



Pietro da Cortona's *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (ca. 1627).

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THE SABINE WOMEN RE-IMAGINED: WOMEN AND THE POWER OF PERSUASION DURING THE EARLY NATIONAL PEACE MOVEMENT

BY RACHEL A. SNELL

Snell's article examines founder and first president of the American Peace Society William Ladd's encouragement of women's participation in the Early National peace movement as an example of politicized domesticity. Ladd's encouragement built upon the popular perception that women's virtue exerted a moralizing influence over men and families. By encouraging women to write peace essays and hymns for publication, Ladd sought to expand women's power and influence beyond their families. The embrace of women's persuasive abilities in reform activities is representative of the overlap between public and private space in Early National America as well as the ongoing negotiation of women's public activity. Rachel A. Snell completed her PhD in History at the University of Maine in 2016. Her dissertation project focuses on discourses of domesticity through a comparative Atlantic perspective on the cultural construction of domesticity in Anglo-American print culture to better understand the everyday lives of middle-class, white women in the United States and British North America. The principal sources for this project, printed cookbooks authored by women for a female audience and manuscript cookbooks created by individual women for their personal use, reflect women's agency in the definition of their roles.

IN ROME'S founding myth, the first generation of Roman men sought wives from among the Sabines, a tribal group who populated the area. Despite being rebuffed by the women's fathers, the Roman men abducted and married the Sabine women. In the midst of the resulting battle between their fathers and husbands, the Sabine women rushed between the armies and beseeched the combatants,

Not to pollute themselves with the impious stain of the blood of father-in-law and son-in-law, nor brand with the infamy of parricide

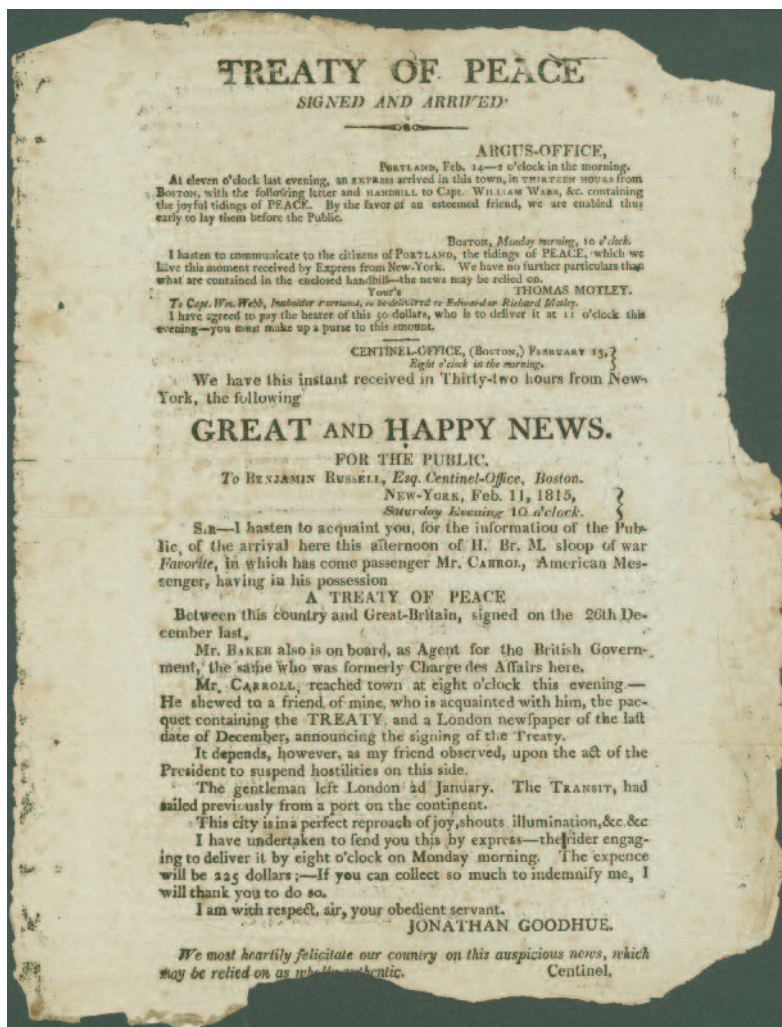
their offspring, the children of one, and grandchildren of the other party. If ye wish, said they, to destroy the affinity and connection formed between you by our marriage, turn your rage against us; we are the cause of the war; we are the cause of wounds and death to our husbands and fathers. It is better for us to perish, than to live either widowed by the loss of one party or fatherless by that of the other.

Powerfully affected by the women's words and actions, the men soon established not only peace, "but combined the two nations into one."¹

When William Ladd, founder and first president of the American Peace Society, encouraged women's involvement in the Early National peace movement, he drew on the example of the Sabine women. Ladd often concluded his addresses with a special appeal to the ladies in the audience, enumerating the ways they could promote the cause of peace. He emphasized activities within women's prescribed role in the private sphere, citing especially the importance of women's control of the education of young children and their virtuous and moralizing influence over the actions of men. This conception of women's naturally virtuous and moral nature was essential to Ladd's re-imagining of the Sabine women in nineteenth-century American society. Of this nature he wrote, "how beautiful it appeared in the Sabine women, when they boldly rushed between the contending armies, and saved their husbands and fathers from mutual slaughter! How much more it is incumbent on Christian females, to endeavor to put an end to war, for it is not temporal life only, which is hazarded, but life eternal."² Ladd's encouragement of women's peace activities fit a pattern in Early National society that tied women's increased participation to the ideology of domesticity. By encouraging women to write essays on peace for publication, distribute tracts, form their own—female only—peace societies, and generally use their feminine influence to promote peace, he helped enlarge the limits of appropriate public action for women. Ladd's encouragement of women's involvement re-imagined the Sabine woman as an educated wife, mother, or daughter who would rush between the contending armies armed with her pen, her civic virtue, and her persuasion.

I

The peace movement that developed in the years after the War of 1812 was part of the "enormous efflorescence of associational life of all kinds in the early nineteenth century."³ Both republican ideology and Protestant theology emphasized the importance of civic virtue; defini-



Peace treaty announcement broadside marking the end of the War of 1812, printed by Eastern Argus of Portland, 1815.
Collections of the Maine Historical Society.

tions of the term varied but many social and religious leaders believed the republican experiment would fail without a citizenry compliant with religious morals. The situation in New England was increased in volatility by the existence of a strong, conservative orthodox establishment and the growing popularity of more passionate and personal evangelical faiths. Millennialism—the belief expressed by both orthodox and evangelical Protestant theology that the apocalypse and judgment day were quickly approaching—combined with republican ideals of citizenship to emphasize the importance of placing the common good before self-interest. This resulted in a populace hyper-concerned with the morality of their society. Nathan Hatch termed this hybrid of millennialism and republicanism “civil millennialism.” Inherent in this term is the concept that political and social actions can influence the outcome of the apocalyptic battle between good and evil.⁴ Inspired by these complementary ideologies, Christian activists sought to rid society of sin by creating a bewildering number of voluntary associations devoted to a vast array of social causes.

In comparison to the antislavery, temperance, and later women’s movement, pacificism was a “minor movement in a century obsessed with reform activities.”⁵ The decade and a half after the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812 witnessed an upsurge in peace societies in the northeastern United States, culminating with the founding of the American Peace Society in 1828. Economic factors played a substantial role in the popularity of peace activism. Federalist political opposition to “Mr. Madison’s War” and the economic hardships suffered by a region dependent on trade during the war, coupled with the general reform fever of the region, made the northeastern United States “likely soil for such a proposal.”⁶

During the War of 1812, “Federalist New England was a hotbed of domestic opposition.”⁷ Soon after Congress declared war in June of 1812, Massachusetts Governor Caleb Strong proclaimed a public fast of atonement for America’s “engagement in war against the nation from which we are descended, and which to many generations has been the bulwark of the religion we profess.”⁸ This set the tone for further public protest. Throughout the war, northeastern financiers refused to subscribe to war loans, the inhabitants of Nantucket declared their neutrality in the conflict, and, during 1813, a Newburyport mob attempted to free a group of British prisoners of war, comprising one example of many such collective protests in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut during the war.⁹ Further, New England churches embarked



William Ladd, Minot, ca. 1830.
Collections of the Maine Historical Society.

upon a “veritable civil war” concerning the righteousness of the conflict.¹⁰ While some denominations supported Madison’s administration, the majority of Congregationalists “condemned the war as an attack on Protestant England in behalf on Napoleonic satanism, while millennialists on all sides debated whether the crisis signaled divine punishment or a positive challenge for spiritual renewal.”¹¹ The postwar peace reformers possessed a strong foundation of anti-war sentiment to build upon by 1815.

Prior to 1815, for the most part, only Quaker, Mennonites, Dunkers, and other smaller sects, collectively known as the peace sects, expressed any commitment to pacifism.¹² The proliferation of peace societies in 1815 marked the entrance of adherents from mainstream religions.

While the early-nineteenth-century societies remained largely ignored and even ridiculed, they counted among their numbers some of the most respected and influential men in the new country. The Massachusetts Peace Society included Governor William Phillips, Old South Church Deacon Thomas Dawes, Judge Joshua P. Blanchard, and William Ellery Channing, one of the most famous clergymen in the nation.¹³ The Peace Societies produced popular newspapers and books that reached large audiences. New York Peace Society founder David Low Dodge's *The Mediator's Kingdom not of this World but Spiritual, Heavenly and Divine* sold out a first-edition press run of one thousand copies in two weeks.¹⁴ Peace reform started moving away from the fringes and toward the mainstream of American society.

These publications allowed peace advocates to reach wider audiences. William Ladd, for example, converted to the cause of peace by a peace publication, emphasized the role of persuasion in changing public opinion. Born in Exeter, New Hampshire, in 1778, Ladd received his education at Harvard before joining the family business and beginning his career at sea. He quickly advanced to the rank of captain, but his career was cut short by the War of 1812. Ladd retired from the sea and settled in Minot, Maine.¹⁵ His initiation into the American reform culture began with his opposition to the building of the Bunker Hill Monument on the grounds that it glorified war. He also ardently protested the slave trade in the name of peace. His friends in Maine introduced him to the peace movement, and he was converted to the cause by reading a copy of *A Solemn Review of the Custom of War*, written by Massachusetts Peace Society founder Noah Worcester. "I became convinced that war is an evil, which might be banished from civilized society," Ladd wrote. "And ... it is the duty of every man to lend a helping hand to bring about so desirable an event."¹⁶ During his lifetime, Ladd's fellow activists hailed him as "the apostle of peace"; like the Biblical apostles, he devoted his health, wealth, and influence to his cause.

Ladd worked for peace by founding the American Peace Society in 1828. His biographer recounts that he was "a generous and steadfast friend of all truly benevolent causes," especially Sabbath schools and the temperance movement. However, he devoted the bulk of his efforts to the American Peace Society. As Merle Curti recounted, "he journeyed about as general agent of the Society, lecturing, getting subscriptions, soliciting aid from colleges, churches, individuals, offering prizes for peace essays, corresponding, talking in season and out of season."¹⁷ Supporting the cause of peace became Ladd's full-time occupation. In 1835, he

traveled 1,300 miles, delivered forty public addresses, and collected \$982 for the Society's benefit, all while writing newspaper essays on peace and corresponding with peace societies both in the United States and abroad. He also served as editor of the Society's periodical, *Calumet*.¹⁸

Until the mid-1820s, the typical member of an early peace society was a middle-aged, college educated, male Protestant.¹⁹ William Ladd was instrumental in changing the membership makeup and influence of these societies. The period after the War of 1812 witnessed a shift in the tactics employed by reformers. Early in the century, most groups relied upon coercion, religious and legal, to further their agendas. These early reformers found public opinion difficult to sustain, "especially as moral societies elaborated a distinctive quasi-coercive mode of operation."²⁰ Despite early successes, these societies fell into decline after the War of 1812. Joel Bernard attributes this decline to an inability to balance coercion and democracy in the changing political landscape. "Despite the continuing formation of moral societies outside New England, the end of the war relieved the major source of anxiety that had made an alliance between Federalists of different religious tendencies seem imperative."²¹ Furthermore, the disestablishment of the Congregational Church curtailed the reform impulse in the orthodox denominations.

In 1821, the Reverend John Chester explained the failure of moral societies in an address to the Albany Moral Society. Chester argued that moral societies made a tactical mistake; the efforts to enforce legal restraints on immorality served not to inspire society to greater action, but caused people to fear that the moral societies, "armed with statutes, and followed by officers," would "abridge the liberties."²² Disheartened, but unprepared to accept lasting defeat, Chester suggested a change of tactics: "moral reformers in voluntary societies ought in the future to exercise persuasion, not force."²³ He encouraged reformers to promote their causes through personal example and other non-coercive means. "You cannot coerce a free people that are jealous ... of their rights; and those who have not the power of legislators and executioners, should never have assumed their prerogatives."²⁴ Chester recognized that the postwar social climate would require new tactics.

Persuasion, through lecture and literature, was the primary tool used by subsequent reformers. Ladd, his biographer claims, was a master at the new technique.²⁵ In his addresses and published writing, he described the peace movement as a battle of words. "Public opinion cannot only prevent wars which originate in a love of glory . . . but can also overawe the love of power, wealth, of revenge, and to say of the angry

passions, 'peace, be still.'"²⁶ In his quest to win over public opinion, he acknowledged the role of women: "the continuance of war depends on public opinion, and no person, male or female, is without influence."²⁷

That Ladd recognized women's ability to influence public opinion was a response to midcentury social circumstances. He hoped to reach an educated, reform-minded, evangelical Protestant audience, and women were the majority in both churches and reform organizations. Though he likely did not believe women could be leaders and organizers, he willingly made that concession. Ladd recognized the influence of women in the current social climate: "the more the world is Christianized and civilized, the more it yields to moral power, and the less to physical force.... It is in the power of the female sex to rouse the church to action."²⁸ Further, Ladd was familiar with the important role played by women in British efforts to abolish slavery and the slave trade, and he heaped credit upon the British women abolitionists. "Had not the female sex risen in their majesty, the work would not have been done to the present day. It was *their* influence which finally prevailed over the arts and bribery of those who were interested in making their fellow creatures slaves, and keeping them in bondage. It was *their* untiring perseverance which won the truly glorious and bloodless victory."²⁹ Precedent demonstrated the effectiveness of women's moralizing influence on public opinion.

As America responded to the pressures of capitalism and industrialization, women's social role changed. Men increasingly left the home to work, and the home became, not the site of production as it had been during the colonial period, but the private realm of women, particularly for those of the upper and middle classes. The ideal of True Womanhood that developed between 1820 and 1860 left no economic role for women within the home and little social role for them outside the home. The public sphere became the sole realm of men, and women thus were relegated to the private sphere of the home and family. Society defined the True Woman of the early nineteenth century by her "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity."³⁰ Her primary concerns were the moral upbringing of her children, the careful maintenance of her home, and the comfort of her husband. But ideology, one must remember, does not always reflect reality. The attributes that suited the True Woman for the private sphere could also create a public role that embodied the piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity the prevailing ideology required of them. Reform work and membership in voluntary associations created new public spaces, "located between the public world of politics

and work and the private intimacy of family,” and this made possible “a new vision of active citizenship” for women.³¹

Religion became “the key loophole through which most white women . . . entered public life,” The evangelicalism of the Second Great Awakening encouraged women’s reform activity.³² Increasingly, society defined virtue as feminine, and this conflation of virtue with femininity created “pockets of authority” for women and their associations.³³ Virtuous republican citizens had a responsibility to ensure not only the morality of their own families, but that of their communities in general and those less fortunate than themselves especially, including slaves, the illiterate, the poor, and those suffering the hardships of war. By the 1820s, “it had become commonplace to employ evangelical femininity both to justify a collective public role for women and to redefine collective action as an action of domesticity.”³⁴ Those skeptical of increasing women’s roles often criticized women’s groups when they embraced radical reform measures or assumed overtly public roles, but for the reformist women who embraced the concept of politicized domesticity, public action became an “indicator of, rather than a challenge to, their female and familial status.”³⁵ By connecting their public actions to their socially prescribed roles as educators and caretakers, women expanded the idea of True Womanhood without upsetting society’s expectations.

II

Nevertheless, women’s participation in the reform movement remained a matter of some controversy during the 1820s and 1830s. Men dominated the voluntary societies, while associated ladies’ auxiliaries provided women with a forum for organizing and discussion.³⁶ Unlike other reform organizations of the era, the American Peace Society was open to women.³⁷ Women’s participation in the American Peace Society, as encouraged by Ladd, represented a significant change in their relationship to the cause of peace. The earliest organized effort toward peace in American history was Dr. Benjamin Rush’s proposal for a national peace office in 1793. Rush envisioned a role for women based on their symbolic role in late-eighteenth-century politics. A Philadelphia physician, former Continental Army Surgeon-General, and signer of the Declaration of Independence, Rush was perhaps the most socially prominent of the early peace activists. Although he did not live to see the flowering of peace societies after the War of 1812, his proposal for a creation of a national peace office, intended as a complement to the War



Independent Benevolent Society of Philadelphia membership certificate, ca. 1814, depicting a form of politicized domesticity.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Office, reflected the strong connections between evangelical Protestant theology and republican ideology prevalent at the time and so essential to the flowering of reform organizations. The Secretary of Peace, he believed, should be a “genuine republican and sincere Christian, for the principles of republicanism and Christianity are no less friendly to universal and perpetual peace, than they are to universal and equal liberty.”³⁸ Rush’s proposed office would establish and maintain free schools dedicated to teaching pacific Christian principles, distribute an American edition of the Bible to every family, and support the elimination of

capital punishment. Through the eradication of military ritual—and the creation of a museum featuring a collection of swords beaten into plowshares and dedicated to the celebration of peace and cooperation—Rush aimed “to substitute a culture of peace for the glamour and heroism of war.”³⁹ He included a place for women in his peace museum as symbols of virtue and beauty: “to complete the entertainment of this delightful apartment, let a group of young ladies, clad in white robes, assemble everyday at a certain hour, in a gallery to be erected for the purpose, and sing odes, and hymns, and anthems in praise of the blessings of peace.”⁴⁰ Described by historian Charles DeBenedetti as “laughable if laudable,” Rush’s proposal was not suited to the social climate of the 1790s, where military victory in the War of Independence remained essential to American identity. Still, it marked the beginning of a change in public perceptions of peace and war.⁴¹

Many of Rush’s themes remained constant in the peace movement, but Ladd added a more definitive role for women. Through their influence on childhood education and their moral influence on men, women could have great effect on the movement. While Ladd encouraged them to take a more public role, he never envisioned them abandoning their qualities of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Rather, these qualities were essential to the idea of women’s power and influence.

Ladd believed peace work suited women’s character uniquely: “there is something peculiarly appropriate in woman’s undertaking the cause of peace. Men make war—let women make peace.”⁴² He often reserved the last few pages of his speeches to encouraging women’s activism. During the mid-1830s, at the request of many New England ladies, Ladd devoted a series of newspaper articles to answering the question, “what can females do to promote peace?”⁴³ Published in religious newspapers throughout New England, the essays reached an audience of white, Protestant, upper- and middle-class women who had the time and the means to devote themselves to reform activity. The wives, mothers, and daughters of the men who originally flocked to the early peace societies and the women reformers who created women’s reform associations did so on the basis of politicized domesticity. Ladd argued that the influence of women remained “undervalued, both by themselves and others,” and he placed great emphasis on women’s subtle influence. “The influence of the female sex on the destinies of the world, is full as great as that of the male sex, though it is not so obvious.”⁴⁴ Over the course of ten essays, Ladd thoroughly described the activities suited to women peace activists, ranging from educating children, decorating the home, and influ-

encing the family, to public activities such as writing for the presses, founding or joining female peace societies, and distributing peace tracts.

Ladd encouraged women to begin their efforts at home: "use first your influence for the promotion of the cause of Peace in your own family, on your husbands, brothers and sons."⁴⁵ Women's moralizing influence, he felt, was strongest in the home and among family members. Ladd believed that persuasion was a tactic appropriate to the cause of peace, and, by extension, women were appropriate to the art of persuasion.⁴⁶ Female persuasion, in Ladd's definition, took very specific form. "The influence of women lies in the 'still small voice,' which has often a greater effect than the 'wind, the earthquake, and the fire.'"⁴⁷ Women's power lay in the subtler forms of persuasion, particularly in the use of music or poetry, rather than in the manly persuasive forms of exhortation or rebuke.

In an essay devoted to the subject of military balls and reviews, Ladd argued that the object was "to inspire a martial spirit among our young men." The extravagances that accompanied such events were inappropriate for ladies, namely "the dissipation, late hours, unnecessary expense, danger to health, over excitement and consequent exhaustion and debility, which always attend a ball."⁴⁸ Women hazarded not only the cause of peace in attending such events, but also their health. Women were complicit in supporting war when they admired soldiers and enjoyed military events, but they retained the power to affect change because "the absence of fair spectators would soon cool down military fever and thus remove one great cause of war."⁴⁹

Ladd emphasized women's influence as mothers in his essays and public addresses, dwelling especially on their responsibility to raise their children through pacific means. A woman's influence on her children did not end during childhood; rather, it continued throughout their progeny's lifetime: "you are the guardians of our infancy . . . It is yours to give the tender plant direction favorable to the cause of humanity and peace which will grow with its growth and strengthen with its strength."⁵⁰ Ladd warned mothers not to allow their children to become infatuated with military glory by playing with martial toys. The home should be free of "pictures and statues" that glorified militarism.⁵¹ "Children are imitative creatures. They love to ape the soldier; and, if indulged, habits of thinking and acting are fixed in their minds, which will last them through life. The mother, therefore, or the nurse, or governess, or the sister, who fosters such propensities by providing the paper cap and feather, and other martial toys, does an irremediable injury to the

child, and to the world.”⁵² More important was the influence of education, particularly through books. Ladd encouraged parents to select the books their children read as carefully as they selected their companions. About this, he stated, “that which is of the greatest consequence to the triumph of the principles of Peace, and over which females, and particularly mothers, have great control, is the nature of the books which are part into the hands of children.”⁵³ He further emphasized the importance of a pacific education by drawing upon an example from the recent past. He wrote, “how different would have been the state of Europe, if Napoleon Bonaparte had been instructed in a Sabbath school, instead of a military academy, and had his mind been imbued with the principles of Peace!—how much sin and misery, both temporal and eternal, would have been prevented!”⁵⁴

In the later essays, Ladd shifted from activities within the home and connected to children, to activities that redefined the boundaries of the private sphere. Ladd encouraged women to distribute peace tracts, join female peace societies, and write for the press. This new direction was firmly rooted in women’s roles as moral guardians, educators, and caretakers, but it suggested an increasingly significant role outside the home.

In his seventh essay, Ladd encouraged activities that took women outside of their homes. First, he asked women to distribute peace tracts, believing this to be “an employment peculiarly suited to females,” because “no man of gallantry, or even common civility, will refuse to read a Peace tract presented by a lady.”⁵⁵ Like many reformers, he considered peace tracts, along with essays, poems, and stories published in newspapers and books, an excellent means of influencing public opinion. The mundane task of distributing peace literature in theory could have great effect.

I know a lady who seldom speaks on any subject, but who, being an ardent friend of Peace, has employed herself in distributing peace tracts, requesting the members of a family read them, and calling for them after a proper lapse of time, she would carry them to other families. Sometimes she would read tracts and newspaper essays, in favor of Peace, to families. By these means, she converted almost the whole town in which she resides, to the pacific principles of the gospel.⁵⁶

Ladd discouraged the women members of the Peace Society to stand on street corners distributing peace tracts to strangers; rather, he called on them to distribute them in their own family and to the families around them.

If one woman distributing peace tracts possessed the ability to convert nearly an entire town, a group of women dedicated to the cause of peace retained the capacity to accomplish even more. He asserted, "by joining a Peace society, and contributing your mite, you make your influence to be felt wherever a Peace tract can circulate, and farther than that."⁵⁷ Ladd encouraged his readers to create their own female peace societies and provided a model constitution to ease the process. He believed a group more efficiently promoted peace than an individual and referred to women's temperance, antislavery, and moral-reform organizations as examples of the power of collective female influence. While he recognized the nobility of these three reform causes, he saw peace advocacy as a more appropriate public activity for women. "The cause of Peace may be advocated in any company, without danger of offending the most sensitive delicacy," said Ladd.⁵⁸ There was nothing unladylike about a woman promoting peace.

Writing for the press, in fact, was the only behavior that verged on the unladylike, and Ladd carefully connected that activity to women's role as mothers and their moral authority. During the late-eighteenth century, American republican ideals increasingly stressed the mother's duty to educate children, and Ladd believed that writing for the press was an extension of this important task. While the colonial period produced such notable authors as Anne Bradstreet, only in the new republic did women begin to publish in larger numbers, generally authoring school textbooks or historical texts "for family reading."⁵⁹ As the home increasingly became the domain of women, "texts designed to help her various domestic duties proliferated, as did the assumption that such texts should be written and/or edited by women charged with the same responsibilities."⁶⁰ Women authors who became the most widely recognized writers for peace, such as Sarah Josepha Hale and Lydia Maria Child, began their careers writing for this genre.

Early nineteenth-century society recognized women as uniquely suited to writing educational material for women. Moreover, their experience as mothers left them suited for writing children's literature.

It is a singular fact that by far the greater proportion, both in number and usefulness, of the publications intended for the young, are the productions of the softer sex. Their situation peculiarly fits them for the task. Conversant with the earliest development of character, their keener vision enables them to discern those nicer shades which are beyond the observations of our own sex . . . Their influence therefore upon the early mind as writers, is second only to their agency as moth-

ers, in pointing out the commendable qualities of the heart, in teaching the tendency of natural bias, and in warning the young of the dangers by which they are surrounded, from the operations of feeling and passion.⁶¹

Women, by nature and experience, remained better suited to writing for children than men. Through the genres of domestic guides and children's literature, women authors carved out a space in the publishing world that relied upon their skills as homemakers and mothers. Ladd drew on both these themes in encouraging women to write for peace.

Unlike the other activities he suggested, Ladd recognized that not all women were suited to the task of writing, stating, "it is in the power of every female who has come to years of discretion, to aid the cause of Peace by every means above enumerated, except only the seventh"—that is, writing and publishing.⁶² He lamented that not all popular women authors devoted their pens to his cause and viewed the work of these authors as a missed opportunity: "had such women . . . given their talents to the cause of Peace, what a change in public opinion might have been expected."⁶³ In his praise of those who promoted the cause of peace with their pens, Ladd emphasized one author who served as a model for others: the poet and author Lydia H. Sigourney. Under her married name—Mrs. Sigourney—she published many poems and prose pieces opposed to the glorification of war, and, according to Ladd, "in all her writings, the principles of Peace shine 'like apples of gold in pictures of silver.'"⁶⁴ Sigourney's short poem, "the War Spirit," contrasted the popular perception of the glories of the battlefield with the harsh realities of the suffering and loss hidden behind those glories.

War-spirit! War-spirit! Thy secrets are known,
I have looked on the field when the battle was done—
The mangled and slain in their misery lay,
And the vulture was shrieking and watching his prey;
But the heart's gush of sorrow, so hopeless and sore,
In the homes that those loved ones revisit no more.⁶⁵

Sigourney devoted much of her peace work to educating children and combating the glorification of war instilled through their playthings, reading material, and home décor.

As an example for potential peace writers to follow, Ladd suggested Sigourney's short story, "The Farmer and the Soldier."⁶⁶ The story contrasted the lives of two brothers. One glorifies war and declares his intention to become a soldier, while the other protests against war, citing a

recent sermon the boys heard. Despite his brother's admonishments, the first does indeed grow up to be a soldier and returns fifteen years later to recount his suffering to his farmer brother and his contented family:

He had been in battles by sea and by land. He had heard the deep ocean thunder with the echoes of war, and seen the earth drink in the strange red shower from mangled and palpitating bosoms. He had stood in the martial lists of Europe, and jeopardized his life for a foreign power, - and he had pursued in his own land, the hunted Indian, flying at midnight, from his flaming hut. He had gone with the bravest, where dangers thickened, and had sought in every place for the glory of war, and had found only misery.⁶⁷

Far worse than the absence of glory was the presence of sin. To the soldier brother, "the greatest evil of the soldier's life" was the "sin with which he is surrounded and made familiar."⁶⁸ The pious evangelical Christian would have been horrified by a career where "Oaths, imprecations, and contempt of everything sacred, are the elements of his trade. All the sweet and holy influences of the Sabbath, and the precepts of the gospels impressed upon his childhood, are swept away."⁶⁹ The practice of war, then, represented not only violence among nations and the depavation of children and women; it also threatened the very foundation of society. For the evangelical republicans of the early nineteenth century, a virtuous citizenry strictly educated in Christian morals was essential to the proper functioning of government. The education of children to be good citizens was women's primary task, and Sigourney returned to this theme in her conclusion. The soldier brother believed a childhood of books and games glorifying war and his life of soldiering misled him and hazarded his eternal soul, with his final breath warned his young nephew, "dear John, never be a soldier."⁷⁰

Sigourney provided Ladd with a perfect example of an activist women author. Her work emphasized her role as wife and mother, and she published all of it under her married name. Well-educated and from a good family, she only took up her pen to write when financial reverses necessitated she help provide for her family. In Lydia Sigourney, Ladd saw "a woman whose example could instruct all would-be literary women as to what they could do, what they should so, and also what they had better not do."⁷¹ He was careful to stipulate that not all women could be peace authors, and that those who did write for peace should limit their audience to children and other women. Thus, the constraints of politicized domesticity itself and the expectations of their male co-reformers limited women's authorship.

While Ladd often discussed appropriate activities for women's peace activities in his addresses and printed essays, only in this collection of essays did he suggest the potentially unladylike task of writing for publication. In addresses aimed at a mixed audience or more specifically at men, he emphasized activities more closely connected to the private sphere and to women's moralizing influence. His encouragement of women writers within carefully stipulated limits was, in part, recognition of his audience: the ladies of New England. While peace advocacy remained congenial to women's character, "many a man has not the moral courage to plead for Peace, for fear he shall be accused of effeminacy or cowardice."⁷² American popular culture was too entrenched in the glories of war. Thus women were Ladd's natural audience and his natural allies. Women remained best at converting other women, and they also enjoyed the strongest influence on young children—Ladd's best hope for creating a culture that glorified peace. Further, Ladd seemed to place great store in women's moralizing influence over men: "Their influence does not end with our infancy. Who has not felt its effect on youth and manhood? He who has not felt it, must be more or less than man. What they approve, we follow; what they condemn, we abandon."⁷³ It might be women alone, who could finally persuade men away from the glories of war.

Women reformers confidently conformed to the expectations of society, especially male reformers. William Ladd and the early nineteenth-century peace movement provides a useful example of the expanding definition of women's appropriate public role and the limits placed on that role by men. He expected women to combine their reform labor with men's, but to remain in a subordinate position. In regard to this, he said, "Hitherto, I have noticed the influence of the female sex, only as separate and distinct from that of the other sex; but when they join their influence with ours, both are wonderfully increased."⁷⁴ While some of the activities Ladd encouraged pushed the limits of women's private sphere, none challenged the piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity expected of women. Rather, they built upon these expectations. Ladd believed that there was "something peculiarly appropriate in woman's undertaking the cause of peace."⁷⁵ Ladd's encouragement built upon the popular perception that women's virtue exerted a moralizing influence over men and families. By encouraging women to write peace essays and hymns for publication, Ladd sought to expand women's power and influence beyond their families.

Ladd's re-imagining of the Sabine women did not break any glass ceilings; nor does it present Ladd as a precursor to women's liberation by

any stretch of the imagination. However, his encouragement of women peace activists demonstrates the flexibility of domestic ideology. Along with the efforts of a generation of women authors, Ladd pointed to a larger trend in Early National society toward an expansion of the private sphere. This redefinition of women's socially accepted public activity remained firmly entrenched in the ideals of domesticity but at the same time allowed women a greater role in society. The social activism of the members of female peace societies and the publications of women like Sigourney created precedents and cleared paths that remained open for their successors. The women of the early-nineteenth-century reform movements not only aspired to cure society's ills; they created a public role for women in American society.

NOTES

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3. Marc Harris, "Civil Society in Post-Revolutionary America," in *Empire and Nation: The American Revolution in the Atlantic World*, Eliga H. Gould and Peter S. Onuf, eds. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 211.
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5. Valarie H. Ziegler, *The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 5.
6. Merle Eugene Curti, *The American Peace Crusade, 1815–1860* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1929), 6.
7. Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 28.
8. Governor of Massachusetts, "Commonwealth of Massachusetts, By His Excellency Caleb Strong . . . A Proclamation, for a Day of Public Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer. . . ." (Russell and Cutler, printer, 1812), 1.
9. DeBenedetti, *Peace Reform in American History*, 29.
10. William Gribbin, *The Churches Militant: The War of 1812 and American Religion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), 103.
11. Ibid.
12. Peter Brock, *Pacifism in the United States, from the Colonial Era to the First World War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 449.
13. Ziegler, *Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America*, 23.
14. Brock, *Pacifism in the United States*, 451.

15. John Hemmenway, *The Apostle of Peace: Memoir of William Ladd* (Boston: American Peace Society, 1872), 28–36.
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17. Curti, *American Peace Crusade, 1815–1860*, 44.
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24. Ibid.
25. Hemmenway, *Apostle of Peace*, 58.
26. William Ladd, *Address Delivered at the Tenth Anniversary of the Massachusetts Peace Society, December 25, 1825* (Boston: Isaac R. Butts and Co, 1825), 9.
27. Ibid., 26.
28. Ladd, *On the Duty of Females to Promote the Cause of Peace*, 4–5.
29. Ibid., 5.
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33. Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women’s Activism: New York and Boston, 1797–1840* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 20.
34. Ibid., 31–32.
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36. Ziegler, *Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America*, 6–7.
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39. DeBenedetti, *Peace Reform in American History*, 26.
40. Runes, ed. *Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush*, 22.
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44. Ibid., 45 and 3.
45. Ibid., 13.
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48. Ibid., 15–16.
49. Ibid., 18.
50. William Ladd, “An Address Delivered at Portland, February 6, 1824, before the Peace Society of Maine,” Peace Society of Maine, ed. (Portland, ME: A. Shirley, 1824), 14.
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