated: “While they were slaves, we did much to feed and clothe the body; now they are becoming freemen, shall we do nothing for the immortal mind?”

Samuel Gridley Howe, an American who had served in the Greek Army, wrote to Emma Willard on the subject of advancing education in Greece. Emphasizing the importance of her efforts, Howe referred to his own experiences in Greece, stating that there were many things that could prevent the advancement of women to their proper place in the new Greek nation: “The national traditions show that she has been the humble servant, or the petted slave of man from the remotest antiquity. During the last four centuries the country has been ruled by the Turks.

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90 “Education in Greece,” 146.
who deny to woman a participation in human nature.” Willard shared these sentiments. In 1833 she stated that female education in Greece was especially important because the Greeks had been slaves under Turkish rule for so long. It was necessary, argued Willard, for “others to resuscitate the principle of life within her. When this is once effected, she will walk abroad in her own strength and provide for herself and her children.”

Willard and her supporters began to identify the status of both American women and African slaves with the Greek women they supported. The women who advocated for female education throughout the civilized world increasingly connected American society’s willingness to keep both women and slaves uneducated, adding additional weight to their argument that American society should embrace advanced female education. In 1833, Willard’s sister, Almira Phelps, compared those who denied education to women to southern slaveholders. She noted that a bill for the endowment of a female seminary, “was defeated through the influence of those” who thought “of the evils which might result, from the enlightening the minds of those, who were destined to a limited and subordinate sphere.” Applying her thoughts of education as being the ultimate method of enlightening any group of people, Phelps observed that, “As respects the slave, this reasoning is undoubtedly correct; let the black population of the south be taught that they in fact possess the greater physical power; let their minds be opened to

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91 “The Experiment,” American Ladies’ Magazine; Containing Original Tales, Essays, Literary & Historical Sketches, Poetry, Criticism, Music, and a Great Variety of Matter Connected with Many Subjects of Importance and Interest (1834-1836), October 1834, 447.

the truths of man’s equality by nature and of the unjust tenure” of their bondage.\textsuperscript{93} In an address advocating for female education in Greece, Willard spoke about the long battle before her to spread female education from the United States to the rest of the world. Punctuating the address, Willard digressed, stating, “But I wish not to exhaust the subject of female education… Justice will yet be done. Woman will have her rights. I see it in the course of events. Though it may not come till I am in my grave.”\textsuperscript{94}

Emma Willard’s sentiments proved truer than she perhaps imagined. Female activism in the American philhellenic movement did open doors, however small, for American women. Through activism in Greek aid societies, women were able to extend their domestic domain to a public and political cause that included an international dimension. Working alongside their male counterparts, the ladies of America successfully formed female organizations and engaged other women throughout the country in the same pursuit. Achieving a sense of solidarity that was so widespread that even a population of people thousands of miles away marveled at American women’s devotion to the Greek cause. American women advanced their sex by aiding their sisters living under Turkish oppression. Female participation in the Greek cause heightened women’s receptivity to the larger question of women’s rights in the larger world.

\textsuperscript{93} Almira Lincoln Phelps, Lectures to Young Ladies, Comprising Outlines and Applications of the Different Branches of Female Education, for the Use of Female Schools, and Private Libraries (Boston: Carter, Hendee & co., 1833), 40.
\textsuperscript{94} Willard and Troy Society for the Advancement of Female Education in Greece, Advancement of Female Education, 9.
American men and women who viewed the 1847 unveiling of Hiram Powers’ statue *The Greek Slave* linked philhellenic sentiments with the impulses of abolitionism and women’s rights in a shocking yet powerful and persuasive new way. Trained in Europe, Hiram Powers sculpted *The Greek Slave*, which was the first nude statue to be accepted by the American public, depicted a young Christian Greek girl on a Turkish auction block.\(^95\) The statue toured the United States and was viewed by thousands of Americans, both male and female, throughout the country, stimulating social debate wherever it went. The work compelled many Americans to recall their support for the Greek Revolution, their disdain for Turkish slavery, and the status of women both at home and abroad. Just as the abolitionist and women’s rights movements drew momentum from the Greek Revolution, Power’s statue revived a symbol of Turkish oppression and connected it with the abolitionism and female oppression.

Although the Greek War had long since ended, the discourse denouncing Turkish enslavement of the Greeks had not disappeared. Moreover, by 1847 more American men and women, primarily in the North, had become increasingly hostile to the institution of slavery in their own country. American newspapers reported the public reaction to *The Greek Slave* throughout the country.\(^96\) While there were some critics of the statue, including one writer for *The Liberator*, who briefly commented that the statue was “too white for their philanthropy,” most reacted as Powers intended: that *The Greek Slave*’s

\(^95\) Powers’ subtly indicated the religious identity of his subject by including a cross and locket necklaces near the Greek maiden’s manacled hands.

spirit was on display and not her nudity, revealing a steadfast trust in divine providence even though she stood “exposed to be sold to the highest bidders.”

Many Americans imagined The Greek Slave as an idealized symbol of freedom, an image that highlighted the degree to which American society fell short of the ideal. Frederick Douglass’s paper captured this sentiment best. In a review, the author described the statue in great detail and offered emotional reaction to seeing the innocent young girl in chains. “How heart and brain burn with hatred for the cruel Turk who does thus violate the sacred rights of human nature,” condemned the reviewer, “And to this feeling heart and discerning eye all slave girls are GREEK, and all slave mungers Turks … their country Algiers or Alabama, Congo or Carolina the same.” The North Star review concluded that such was the power of viewing The Greek Slave that “had Congress appropriated ten millions of dollars to buy this silent moral mentor, and given it a place in the halls where so much crime has been legalized and connived at, ours would have been a wiser and better nation.”

Many Americans saw in the statue not just the plight of a young Greek but a larger injustice. If the owner of this young Greek girl was cruel and despotic, then so too was any individual who stole away the innocence and freedom of another.

There were many other reviews of The Greek Slave that echoed similar sentiments. Another anti-slavery publication reviewed Powers’ statue and observed that in viewing Powers’ statue, “A yet deeper moral is there, for Americans… It is an

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98 Green, “Hiram Powers’s “Greek Slave,” 34.  
impersonation of SLAVERY. This creature, exhibited for sale in the slave market, is a counterpart of thousands of living women. Every day does our own sister city of New Orleans witness similar exposures, with a similar purpose.” The author of the article concluded with the hope: “Would that the Greek Slave as she passes through various portions of our country, might be endowed with power to teach, to arouse, to purify public opinion.” Yet another publication printed in their review of the statue that while Powers’ image “enchants the world… There were fair breasts that heaved with genuine sympathy beneath the magic power of the great artist, that have never yet breathed a sigh for the sable sisterhood of the South! …may many a mother and daughter of the Republic be awakened to a sense of the enormity of slavery, as it exists in our midst!” These reviews clearly indicate that for many Americans who flocked to see The Greek Slave they not only saw the statue as a beautiful work of art or as a political statement against slavery within the Ottoman Empire, but also that it was an indictment against slavery within Powers’ own home country.

Some anti-slavery advocates in the United States even argued that a slave’s condition was better within the Ottoman Empire than with their own country. It is important to note that from the time the statue was unveiled in the United States to when the review was published, the Bey of Tunis and the Sultan of Turkey had outlawed the

slave trade in urban slave markets. One newspaper commented on this irony given the popularity of *The Greek Slave*:

> There is a painful significance… in the fact, that this masterpiece of our gifted American Artist should represent a youthful female slave… It brings home to us the foulest feature of our National Sin; and forces upon us the humiliating consciousness that the slave market at Constantinople is not the only place where beings whose purity is still undefiled, are basely bought and sold for the vilest purposes, - and the still more humiliating fact that while the accursed system from which it springs has well nigh ceased in Mahomedan countries, it still taints a portion of our Christian soil, and is at this very moment clamoring that it may pollute yet more.  

What is clear is that like the *Eastport Sentinel*, Douglass’s paper recognized that after several years of national notoriety and fame, *The Greek Slave* had widespread appeal and therefore could serve as a powerful image for anti-slavery writers to use for their purposes.

Other artists immediately saw the relevance to American slavery. *The Greek Slave* influenced several copies, most notably John Tenniel’s cartoon, printed in the British periodical, *Punch*. The cartoon was titled *The Virginia Slave* and depicted a nude African woman standing in a similar way to Powers’ statue. Figure 19 Draped over the post to which the Virginia slave was chained was an American flag. At the base of the statue, the words “E Pluribus Unum” were clearly chiseled. The caption for the cartoon read: “Intended as a Companion to Power’s “Greek Slave.””

In 1851, *The Greek Slave* was sent to England to appear in The Crystal Palace Exhibition. A fugitive American slave attended the exhibition with the purpose of making an anti-slavery demonstration in the presence of *The Greek Slave*. When he arrived, the

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fugitive placed a copy of *The Virginia Slave* nearby *The Greek Slave*, stating “As an American fugitive slave, I place this Virginia Slave by the side of the Greek Slave as its most fitting companion.” Cartoonist Tenniel, like many American abolitionists, saw the hypocrisy in sending *The Greek Slave* to Britain to be displayed as the pinnacle of American achievement in art.

Some female abolitionists, such as Emma Willard, Lucy Stone Blackwell, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had increasingly come to see the similarity between the plight and condition of enslaved black people and their status as disenfranchised women. These women would also use the rhetoric of the philhellenic movement for their own purposes.

For American women especially, *The Greek Slave* resonated with their own legal status as well as the status of African slaves. The image of the slave as a symbol of lost personhood was especially powerful for women who lacked legal control over their bodies. Historian Karen Sanchez-Eppler argued: “Feminists and abolitionists were acutely aware of the dependence of personhood on the condition of the human body since the political and legal subordination of both women and slaves were predicated upon biology.” That *The Greek Slave* depicted a nude, Christian female with no control over her sexuality, let alone her future, was an association not lost on American women. When in 1851 *The Greek Slave* was on exhibition in Boston, Lucy Stone (Blackwell), a budding abolitionist at the time, visited the exhibit. Upon seeing the statue, Stone was struck by

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104 Karen Sanchez-Eppler, John R. McKivigan, *Abolitionism and Issues of Race and Gender* (Garland, 1999), 374–376 Sanchez-Eppler described the legal status of women of the nineteenth century as being predicated upon contemporary understanding of biology: “Medical treatises of the period consistently assert that a woman’s psyche and intellect are determined by her reproductive organs.”

105 Karen Sanchez-Eppler ibid., 375–6.
how “emblematic of women” the statue was with “fettered hands and half-averted face.” Stone claimed that viewing Powers’ statue was one of the most momentous events in her life. Stone recalled that in contemplating the meaning of the statue “hot tears came to my eyes at the thought of millions of women who must be freed.”

For many people, *The Greek Slave* compelled them to see that the plight of slaves and women were one and the same. Once when Lucy Stone spoke at an Anti-slavery Society meeting where she conveyed her newfound passion for freeing all women from the ways in which they were subjugated, one of the event organizers criticized her speech, reminding her “The people came to hear anti-slavery, and not woman’s rights.” Stone responded that “I was a woman before I was an abolitionist” and insisted that she would speak about women or resign from speaking further for the Anti-Slavery Society. Unwilling to lose an increasingly popular speaker, the Anti-Slavery Society ultimately decided to permit Stone to speak on both subjects, but she could only speak about Woman’s Rights at her own expense.

Other women responded to Powers’ statue by intensifying their public commitment to women’s rights. A contemporary of Hiram Powers was Harriet Hosmer, an American female sculptor that endeavored to convey a message of anti-slavery and pro-woman’s rights through her art. Born in 1830, Hosmer’s talents were recognized from a young age. Hosmer’s family sent her to Rome to train with some of the top

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sculptors of the time, helping her cultivate an interest in classical artistic themes that especially focused on female subjects. As Hosmer’s notoriety as an female artist rose, she attracted the attention of female abolitionists and women’s rights advocates including abolitionists Lydia Maria Child and Lucy Stone Blackwell. Only in her early twenties at the time, Hosmer critiqued Powers’ *Greek Slave* by producing her own sculpture of a female slave. Hosmer, with the encouragement of both Child and Blackwell, endeavored to produce a statue of a woman that unlike *The Greek Slave* would depict a strong, resolute defiance in the face of male oppression. Hosmer’s statue depicted Zenobia, the queen of Palmyra (present day Syria) who was enslaved by the Romans in 274 A.D.

Figure 20

With Powers’ *Greek Slave* as inspiration and motivation, Hosmer diligently gathered the advice of her female supporters and created a statue that combined woman’s rights and abolitionism. One of Hosmer’s most famous supporters of the period was English poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who saw *The Greek Slave* while it was on display at the Crystal Palace in England. After viewing the statue Browning penned a well-known poem detailing her reaction:

…On the threshold stands an alien image with enshackled 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 center Art’s fiery finger; and break up erelong The serfdom of this world! Appeal, fair stone, From God’s pure heights of beauty, against man’s wrong! Catch up in the divine face not alone

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109 Lydia Maria Child to S.B. Shaw, 1852 John Greenleaf Whittier et al., *Letters of Lydia Maria Child* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1883), 68.
110 Culkin, *Harriet Hosmer*, 55–82; “Miss Harriet Hosmer,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, November 7, 1857 This article is one example of many where Lydia Maria Child is referenced as a close friend and supporter of Hosmer’s. L. Maria Child, “Miss Harriet Hosmer,” *Liberator*, November 20, 1857 One example of many that Lydia Maria Child wrote articles in newspapers praising Hosmer as an artist.
In her poem, Browning criticized the paradoxical placidness, but reminded her readers that *The Greek Slave’s* message was not merely of Turkish oppression, but a reminder of the existence of oppression in the West as well. Hosmer visited Browning while in Florence and made her initial plans for her Zenobia statue at that time. Historian Kate Culkin has argued that Browning’s criticism of Powers’ statue as being too passive likely influenced Hosmer to create a female statue that would “imbue Zenobia with the sense of dynamic action that many observers would later comment on.”112 Instead of creating a demure and vulnerable maiden, Hosmer’s *Zenobia in Chains* was a fully clothed, strong, and determined woman with almost a sense of impatience at her captivity in chains “most strongly expressed in the hand which is grasping the chain” as if ready to break in two.113

Lydia Maria Child was also especially active in providing suggestions on how Zenobia should appear, suggesting that Hosmer’s statue portray a strong rather than weak woman. Child wrote many reviews of Hosmer’s work, praising her artistic abilities as a female artist. Child’s review of *Zenobia in Chains* reflects her interest in Hosmer’s statue and highlights its differences from Powers’ statue: “The expression of the beautiful face is admirably conceived. It is sad, but calm, and very proud; the expression of a great soul, whose regal majesty no misfortune could dethrone.”114 Like Browning, Child disagreed with Powers’ depiction of a subdued, weak, and demure woman suffering under male oppression and rather preferred that such a female figure should stand resolute and


113 Harriet Hosmer to Lydia Maria Child, August 26, 1859, quoted in ibid., 58.

determined. Hosmer wrote Child specifically addressing this aspect of the statue, explaining “I have tried to make her too proud to exhibit passion or emotion of any kind; not subdued, though a prisoner; but calm, grand, and strong within herself.” Child concluded in her review of the statue to her readers of the Home Journal and Lady’s Home Magazine: “Are you not glad a woman has done this? I know you are; or I would not have written to you of my own delight in this great performance of our gifted countrywoman.”

Abolitionist and women’s rights advocate Frances Dana Barker Gage was equally impressed with Hosmer’s abilities as sculptor of female subjects, further associating Hosmer’s work with the anti-slavery and early feminist movements. In an article written for The Liberator and titled “Masculine Women,” Gage wrote a biting criticism of an article that had suggested that any female achievement was an exhibition of a masculine trait rather than a feminine one. “Is it any more masculine to be able to paint the beauties of a horse, than to be able to see one and admire it with womanly eyes?” Gage demanded, “… the triumphant claim to masculinity of genius made by this gifted woman [Hosmer] is nowhere to be found, except in the fact that she has excelled even man himself.”115 Gage continued: “The mad-dog cry of masculinity has well-nigh spent its force. The world will recognize talent and power; and the wise ones are fast coming to the conclusion, that ‘it will not pay’ to let one half the genius and worth of a holy humanity lie undeveloped and unemployed, because the possessors, by an accident of birth, are women.”

115 F. D. G, “‘Masculine Women,’” Liberator (1831-1865), January 15, 1858, 12.
Hosmer’s *Zenobia in Chains* did not obtain the same fame and notoriety as Powers’ *Greek Slave*. However female advocates for abolition and women’s rights rallied around Harriet Hosmer and her work. They saw *Zenobia in Chains* as visual critique of Powers’ statue. Where Powers’ statue represented a philhellenic and abolitionist icon with a powerless woman in need of rescue, Hosmer’s statue represented the aspirations of the women’s rights movement. For the women who admired, endorsed, collaborated on, and created *Zenobia*, the symbol of women’s rights should not passively accept subjugation and slavery like Powers’ *Greek Slave*, but rather should defy it.\(^\text{116}\)

Feminists translated their critique into fashion. An easily recognized symbol of Eastern exoticism in nineteenth-century America, Turkish trousers turned the despotic Turkish paradigm on its head and came to represent the pursuit of female freedom. Three years after Hiram Powers’ *Greek Slave* made its tour through the United States, women’s rights advocates promoted a new fashion trend that endeavored to displace social restrictions on women.\(^\text{117}\) Named after Amelia Jenks Bloomer who first wore the fashion in the United States, “The Bloomer Costume” was a fashion sensation in the 1850s with newspapers reporting throughout the country a multitude of sightings of women wearing them. Figure 21 The costume was inspired by Turkish trousers consisting of a shorter skirt with pantaloons “of the same materials as the dress, and extending from the waist to

\(^{116}\) Culkin, *Harriet Hosmer*, 57 Culken explained that portraying a woman in chains and begging for liberty was initially an abolitionist icon, but women’s rights advocates endeavored to alter this image to portray women as confident and strong. Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition* McKivigan, *Abolitionism and Issues of Race and Gender*, 377–378 Sanchez-Eppler described how women’s rights advocates endeavored to command a stronger sense of personhood.

the instep, are gathered around the ankle, and allowed to fall over the gaiter.”\textsuperscript{118} Worn and discussed by women and the American public from New England to Texas, the Bloomer costume was viewed as a welcome alternative to the whalebone corsets, with yards of fabric composing the necessary petticoats and skirts typically worn by women of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{119}

This was not the first time Turkish inspired trousers were adopted by women as a symbol of female independence. The use of Turkish trousers as a symbol of women’s rights can be traced to the eighteenth century with the printing of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s letters from the Turkish Embassy. Written from her experiences in the Ottoman Empire as the wife of the English diplomat, Lady Montagu conveyed that women in Turkish harems, in some ways, had more rights afforded to them than she did as an Englishwoman.\textsuperscript{120} Lady Montagu’s observations of the Turkish female fashions were greatly altered after a visit to a Turkish bath. Lady Montagu arrived at the bath and discovered that it was exclusively women, all bathing nude and openly discussing the news of the day. “In short,” she commented “‘tis the women’s coffee house, where all the news of the town is told, scandal invented etc.” When Lady Montagu attempted to excuse herself, she was persuaded to not only stay, but also to loosen her stays, “which satisfied them very well, for I saw they believed I was so locked up in that machine, that it was not

\textsuperscript{118} “The Bloomer Costume,” \textit{Hinds County Gazette}, June 19, 1851.
in my own power to open it, which contrivance they attributed to my husband.”  

Upon her return to England, she wore Turkish inspired attire as an outward display of admiration for the Ottomans and of the greater freedom the fashion gave her as a woman. By the late 1820s, some Americans also began to question the tendency their countrymen had to cast themselves as culturally superior to the Ottoman Empire. Lydia Maria Child went so far as to print in her publication for young people that “We ought to respect what is good, wherever we find it, and rather seek to imitate the virtues of others, than to excuse faults of our own.” Speaking specifically on the American tendency to cast Turks as cruel and wicked characters in stories, Child enumerated at length examples of Turkish virtue and honesty, concluding that Americans “and all the civilized world” should “imitate the Turks.” Like Lady Montagu, Child attempted to strike down stereotypes assigned to the Ottoman Empire suggesting that by the time women were donning the Bloomer costume, some Americans had come to see some cultural aspects of the Ottoman Empire as being useful and even preferable to those commonly practiced in the United States.

Women who favored the Bloomer costume made a political statement with the fashion by intentionally organizing processions in the Turkish-inspired costume in Fourth of July celebrations. One article printed in a medical journal reported that a celebration

121 Mary Jo Kietzman, “Montagu’s Turkish Embassy Letters and Cultural Dislocation,” Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 38, no. 3 (July 1, 1998): 539.
had taken place in Springfield, Massachusetts on the Fourth of July where women came together to celebrate “an invention which will save thousands from a premature grave.”

The article continued with a public address: “Ladies and Gentlemen – We congratulate ourselves, and one another, this day, not for deliverance from the British yoke, but from the despotism of a pampered and vitiated appetite, and from the death-grip of the corset string.” Still other examples of women wearing the Bloomer costume intentionally on the Fourth of July included a group of ladies from Lowell, Massachusetts. Calling themselves “Legion,” these ladies made arrangements a full month in advance to process on the Fourth “in white and in the Bloomer costume.” And in Hartford, Connecticut, a Fourth of July procession of “thirty-one young ladies in the Bloomer costume” emerged to “represent the several States of the Union.”

Well-known feminists of the day promoted the costume to female audiences. Elizabeth Cady Stanton promoted the fashion in an article printed in The Lily, which was subsequently reprinted in The Liberator. In the article, Stanton asked readers: “A long, full, flowing skirt, certainly hangs more gracefully than a short one; but does woman crave no higher destiny than to be a mere frame-work on which to hang rich fabrics to show them off to the best advantage?” The fashion proved to be controversial partly because the trousers were similar to men’s fashion (in some locations in the United

125 “Siftings from Exchanges, with Editorial Sprinklings,” Weekly Eagle, June 12, 1851.
126 “In the Hartford (Conn.) Procession on the 4th of July There Were to Be Thirty-One Young Ladies in the Bloomer Costume, to Represent the Several States of the Union,” Boston Daily Atlas, July 7, 1851.
127 Stanton, “The Bloomer Costume.”
States, a woman could be fined for dressing as a man) and partly because it was an adaptation of a Turkish fashion. Even though the Bloomer costume had disappeared by 1860, its brief popularity represented an upsurge in female independence and the assertion of women’s rights. By donning a style that was associated with Turkish despotism and female oppression, women’s rights advocates signaled that their reform efforts would not be demure and accepting of their condition as Powers had depicted in his *Greek Slave*. Women’s rights advocates rather would “insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.”  

Ironically, women’s rights advocates had transformed Turkish oppression into a form of women’s liberation.

**Conclusion**

In multiple ways, the philhellenic, abolitionist, and women’s rights movements had converged to create a powerful new synthesis in social reform movements throughout the country. Turkish despotism as a common archetype associated with the Ottoman Empire remained a constant throughout early America and persisted into the antebellum era. The tense years of the Barbary Wars magnified by the “Greek Fire” that spread throughout the United States during the 1820s solidified this perception. By the 1830s, to recall the tyranny of the Turks was to summon the ultimate definition of despotism in the contemporary world. Turkish tyranny increasingly came to be associated with the persistence of slaver in the American South with perhaps the ultimate example being Senator Charles Sumner’s *White Slavery in the Barbary States*, published in 1853.

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128 Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage: 1848-1861* (Fowler & Wells, 1889), 70–1.
the title indicates the work was intended to be a history of slavery in the Barbary States, the antislavery sympathizer repeatedly used Turkish slavery as a comparison to slavery in the American South. Referring to the South as the Barbary States of America, Sumner offered a multitude of points of comparison to the Barbary States including that “Virginia, Carolina, Mississippi, and Texas should be the American complement to Morocco, Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis.”\textsuperscript{129} With the slaves’ “long catalogue of humiliation and woes” not yet complete, Sumner’s history of the Barbary States illustrated that the system of slavery Americans had so reviled for decades was really not dissimilar to the system they themselves allowed to continue within their own borders. Similarly, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, friend and editor of Samuel Gridley Howe’s papers, wrote at the end of the nineteenth century and went so far as to state that the antislavery cause in the nineteenth century had “begun in Greece” and culminated “in our American Civil War.”\textsuperscript{130}

The unveiling of Hiram Powers’ \textit{Greek Slave} proved to be a pivotal symbol of women’s involvement in the Greek cause stimulated their interest in the abolitionist and women’s rights movement. Widespread activism in the philhellenic movement made way for female efforts at reform in women’s education in the U.S. and Greece. Viewing the denial of education to women as not dissimilar to the denial of education to African slaves, the women’s rights and abolitionist movements shared many of the same members. Drawing on philhellenic rhetoric that pleaded with women to “depart from that

\textsuperscript{129} Sumner, \textit{White Slavery in the Barbary States: A Lecture before the Boston Mercantile Library Association}, 12.
\textsuperscript{130} Howe, \textit{Letters and Journals of Samuel Gridley Howe}, xi.
retired circle” within which women of early America were bound, women mobilized female interest in saving the defenseless Greek matron and maiden from the hands of the cruel Turk. As time went on, however, and women increasingly enjoyed access to reformist organizations, members of both abolitionist and women’s rights circles became more outspoken.

Ironically, American involvement in the Greek War of Independence had led to surprising and unexpected consequences. Although the “Greek Fire” initially aimed at helping the Greeks, it ended up transforming American society. Both the rhetoric of the Greek cause and participation in the movement charged the participants, revealing the hypocrisy of American slavery and the injustice of oppressing American women. The influence of Greece on the United States did not end with the ancient classics but continued through the mid-nineteenth century.
Figure 18. Hiram Powers, "The Greek Slave," 1844, Smithsonian American Art Museum.
Figure 19. John Tenniel, "The Virginian Slave," Punch, 1851.
Figure 20. Harriet Hosmer, "Zenobia in Chains," 1859, St. Louis Art Museum.
Figure 21. N. Currier, "The Bloomer Costume," lithograph, 1851, The Library of Congress.
CONCLUSION

“We cannot be persuaded” wrote an American newspaper editor in 1821, “but that all the civilized world sympathise with the Greeks. There are associations and recollections connected with ancient Greece familiar to all the reading world, which must operate greatly in their favor. theirs is the page of history on which we dwell with most delight.”¹ A cursory examination of this article and the thousands of others printed in the United States during the 1820s only reveals that Americans supported Greek independence on at least in a theoretical sense. Historians have most often defined the presence of the Greek War for Independence in the United States as merely an auxiliary branch of the better-known philhellenic movement in Europe. A closer assessment of the movement in the United States, however, indicates that that this developed into a singularly American movement that bore many consequences for American society and politics in the decades that followed.

At first glance, that many American men and women organized aid societies and provided charitable support to the Greeks during their war for independence in the 1820s could be merely attributed to a nostalgic connection between Americans and the modern Greeks. There were, however, other revolutions that took place at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that were similar to the Greek War in that

¹ “The Greeks and the Turks,” American Mercury, July 31, 1821.
regard but did not generate nearly as much interest or support from the American public. There were additional intellectual forces behind American popular support for the modern Greeks. As we have seen, the persistence of the classical tradition in the United States that was in part driven by an imagined political and ideological connection to ancient Greece. The intellectual connection between the United States and the Greek cause can be found in literature, newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets. For example, American poet James Percival wrote a poem dedicated to the Greek cause at the beginning of the war. Percival appealed to his American audience that they should join the Greek cause and by doing so they would “give to Greece her ancient liberty, and ye shall live Immortal, in your fame.”

Percival connected the modern Greeks with ancient Greece as a reason for Americans to support the cause. By defending the Greeks against the paragon of tyranny and despotism in the world, Americans would fulfill a perceived civic duty in aiding the descendants of the ancient world whose political and philosophical ideals had so influenced the founding and development of the United States. If successful, Americans would surpass even the immortal status they gave the ancients as defenders of liberty. Americans were proud of their bond with ancient Greece and immediately began to organize relief efforts. Some Americans even volunteered to serve in the Greek Army and were financially supported by local philhellenic organizations.

The relevance of this movement in American history goes beyond merely viewing American philhellenism of the 1820s as illustrative of the presence of the classical

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tradition in society. Over time, the Greek War effort became an important way for Americans to spread their conception of liberty and freedom to the ancient homeland of democracy. The popularity of the Greek War in the United States was part of a larger movement where American philanthropists endeavored to expand American influence abroad by promoting a romanticized vision of modern Greeks as descendants of the ancients who, like the United States, would embrace a democratic form of government rule. Fueled by an early sense of American nationalism and devotion to the classical tradition, many Americans enthusiastically sent aid to the Greeks.

In a similar way, The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions also became involved in the philhellenic movement. Viewing Greece and the Middle East as an ideal place to spread American religious reform, missionaries began organizing evangelist efforts at the beginning of the 1820s. Protestant reform, it was thought, would instill individual self-determination among the Orthodox Greek Christians accustomed to a church hierarchy. Missionaries and philhellenes combined their efforts in travelling to Greece and in many cases financially supported one and other in meeting their converging goals of uplifting the Greek people.

Complicating these efforts to expand the United States’ presence in the Mediterranean were other groups of Americans who desired to expand influence in the world through another avenue. Government officials as well as American merchants desired to improve diplomatic and commercial interests with the Ottoman Empire, but the American philhellenes stalled their efforts. With massive amounts of privately collected Greek aid leaving the United States, Presidents Monroe, Adams, and Jackson, and their
agents in Istanbul faced a difficult task in convincing officials from the Ottoman Empire to negotiate a trade agreement. The ongoing tension between the government’s official policy and popular sentiment in favor of Greece nearly undermined both popular efforts on behalf of the Greeks as well as the trade negotiations. Nonetheless, the whole dynamic has a larger significance: Americans expressed a deep and abiding interest in a far-off and distant part of the world and demonstrated a truly impressive ability to mobilize themselves at the grassroots level. This was surely democracy in action.

Perhaps most important, popular efforts in support of the Greek War for Independence yielded a totally surprising result. Greek relief efforts in the United States helped shape the discourse of antebellum slavery and women’s rights’ movements as well as drew participants into the public sphere. Women, for example, played an active and publicly visible role in the Greek War effort, providing them with added access to reform and politics. Women reacted to the Greek War from their roles as Republican mothers, the virtuous familiar nurturers who cultivated and preserved morality and virtue within their families. These women, like their male counterparts, condemned the despotism of the Turks, believing that their rule prevented Greek women from assuming the same roles as American women held in their homes and communities. Female philhellenes therefore became especially involved in the Greek War effort as they increasingly focused attention on aiding Greek women and children. By aiding Greek mothers and their children, American women believed that they would play as important a role in achieving a successful revolution as any amount of aid for the men fighting at the front. It was up to
Greek mothers, in the view of these female philhellenes, to first instill virtue in a budding society from the home.

An important way American women achieved this goal was through the advocacy of education reform. These women appealed for donations in order to send American schoolteachers to Greece so that education might uplift Greek women from their former debased lives under Turkish rule. As a result of female involvement in the cause, American women came to understand and articulate their own oppressed status as American citizens through the prism of the Ottoman Empire. Seeing that their status was not completely dissimilar to Greek women living under Turkish rule, more women (and some men) began to call for the expansion of women’s education and the establishment of equal rights for both sexes.

The abolitionist movement also benefited and evolved as a result of the Greek War effort. Many abolitionists adopted philhellenic rhetoric as part of their expanding movement. The philhellenic movement exhaustively detailed throughout the 1820s how the Turks were barbaric and despotic in that they enslaved the descendants of the ancient Greeks. This indictment was made all the more powerful for American audiences given that within their own lifetime the United States had encountered the Ottoman Empire through the Barbary Wars and had read many firsthand slave accounts written by imprisoned American citizens. Abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and David Walker, however, pointed out the inherent hypocrisy of supporting the Greeks against the Turks when slavery persisted within the United States. The adoption of philhellenic
rhetoric to the abolitionist cause turned the widely understood despotic Turk paradigm on its head, arguing that American slaveholders were as heinous as the slaveholding Turks.

The relevance of global events in early American society and politics come into focus by evaluating the origins of the abolitionist and women’s rights causes in terms of the Greek War. Historians have studied the origins and development of these movements from a national and internal perspective, but when the focus expands to include an international perspective, these movements assume an added dimension of complexity. The abolitionist and women’s rights movements gained momentum around the same time that the philhellenic movement was at its peak. Both the abolitionist and women’s rights movements drew participants from the philhellenic movement had enjoyed. These antebellum reform movements also absorbed some of the rhetoric philhellenes employed, especially in regards to Turkish slavery and the alleged subjugation of women under the Ottoman Empire, in order to build a more powerful and influential arguments for their cause.

Returning again to Hiram Powers’ *The Greek Slave*, it is now evident that public reaction to the statue did not represent a singular response to a particular art object but rather the culmination of many decades of debate and discussion beginning with the Greek War for Independence. Although the statue purportedly depicted a young Greek maiden suffering humiliation on the auction block, American men and women saw much more. The connection between Turkish slavery and American slavery was inevitable and unavoidable, provoking shame, outrage, embarrassment, pity, and empathy – and ultimately, it was hoped, public action that would lead to the abolition of the horrendous
institution. “And to the feeling heart and discerning eye,” wrote an abolitionist author, “all slave girls are GREEK, and all slave mungers TURKS, wicked cruel and hateful; be their names Hassam, Selim, James, Judas or Henry; their country Algiers or Alabama, Congo or Carolina, the same.” For many Americans, especially those living in northern states, The Greek Slave confronted them with their allowance of slavery to persist within the borders of their own country. “The lesson learned at the feet of this great creation of thought,” continued The North Star author, “is of no country nor color, and has its boundaries on the one hand in heaven… and on the other, by that dark chaos, where all order is lost, and love gives place to the wranglings and hatred born of an unlicensed selfishness.” Understood in this light, The Greek Slave becomes not simply a remarkable object in the history of American culture, but also the culminating symbol of global currents influencing American politics and society in the era between the American Revolution and the Civil War.

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