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Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s Historicization of Antebellum Landscapes and Character in *A New-England Tale* and *Hope Leslie*

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s situating of New England religion, political issues, and social class structures in *A New-England Tale* (1822) and *Hope Leslie or Early Times in Massachusetts* (1827). *A New-England Tale* models the convergence of morality, religion, education and politics in nineteenth-century America in order to awaken a sense of national pride, and in doing so places a priority on political independence and education. *Hope Leslie* models morality and traces the correlation of religion and politics as they served to promote Puritan civic responsibility in seventeenth-century New England, and in doing so places a priority on moral integrity and a cultural shift toward autonomy.

Sedgwick’s childhood in Massachusetts at the turn of the nineteenth century inspired her literary portrayal of America’s natural surroundings, religious and racial tensions, antebellum manners, and New England character. She conceives of nature as a form through which to develop and measure her cast of characters in both novels and a source from which to depict a romanticized version of the landscape. These novels signify her early contributions to the historical romance as a genre, and Sedgwick’s modeling of the religious, political and social responsibilities for both the heroes and the heroines in a harsh New England environment is what makes them uniquely American.
Foreword

Readers of American literature written in the nineteenth century about the nineteenth century are certainly familiar with the names James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving. Their names are synonymous with Cooper’s character Natty Bumppo and Irving’s Rip Van Winkle as figures through which each author provides a post-Revolutionary representation of pre-Revolutionary America. While Cooper and Irving were developing their characters and American landscapes, Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1789-1867) was also at work developing American characters and landscapes. Most of Sedgwick’s writing was first published anonymously, although it was not long before her name and her literary representation of an early American perspective quite different from Cooper’s and Irving’s became widely known. Yet her popularity waned in the twentieth century, and her work still continues to be marginalized in comparison to that of her male contemporaries. Even given such neglect, Sedgwick’s literary characters provide a meticulous and necessary representation of antebellum social structures that suggests a very different point of view on class, race, religion, and political issues associated with the young Republic. In particular, Sedgwick’s first and third novels, *A New-England Tale* (1822) and *Hope Leslie or Early Times in Massachusetts* (1827), develop a history of America that Sedgwick crafted to present her conception of social priorities and sense of promise she associated with the early Republic, and at the same time they each provide models of an American character for citizens to emulate.

The thesis that follows examines Sedgwick’s positioning and analysis of religion, politics, and social class and structures in *A New-England Tale* and *Hope Leslie*. 

1
Catharine Maria Sedgwick was born in 1789, the same year George Washington assumed the presidency, in Stockbridge, Massachusetts to Pamela Dwight and Federalist politician Theodore Sedgwick. She was the sixth of seven children and the youngest daughter of three. Mary Kelley’s edition *The Power of Her Sympathy: The Autobiography and Journal of Catharine Maria Sedgwick* (1993), opens with Sedgwick’s recollections of her ancestors in her autobiography, which were written for her great-niece, Alice Minot, the daughter of her cherished niece Kate and William Minot. As Kelley points out, “Had William appealed to her on the basis of her literary achievements, this inveterately modest woman almost certainly would have declined” (3), but to outline their family heritage for her niece, Sedgwick obliged the request. Elaborating on the style of Sedgwick’s personal writings, Kelley remarks that she, “departed from an autobiographical tradition in which the self moved inexorably toward separation and individuation” (5), choosing instead to develop her life through a series of substantial letters to her niece that shift from recollections of the past to observations on the present, as if to highlight the moral character and civic contributions of their ancestors for Alice’s benefit. This series of Sedgwick’s letters serves as her autobiography and includes correspondence between family members that frames her family history in relation to the American past, with Sedgwick as the mediator between the two.

Sedgwick’s autobiography draws almost exclusively on the stories she heard when, as a youngster, she became the budding family historian, while her journal spans and documents her adult years. Her autobiography opens with information she has gathered about her paternal grandfather, Robert Sedgwick. Commissioned by Oliver
Cromwell, Robert led the military exploration of Jamaica for the English. Sedgwick adds with pride, “Truly I think it a great honor that the head of our house took office from that great man who achieved his own greatness, and not from the King Charleses who were born to it” (45). She continues, “My father’s mother died long before I was born; my mother’s mother, I think, about eighteen months after” (47). Sedgwick’s maternal grandmother, Abigail Williams Sergeant Dwight, was an important woman in the community who Sedgwick identifies as “a woman much celebrated in her day for her intelligence and character. . . . I have always heard her spoken of as a remarkable woman in her time” (47). Among the anecdotes she tells Alice about her grandparents, one concerns an Irish friend of theirs named Lynch and the bias in the community against him; she then notes, “The result of this new experiment in the world of a distinct race, with marked characteristics and a religion of their own, living among us with the full benefit of equal rights and privileges, you, my dear Alice, may live to see” (51).

Sedgwick’s interjections to her niece that guide the reading, directly addressing Alice in the text, make this autobiography unique. She accords the challenges presented by the integration of various cultures and races in New England as an ongoing process in which the result was the enhancement of American national identity. Although Lynch is not family, she is particular about including his story, as if to make an appeal to Alice’s moral character amid the narrative of their family history.

While Sedgwick was not old enough to recall her grandparents, making her account second-hand at best, her account of her parent’s lives was far from second-hand. Both Theodore and Pamela made distinct personal sacrifices for the success of the young
Republic, to which Catharine was witness. Theodore, a graduate of Yale, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives where he served as speaker, and although he held his family in high regard, his career always came first. She notes, “The good done by my father in contributing to establish the government, and to swell the amount of that political virtue which makes the history of the Federal party the record of the purest patriotism the world has known-that remains” (63). His sacrifices of family for politics meant isolation and frequently despair for Pamela who had to reconcile herself to performing the domestic responsibilities of child rearing and running the household virtually alone while her husband was away at work. Sedgwick provides Alice with a sense of Pamela’s character by sharing her letter to Theodore about the continuation of his political career: “The new government is yet untried. If I mistake not, the success of it depends more on the virtue and economy of the people than on the wisdom of those who govern” (58). Sedgwick recalls, “My father decided for public life, and I believe my mother never again expressed one word of remonstrance or dissatisfaction” (58). Struggling with depression and mental instability until her death in 1807, when Catharine was seventeen, Pamela had faith in the success of the Republic with or without her husband’s service. But knowing his inclination to continue in the public eye, she concluded her letter to him, saying, “Submission is my duty, and, however hard, I will try to practice what reason teaches me I am under obligation to do” (59). As a demonstration of patriarchal duty and matriarchal sacrifice, Sedgwick tells Alice, “Their union was a very perfect one: reverence, devotion, with infinite tenderness on her side; respect, confidence, and unswerving love on his” (57-8). Although Sedgwick
never married, she had a clear perception of the ideal New England marriage.

The rights of women in the early nineteenth century were limited. Girls did not generally receive a formal education, and unless they married they had little legal standing in society. Few women remained single, but coming from a family of lawyers, Sedgwick relied upon her brothers for the legal representation typically provided by a spouse. She was known to spend several months at a time with the family of one or another of her brothers: Theodore, Harry, Robert, and Charles.

Three of my brothers were my seniors. I have no recollections of my eldest brother [Theodore] during my childhood. He was away at school and at college, but with my two brothers Harry and Robert I had intimate companionship, and I think as true and loving a friendship as ever existed between brothers and sister. Your “father Charles” was the youngest of the family, and so held that peculiar relation to us all as junior, and in some sort dependent, and the natural depository of our petting affections. (88)

As adults, all four brothers encouraged their youngest sister to write and assisted her with finding publishers for her writings. Shortly after leaving Calvinism for Unitarianism, Sedgwick wrote a religious tract for the local pastor, which she expanded into her first novel *A New-England Tale*; her brothers all supported her in its anonymous publication in 1822. Their support of her writing continued throughout her career, and in gratitude she dedicated *Clarence* (1830), her fourth novel, to them.

Sedgwick’s affections also extended to her sisters and her brother’s wives. In her Foreword to *Critical Perspectives* (2003), Mary Kelley explains that the anthology
“locates Sedgwick’s professional career in the context of a personal life shaped by profoundly intimate relationships” with her siblings (xii). According to Kelley, Sedgwick’s sisters, Eliza and Frances, had “a less decisive influence upon [her] childhood” (Power 18) because they were considerably older than she. As marriage was the expected course for women, and Sedgwick was only seven years old when her eldest sister married, “it was the relationship between marital union and sibling separation which Sedgwick remembered about her sisters” (18). In her introduction to Sedgwick in *Provisions: A Reader from 19th-Century American Women* (1985), Judith Fetterley also considers her relationship with the wives of her brothers: “The heart of Sedgwick’s life was essentially domestic. . . . Although devoted to her brothers, [she] also formed strong bonds with her various sisters-in-law” (42). A June 1827 entry in her journal reflects Sedgwick’s personal prioritization of family over her career when she describes the lives and health of siblings before noting, “I have written thus far without even thinking that among the events of the last three months is the publication of *Hope Leslie*” (Kelley, Power 118). She continues, “my fond friends expect a great accession of fame to me—fame—what is it? the breath of man” (118). Indeed, her priority was family, and her journal details Sedgwick’s time spent taking care of siblings while they were ill or dying, and when one died, she deeply mourned the loss of their companionship.

Somewhat surprising is Sedgwick’s mediocre education. In her autobiography she told Alice, “I had constantly before me examples of goodness, and from all sides admonitions to virtue, but no regular instruction”; she goes so far as to say, “I believe no school days were as to systematic school learning less productive than mine” (Kelley,
Although she describes her formal education as lacking, the examples set for her by her family proved an inspiring influence on her young mind. She notes, for example,

My father was an observer and lover of nature, my sister Frances a romantic, passionate devotee to it, and if I had no natural perception or relish of its loveliness, I caught it from them, so that my heart was early knot to it, and I at least early studied and early learned this picture language, so rich and universal. (73)

Thus, if her formal education fell short, familial and informal education corrected the imbalance.

American authors did not inspire Sedgwick. Her two primary influences along the path toward discovering her own literary voice were the popular British writers Maria Edgeworth and Sir Walter Scott. Edgeworth was known in America for her *Letters to Literary Ladies* (1795), “a defense of female education,” whereas Scott was best known for his historical novels (Kelley, *Power* 82). Sedgwick dedicates her anonymously published *A New-England Tale*, “TO MARIA EDGEBOTH, AS A SLIGHT EXPRESSION OF THE WRITER’S SENSE OF HER EMINENT SERVICES IN THE GREAT CAUSE OF HUMAN VIRTUE AND IMPROVEMENT, THIS HUMBLE TALE IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.” Without an identified author, the reader naturally associates *A New-England Tale* with Edgeworth’s literary style. “Sedgwick had to look abroad for counterparts during the formative decades of her career. In contrast to the Englishwomen with whom she compared herself, she stood nearly alone” (34). Kelley
proposes that Sedgwick was inspired by Scott’s “enormous popularity,” and by his example she “sought to recover her nation’s past, to kindle interest in its early inhabitants, and to foster a cultural identity other than that derived from the former mother country” (38). Given the stark literary climate in antebellum America, Sedgwick was likely aware that through her writing she was creating a standard for America’s own national representation of the historical romance.

The Sedgwicks were strict Calvinists, but over time they converted to Unitarianism. In her autobiography Sedgwick tells Alice about Dr. West, her family’s clergyman in Stockbridge. He was “of sound New England orthodoxy, a Hopkinsian Calvinist. Heaven forbid, dear Alice, that you should ever inquire into the splitting of these theological hairs” (Kelley, Power 95). Hopkinsianism is a modified Calvinist theology that is based upon the writings of Jonathan Edwards. Of Dr. West, she recalls, “sixty years he preached to us, and in all that time, . . . the ‘pious’ of the town all stood by the Doric faith. The law then required each town to support a clergyman, and his salary was paid by taxation” (95). Of her sisters, she recollects, “Eliza suffered from the horrors of Calvinism. She was so true, so practical, that she could not evade its realities; she believed its monstrous doctrines,” while, “Frances’s imagination saved her from a like suffering” (86). Her descriptions of the influence of Calvinism are limited to the women in her family and the awful effects of this strict religion on them results in her conversion to Unitarianism in 1821.
Bygone Days Inspire an Author: The Emergence of *A New-England Tale*

As Sedgwick explored her evolving religious beliefs, she was also trying her hand at writing. Published only a year after her conversion, *A New-England Tale* was taken up by readers as a Unitarian tract that Fetterley claims was “designed to expose the narrowness and bigotry of orthodox Calvinism” (43). In *New England Literary Culture* (1986), Lawrence Buell argues that “the literary aspect of [the Boston Unitarian-Whig] orthodoxy was a conservative sort of Romanticism . . . during the 1820s and 1830s” (44). The Unitarians “advocated the development of an American literature, while expecting . . . that it would take the form of an adaptation of European models rather than a wholly new idiom” (44). Sedgwick did not disappoint, according to Buell, who observes that Unitarians “pointed to Bryant and Sedgwick, both (happily) Unitarians, as examples of the kind of adaptation they had in mind” (44). Although influenced by European authors such as Scott and Edgeworth, her subject matter was America’s natural surroundings, colonial religious tensions, antebellum manners, and New England characters.

The consideration of Sedgwick’s life and familial influences on the career path she would take is incomplete without acknowledging Elizabeth Freeman, the Sedgwick’s nanny, as the person who raised her before and during her mother’s fatal illness. In her essay in *Critical Perspectives* (2003) Karen Woods Weierman notes that in 1781 Sedgwick’s father “represented the slave Elizabeth Freeman in her suit for freedom” (123). Once free, she became the Sedgwicks’ housekeeper, and all the children affectionately called her “Mumbet.” During their mother’s illness and then after her death in 1807, the Sedgwick children cherished Mumbet as mother, friend and confidant.
Mumbet attributed her desire for freedom to hearing the Declaration of Independence being read in public (132). An undated, incomplete fifty-page handwritten manuscript was discovered in the Massachusetts Historical Society marked by Sedgwick as: “some pages of a slave story I began and abandoned” (122, 126). Although not dated with certainty, handwriting, watermarks and the death of Mumbet in 1829 support the estimate that the manuscript was written between 1833 and 1838 (130). Meta, one of the primary characters in the story, bears a strong likeness to Mumbet; in the manuscript Sedgwick takes special note of “her sound judgment, her incorruptible fidelity,” and “resistance of tyranny” (127). Yet Catharine was reluctant to take a literary stance in support of the abolitionist cause. She supported racial equality, but as her unfinished anti-slavery manuscript indicates, she was unwilling to contribute to the debates over race issues in her public writings.

The slave question is ever present during the pre-Civil War period that corresponded with Sedgwick’s middle years. Weierman suggests that in the anti-slavery manuscript, “the plot has three main themes: resistance to slavery, race science, and gradual emancipation” (127). Based on the incomplete manuscript and the underdeveloped writing in it, Weierman concludes that Sedgwick “simply cannot craft a satisfactory ending or peaceful resolution that would offer a model for the nation” (133). Her relationship with Mumbet gave her a first-hand account of slavery, while the men in her family exposed her to the legal process for freedom. Such exposure to slavery and abolitionism underscores the reasonableness of Weierman’s observation that Sedgwick is “preserving the Union at all costs, and she feared that the radical abolitionists would
destroy the nation” (126). The term “radical” is key to the consideration of Sedgwick’s authorial motivation. The radicals on either side of the slavery question were so far divided that she did not dare to propose a literary solution for fear of inciting further division. There is every indication that her inability to finish this manuscript stems from her struggle to reconcile the problem for the radicals on either side of the debate.

Inevitably, then, Sedgwick’s upbringing in a Calvinist-turned-Unitarian household in nineteenth-century Massachusetts exposed her to the class systems, gender roles and religion, all of which she brings to bear in her fiction. Thus, in both *A New-England Tale* and *Hope Leslie* she incorporates local dialect and environmental detail, as well as the social and political climate based on her own life experiences. *A New-England Tale* is published and set in the early nineteenth century, and Sedgwick enhances its Cinderella plot with social and religious conflicts. These conflicts are centered on the waning influence of Calvinism in New England at this time. *Hope Leslie* is set in Massachusetts during the 1640s. Sedgwick integrates history into her fiction in her alternative account of the Pequot War (1637), her inclusion of Governor John Winthrop (1588-1649) and a touch of the Indian Captive narrative (represented by Hope’s sister, Faith, and Oneco). In this latter novel, Sedgwick daringly takes the role of women beyond the domestic sphere.

*A New-England Tale* and *Hope Leslie* were pioneering efforts at the historical romance genre that Sedgwick helped establish in America. But what constitutes a historical romance? *A Glossary of Literary Terms* does not expound on this categorically; however, “historic” and “romantic” novels are identified and defined in a way that helps
to shape a reader’s expectations: “What we usually specify as the historical novel proper began in the nineteenth century with Sir Walter Scott” (Abrams and Harpham 256). Not only are settings, characters and events taken from history, but they also make “the historical events and issues crucial for the central characters (who may themselves be historical personages) and for the course of the narrative” (256). Notably, romance novels are defined as, “Love stories that focus on the heroine rather than the hero, in which, after diverse obstacles have been overcome, the plots end happily with the betrothal or marriage of the lovers” (351). Scott’s influence on Sedgwick as a historical writer is evident in both novels, but it is also clear that Sedgwick has made the form her own, developing uniquely American settings, characters and events. The romance element in these novels is also demonstrably American, with heroines and heroes drawn from racial and religious characteristics of Sedgwick’s New World setting, and who must prevail against numerous difficulties before their love can be realized personally and within the constructs of New England society. In Archives of American Time, Lloyd Pratt focuses on the period between 1800 and 1850 as “witness[ing] the rise to prominence of one of the most enduringly popular of American literary forms: the national historical romance” (63-4). As representations of Sedgwick’s romantic fiction, these novels place readers in frontier New England when religion defined citizenship, and both demonstrate the role of Calvinism in the foundation of America, spanning a century from Hope Leslie to A New-England Tale.

Perhaps the most significant factor affecting Sedgwick’s efforts to handle this historicism in her novels was the striking rapidity of change in early nineteenth-century
America. In real life, this rapidity carried with it a good deal of social and psychological upheaval as New Englanders struggled to adapt their once primarily agricultural daily lives to life structured by technological modes of timekeeping and communication. Sedgwick conveys this rapidity with her settings that detail daily life and traditional concepts of time, easily recognized by her contemporaries, even as early colonial timekeeping is being replaced. She is marking a period in New England history soon forgotten in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. Judith Fetterley sums up Sedgwick’s authorial skill in handling this uncertain period:

To Sydney Smith’s notorious question of 1820, “in the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book,” Sedgwick provided an answer. Her novels were noteworthy for their use of American materials—settings, characters, manners, history—and frequently for their realism in the handling of these materials. (43)

During the years of Sedgwick’s anonymous authorship, she developed a readership that came to regard her writing as a model of American manners and morals that male and female readers could relate to and ultimately emulate during a period of unprecedented change for an infant nation.

Much of the work to promote the recovery of Sedgwick’s historical fiction focuses on her literary heroines; however, her male characters also demonstrate virtuous traits to be emulated by antebellum men. She made a point to tell Alice about her father’s time on the bench as a Supreme Judicial Court judge with “men of surly, crusty, oppressive manners,” “in a state of antagonism, and some of them had even determined
to leave their profession” (Kelley, *Power* 79). Sedgwick documents his approach to this environment, writing, “My father’s kind, courteous, considerate manners were said by his contemporaries to have produced an entire revolution” (79). For this reason, I would argue that she saw the value in his strategy and modeled it for her heroines and heroes. In *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*, Mary Kelley reveals Sedgwick’s expression of confidence in the “virtue” of girls with little additional guidance. On the birth of another son to her niece Kate, she wrote a letter telling her that it is “the masculine nature that grows rank without pruning or training” (305). This proclivity places the responsibility of shaping and nurturing the moral character of the next generation of men of the highest order for women: mothers and authors.

Harry was the first brother to encourage Sedgwick in the writing and publication of *A New-England Tale*, but even with his support she was apprehensive about putting herself in the public eye. Although the novel was published anonymously, few were privy to the author’s identity. One such friend was Susan Higginson Channing (Kelley, *Private Woman* 201). After the publication of *A New-England Tale* Sedgwick wrote to Susan, “I claim nothing for [the novel] on the score of literary merit” (201). In a letter sent later she rejected “any pretension as an author” and humbly professed, “my production was a very small affair anyway” (201). Not only did her writing of this novel meet the approval of all her brothers, it was also embraced at home and abroad as an insightful representation of the public and private lives and responsibilities of the citizens of the young Republic. Set in the early nineteenth century and written in the third person, *A New-England Tale*
provides an historical account of frontier life, while modeling the integrity and unity of a
nation for her contemporaries.

In the “Preface” to *A New-England Tale*, Sedgwick offers her novel to the limited
collection of expressly *American* literature as a representation of the values that unite
those living in nineteenth-century northeastern American culture, and identifies citizens’
public and private responsibilities as members of the young Republic. She writes, “It is
certainly desirable to possess some sketches of the character and manners of our own
country . . .” (4). In her Introduction to the novel Susan K. Harris remarks that
Sedgwick’s “works show the social concerns of a thoughtful American who was born just
after the Revolution and died just after the Civil War” (xix). The result of Sedgwick’s
effort is the representation of moral character in antebellum life that, at the same time,
provides future generations with a literary snapshot of religion, politics and social classes.

Although the nineteenth-century New England environment influences the
character of the inhabitants of the frontier, Sedgwick presents a romanticized version of
nature in her landscapes and characters, to which her contemporary readers could easily
relate. In *A New-England Tale*, she introduces the reader to the “romantic road” to West
Springfield, Massachusetts as her protagonist, Mr. Lloyd, and his dying wife make their
way from Connecticut: “There is no part our country, abundant as it is in the charms of
nature, more lavishly adorned with romantic scenery” (28). Sedgwick incites affection
toward the countryside landscape by personifying it with familiar characteristics. As the
Lloyds made their way, “a noisy stream dashed impetuously along at their left, and as
they ascended the mountain, they still heard it before them leaping from rock to rock,
now almost losing itself in the deep pathway it made, and then rushing with increased violence over its stony bed,” reminding Mr. Lloyd of “the turbulence of headstrong childhood” (28). Yet as they continue on their journey, just prior to her passing, Mrs. Lloyd points out to her daughter Rebecca “look, how gracefully and modestly that beautiful stream winds along under the broad shadows of those trees and clustering vines, as if it sought to hide the beauty that sparkles so brightly whenever a beam of light touches it” (34). Later, Sedgwick observes the “meadow sparkled with myriads of fireflies, that seemed . . . to be keeping their merry revels by the music of the passing stream” (91). In the harsh frontier environment where the northeastern climate and treacherous landscape dramatically impede habitation, she explicitly characterizes the “romantic scenery” that models her inclination for nature by invoking affection and a connection with the landscape for both the Lloyds and reader.

Sedgwick’s representation of nature becomes a means against which she measures the cast of characters in *A New-England Tale*. Most important among this cast are the following: Jane Elton, the orphaned heroine of the novel; crazy Bet, the eccentric town vagrant; Mrs. Elton, Jane’s mother; Mary, Mrs. Elton’s servant and Jane’s friend; John Lloyd, a newly widowed Quaker who purchases Jane’s family home; Mrs. Wilson, Jane’s widowed paternal aunt who takes her in; Jane’s rebellious cousins, David, Martha, Elvira; and Edward Erskine, a young, wealthy bachelor of the village who proposes to Jane. Key interactions among these characters—and judgments of them—are often rendered in nature-based terms. So, for example, while discussing Jane’s fate, her aunts judge each other’s child-rearing capabilities. The youngest aunt, Mrs. Wilson, is criticized for raising
“disorderly” children, to which she retorts, “if we plant and water, we cannot give the increase” (12). Sedgwick responds, “Mrs. Wilson should have remembered that God does give the increase to those that rightly plant, and faithfully water” (12). In a separate instance Sedgwick uses the same analogy, but to different ends. Of Mrs. Convers, another aunt of Jane’s, crazy Bet tells her, “all the good seed that fell on that ground was choked by thorns long ago” (17). We see this yet again when Jane’s mother, Mrs. Elton, Sedgwick describes as having “sowed the seed, and looked with undoubting faith for the promised blessing” (23). Mrs. Elton immediately confirms this observation, telling Mary, “but the seed is already springing up” (23-4). Four chapters later Sedgwick shares Mr. Lloyd’s observation of Jane that it is “natural for the young plant to expand its leaves to the bright rays of the sun” (54). When Jane revisits John of the Mountain and his wife, John tells their story by likening their lives together to “two old evergreens” (130). Sedgwick as narrator, Mrs. Wilson, crazy Bet, Mrs. Elton, and John all cite struggles in nature that parallel those of humanity, making it easy for characters and readers to relate to the subject.

Competing Doctrines: Religious Virtue in A New-England Tale

In addition to dealing with her romanticized version of nature in her landscapes and characters in A New-England Tale, Sedgwick is even more adept at portraying the region’s religious transition away from Calvinism in the early nineteenth century. Sedgwick uses her understanding of scripture to strengthen her moral message, while providing the reader with positive and negative models of rectitude. She incorporates the tension between citizens of different religious denominations that her contemporary
readers would certainly be familiar in the nineteenth century, and Sedgwick presents the reader with the unifying code of Christianity that transcends church membership.

Sedgwick makes clear that Quakerism and Methodism rose as doctrines that competed with Calvinism during this period and, more importantly, she goes beyond such labels to identify her ideal of the non-denominational good Christian as an alternative for her contemporary readers who have experienced the same disenchantment with Calvinism. When Edward questions Mr. Lloyd’s humble interest in benefitting the community, Edward tells Jane that such “disinterestedness . . . only exists in the visions of poets, or Utopian dreams of youth; or, perhaps, embodied in the fine person of a hero of romance” (128), to which she responds, “Oh! My dear Edward, it does exist; it is the principle, the spirit of the Christian!” (128). Edward mocks her for her belief in Mr. Lloyd’s good intentions by referencing Mrs. Wilson as a “staunch professor” of Christianity, to which Jane asks if it is fair “to condemn a whole class because some of its members are faithless and disloyal? A commander does but decimate [italics in original] a mutinous corps” (129). This calls to mind Theodore Sedgwick’s mannerly approach to the repressive men on the bench and the revolutionary results among members of the Supreme Court that Sedgwick relays to her great-niece in the autobiography. Early in the novel Sedgwick tells the reader that Jane’s mother “believed all the Bible teaches,” (7) and yet Jane is not associated with any established doctrine before she chooses to become a Quaker at the end of A New-England Tale. While some readers take this novel as representing anti-Calvinist sentiment, Sedgwick is also presenting, in Mrs. Wilson, a commonly known nineteenth-century stereotype: those citizens who use their religious
zeal as leverage in public and private interactions, but never adhere to the teachings of the Bible. As Sedgwick illustrates multiple times in the novel, Mrs. Wilson is a better example of a hypocrite than an actual representative of Calvinism.

Sedgwick subtly incorporates in A New-England Tale her knowledge of scripture to enhance the novel’s moral lessons. After the death of Jane’s mother, crazy Bet finds Jane fast asleep with one cheek on her Bible: “It was open at the 5th chapter of John, which she had so often read to her mother, that she turned instinctively to it. The page was blistered with her tears” (15). This passage asks, “How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, John 5:44). The usual interpretation of this passage is that Christians who receive worldly recognition for their moral thoughts and actions will not receive God’s praise; only humility is rewarded in heaven. This interpretation of the verse haunts Sedgwick’s self-centered characterization of Mrs. Wilson, who “accompanied her donation” to Indian and Foreign Missions, . . . with a remark, that what she did give, she gave with a willing heart” (22). Accounting for Mrs. Wilson’s religious credentials, Sedgwick remarks that she “passed through the ordeal of a church-examination with great credit. . . . She thus assumed the form of godliness, without feeling its power” (22). Mrs. Wilson feels entitled to public credit for taking her orphaned niece into her home, and never misses an opportunity to point out her “generosity” to Jane and others in the community. But Sedgwick did not stop with this obvious example of false piety in which her readers were sure to relate.

As if training her readers, Sedgwick provides for them a standard of morality to
strive for in the characterization of Jane Elton and John Lloyd. Sedgwick does not reveal this immediately; her first priority is to establish thoroughly the integrity of the heroine and hero. However, this standard comes clearly into view, when Jane hears of her father’s outstanding debt to the destitute widow Polly, she offers Polly the hundred dollars that would have otherwise enabled her to leave the unpleasantness at her aunt’s house. She does this without hesitation, and her only requests are that Polly “say nothing to any body in the world, of your having received this money from me,” and tell no one “that my parents did not pay you” (73). Later, John of the Mountain tells Jane about his misfortune followed by the aid from a generous benefactor, with the stipulation to “keep it a secret where I got help” (134). From description alone Jane identified the man as Mr. Lloyd. The reader thus becomes witness to two models of active Christian principle that began with Sedgwick’s introduction of John 5 in the Bible as the message of Christian charity is demonstrated in the actions of the heroine and hero. In both instances, the help freely given provided a moral choice that yielded positive results for individuals and their community.

Sedgwick’s cautionary and exemplary representations of Christian citizenship in *A New-England Tale* are presented in the context of tensions between Protestant denominations that were prominent at the turn of the nineteenth century: Calvinism, Methodism, and Quakerism. In her coldest scene of sanctimoniousness, Mrs. Wilson “put[s] it to [Jane’s] conscience, whether if she was sure her mother had gone where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched” (17). As the narrator, Sedgwick’s personal attitude toward Calvinism comes through when she describes Mrs. Wilson’s whine as one
“that has been used by all hypocrites from Oliver Cromwell’s time down” (111).

Sedgwick associates Methodism with the “path to perfection” (123), although Mrs. Wilson describes it as “that soul-destroying doctrine of the Methodists—perfection [italics in original]” (24). Even Mr. Lloyd is introduced in the novel only as, “Mr. Lloyd, a Quaker” (25), which gives the impression that antebellum New England individual identity is encompassed in and revealed by religious affiliation. As a self-absorbed young man during this period, Edward critiques each denomination when he tells Jane, “Your aunt with her everlasting cant, your Methodist friend with her old maid notions, and this precise quaker, . . . have made you . . . rigid, have bound and stiffened every youthful feeling” (143). These characterizations present the religious landscape of disenchantment with Calvinism that resulted in a diverse Protestant community that mirrors the religious environment that Sedgwick personally experienced in New England.

Sedgwick’s successful portrayal of religious tensions—both the religious tensions personally felt by individuals and those experienced between individuals and their denominations— is contrasted to her identification of a “spirit of Christianity” (181) that embodies the Protestant faith: virtue. As the narrator, Sedgwick includes her readers in the narrative as when she describes the virtues associated with Jane’s mother: “how few there are among those whom we believe to be Christians, who govern their daily conduct by Christian principles, and regulate their temporal duties by the strict Christian rule” (my emphasis, 7). This quality is attributed to Mary as a Methodist, Jane as a Christian, and Mr. Lloyd as a Quaker. The Calvinist characters in the novel lack such merit, and Sedgwick uses the burial scene of Jane’s mother to suggest that without a demonstration
of “‘faith by their works,’ we fear they will experience [the Calvinist doctrine’s] just fate” (10-1). “Faith by their works” hearkens to John 5 once again. Virtue is rewarded in the conclusion, while pride and narcissism are punished. Jane is the only one who does not abandon Mrs. Wilson as she lies on her deathbed exhibiting delirium brought on by tuberculosis. Mr. Lloyd looks on sadly and invokes the historic figure of William Penn as he recalls the passage, “a man cannot be the better for that religion for which his neighbor is the worse” (175). Sedgwick advocates for religious tolerance, while striving for moral consciousness that bonds the community and provides salvation for the individual.

New England Politics: Churches, Government and Community

In conjunction with her sketch of religious virtue in A New-England Tale, Sedgwick depicts the close correlation of church and education with politics in the young Republic in a way and to a degree that is not typically depicted in an historical romance. She details the civic function of New England churches that extends to education based on gender and neighborly surveillance of religious and civic duty that fuelled the still developing judicial system. Sedgwick incorporates the details of Shay’s Rebellion (1786-7) to historically document the correlation of church and state that extends to the politics of Christian burial. Among the first American-born generation, Sedgwick is framing the transcendence of church affiliation to invoke individual responsibility and national pride in her readership. She uses the historic diplomacy of the Quakers as an example for New Englanders to emulate in community politics and governance.

The interconnection of church and politics in A New-England Tale play an important role in newly established formalized education that is similar to Sedgwick’s
personal educational experience. The school year in New England ends with examinations and a day for the “exhibition, during which the young men and boys were to display those powers that were developing for the pulpit, and the bar, and the political harangue,” while “[t]he young ladies were with obvious and singular propriety excluded from any part in the exhibition” (55). The boys were primed for social advancement, while the girls were groomed for the submission of marriage. The exception was the reading of the prize composition written by one of the promising female students, to be announced at the exhibition being held in the church meetinghouse. Sedgwick sets the scene—“The teacher and the clergyman were in the pulpit; the scholars . . . on benches at the opposite extremities of the stage; the crowd was hushed . . . while the clergyman commenced the exercises of the day by an appropriate prayer” (57)—she demonstrates the hierarchy of church over education in this predominantly Calvinist community. When a dancing-master comes to the village to offer dance classes, the town clergy consults the Bible and old church records for rules prohibiting church members from attending (44). Despite the division of the village between those who see dancing as a sin and those who regard it as a “healthful exercise and innocent recreation . . . in moderation” (45), the dance school was permitted to open. Some villagers saw the benefit to providing a social and physical outlet for the village youth when properly monitored, but Mrs. Wilson would not be swayed: “At Mrs. Wilson’s instance, two new weekly meetings were appointed, on the same evenings with the dancing-school; the one to be a conference in the presence of the young people, and the other a catechetical lecture for them” (45). Sedgwick presents the context of decision-making by the people of the village, and
although dancing was permitted, she shows how citizens like Mrs. Wilson could still impose influence upon family, neighbors and other churchgoers.

Church authority extended to more than education and Sedgwick relates religious influence on community politics determined by neighborly surveillance in *A New-England Tale*. Sedgwick addresses her reader as a contemporary, “We all know that, from the habits of our people in a country town, it is utterly impossible for the most watchful and skillful manoeuver, to keep his pecuniary affairs secret from the keen and quick observation of his neighbours” (7). To be sure, there was a legal system in place that, strictly speaking, should have exercised such surveillance, as we learn when Jane’s cousin, David Wilson, is arrested for robbery “by the laws of the United States, by which he has offended” (153). However, in practice it appears that neighborly surveillance upheld social and religious standards. These standards were not simply instituted to punish villagers, but to inspire in them ethical conduct. Sedgwick contrasts derogatory to constructive scrutiny in chapter XIII, when Edward’s and Mr. Lloyd’s monitoring of the other is brought to light. Sedgwick sums up what Edward tells Jane, “that from the beginning of their engagement Mr. Lloyd had undertaken the surveillance [italics in original] of [Edward’s] morals,” and he expresses his animosity toward Quakers in general. Sedgwick makes clear that Edward’s judgment of Mr. Lloyd is based solely on his religious beliefs, about which Edward admits to having no understanding. Yet Mr. Lloyd attempts to mentor Edward, “to make him adopt his plans of improvement in the natural and moral world” (140). For her contemporary readers Sedgwick is advocating against citizenship based on religious standing, and for citizenship in which high moral
standards are a model and gauge in the governance of New England; for modern readers she contributes to the literary archives the social politics, varying moral standards and religious diversity of frontier living.

Historically, and in *A New-England Tale*, neighborly surveillance of brethren evolved into the establishment of a judicial system to regulate the harsher offenses within the colonial community. Flawed and still heavily reliant on church leaders, the early legal system that Sedgwick depicts in *A New-England Tale*, thrived on an entirely different political bias, money and charm. When Jane stops to check in on John of the Mountain and his wife, John details his “law-suit” against the landholding Woodhull brothers. This suit was the result of the Woodhulls’ demolition of John’s home and belongings, which the brothers justified because they owned the land where the house was built. John recalls, “all the men in the village were collected at the tavern, for Erskine was to plead for the Woodhulls, and everybody likes to hear his silver tongue” (132). In New England the term “squire” generally refers to a man of the law, and John of the Mountain refers to Edward as Squire Erskine when he defends the Woodhulls in John’s law-suit. Once each side presented its case, the justice decided in favor of the Woodhulls, warning John that he “should never make out well in the world, if [he] did not know more of the laws of the land!” after which “Erskine and the Woodhulls invited the justice and the company into the bar-room to treat them” (133). Later, when Edward tells Jane of his victory he concedes, “I succeeded in winning my cause in spite of law and equity, for they were both against me” (141). Sedgwick corrects this inequity of the law with the discreet intervention of Mr. Lloyd, who offers to purchase the land and materials for a new house
for John and his wife. Sedgwick’s depiction of a legal system in which success depends upon the hiring of a legal representative with a “silver tongue” serves as a warning to her contemporaries that the legal system is flawed. Mr. Lloyd’s discrete response to correct the imbalance demonstrates the importance of community involvement in the interest of republican virtue.

Sedgwick contrasts the moral standards and formal laws being defined by church leaders with a fictional representation of the innocent victims of Shay’s Rebellion. The peculiar scene in chapter IX where crazy Bet leads Jane to John of the Mountain’s home deep in the woods lends more to the story than the ramblings of a tragic local woman. Here, Sedgwick references an event in local history that her contemporary readers would know within the dialogue. The event is Shay’s Rebellion, also known as Shay’s War, named after Daniel Shays, and as if anticipating future readers, Sedgwick provides details of the rebellion in an Appendix. Sedgwick writes that although the rebellion is “a stain upon the character of Massachusetts,” the citizens “enjoyed a republican government, but with it came increased taxation, poverty, and toil” (186). Increased debt, “[t]he organization of courts and the collection of debts, formed one of the principal grounds of discontent” (187). This incited the insurrection against the government. The Appendix details a violent incident that lead to the dissolving of the rebellion, and Sedgwick incorporates crazy Bet’s knowledge of this historic occurrence into the novel. En route to John’s, crazy Bet stops Jane near a grave and although Jane has heard the tale of Lucy many times before, Bet tells her the story as an eyewitness of it:

Ah! But you did not see her as I did, when Ashley’s men went out, and she
followed them, and begged them on her knees, for the love of God, not to fire upon the prisoners; for the story had come, that Shay’s men would cover their front with the captives; and you did not see her when he was brought to her shot through the heart, and dead as she is now. (93)

Later that same day a devastated Lucy drowned herself and was buried nearby on unconsecrated ground because the “squires and deacons found it against law and gospel too, to give her Christian burial” (93). Sedgwick’s reference to “Ashley’s men” in crazy Bet’s dialogue refers to Colonel John Ashley of the government militia (187). She confirms crazy Bet’s record of Shay’s men putting prisoners “into the front of the rebel line,” and concludes her Appendix note: “This is the only civil war which has ever been waged in our country, unless the war of the revolution can be so called” (188).

This is certainly true when *A New-England Tale* is published in 1822. Through crazy Bet in this scene, Sedgwick is presenting local history while drawing the reader’s attention to the politics of Christian burial. Crazy Bet’s tale reveals to the reader the public affairs relating to death. Burial rights are contingent upon the circumstances surrounding the death and the merging of government and church to decide if the deceased is entitled to a Christian burial. Church leaders played a fundamental role in the New England legal system she discloses in crazy Bet’s remembrance of the circumstances of Lucy’s demise.

*A New-England Tale* depicts the first generation of American-born citizens to come of age as the young Republic struggled to unite and prosper as a nation. Sedgwick successfully relates national pride among this generation for their local history, as with
her description of the excitement of the villagers while preparing for the school exhibition: “The old and the young seemed alike interested in promoting the glories of the day” (55). The villagers were creating the regalia for the role of a king “from one of Miss More’s Sacred Dramas” to be performed at the exhibition, when Sedgwick points out the “want of congruity” of the costume because “not one of the republican audience had ever seen a real crown” (italics in original]” (55). The unity and pride of this generation is heightened by the introduction of a “foreigner” among them. Jane interrupts her cousin, Elvira, while she is expressing her infatuation with a Frenchman, Lavoisier, she recently met: “you strangely forget all that is due to your sex, by keeping up such an intercourse with a stranger—by ranting in this way about a wandering dancing-master—a foreigner” (156). After Elvira’s departure from Jane and elopement with Lavoisier, they stop at a tavern for the night and the owner recognizes the Frenchman as the man who reneged on payment for use of a carriage a few years earlier. A group of training militiamen stay at the tavern and upon hearing of the Frenchman’s unpaid debt, they threaten to tar and feather him, but Sedgwick assures the reader, “a yankey mob is proverbially good-natured, and the merry men had enlisted in the landlord’s cause, for the sake of a joke” (163). Sedgwick too is caught up in national pride as she justifies the treatment of Lavoisier as an amusing lesson. Although such bias against foreigners demonstrates national pride in a lighthearted way, Sedgwick, as part of that first-generation born in America was keenly aware of the challenges facing the citizens of a young nation.

Sedgwick’s generation may have been among the first American-born citizens of the republic, but there is no overlooking the generations of native Indians who were here
well before colonization. By the turn of the nineteenth century most of the natives of the New England region had been killed or driven westward, but memories of the threat of violence toward the colonists were still fresh in the minds of young Americans like Sedgwick. In one of the few instances in the novel where race is mentioned, Jane calls upon a well-known, reputable example of Quakerism, William Penn (1644-1718). She admits that it is Americans who are foreigners when Jane tells Edward that Penn and his colony were “the only one[s] who treated the natives of the land with justice and mercy” (127). Her description of Penn and the Quakers has little to do with a specific doctrine and more to do with the employment of kindness, respect and a social consciousness for the improvement of society:

Our fathers, Edward, refused to acknowledge the image of God in the poor Indian. They affected to believe they were the children of the evil one, and hunted them like beasts of prey, calling them ‘worse than Scythian wolves;’ while Penn, and his peaceful people, won their confidence, their devotion, by treating them with even-handed justice, with brotherly kindness; and they had their reward; they lived unharmed among them, without forts, without a weapon of defence [sic]. Is it not the Friends that have been foremost and most active in efforts for the abolition of slavery? Among what people do we find most reformers of the prisons–guardians of the poor and the oppressed–most of those who ‘remember the forgotten, and attend to the neglected–who dive into the depths of dungeons, and plunge into the infection of hospitals”? (127)
Sedgwick depicts the Quaker way of living that respects all members of the community regardless of race, religion and social class. She faults the bigoted perceptions of Puritan fathers for inciting more violence than peace and suggests reaching out to other citizens less fortunate as an honorable way for the community to thrive as a whole. What sparks Jane’s monologue is Edward’s mistrust of Mr. Lloyd based on his religion, and this presents Sedgwick with the opportunity to elaborate on the humanity of compassion in the politics of race and religion regardless of social class.

New England Roles and Responsibilities: Social Class Distinctions

In close correlation with religious and political authority in *A New-England Tale*, Sedgwick relates the ever-changing social class distinctions, and the civic responsibilities associated with such class distinctions. Social class hierarchy and responsibilities are an essential part of the nineteenth-century New England landscape and Sedgwick provides a unique look at the community dynamics that challenge and enhance frontier life.

Although there is a differentiation between social classes portrayed in *A New-England Tale*, Sedgwick also identifies the values that many of the villagers share. While travelling with their infant child, Mr. Lloyd and his wife, Rebecca, encountered bad weather in the Springfield, Massachusetts area and stopped at a log hut with a stream running through it. Sedgwick describes the occupants of the “mansion” as “a fat middle-aged woman, who sat with a baby in her arms at a round table, at which there were four other children eating from a pewter dish in the middle of the table,” and the husband as a “ruddy, good-natured, hardy looking mountaineer” who had lost the use of his legs in a childhood accident (29). Mr. Lloyd’s inquiry into the mountaineer’s income reveals the
family’s resourcefulness in selling beer and cake to passers-by, and selling handmade wooden bowls and dishes to survive: “Mr. Lloyd admired the ingenuity and contentment of this man, his enjoyment of the privilege, the ‘glorious privilege,’ of every New-England man, of ‘being independent’” (32). Such independence was valued in the Massachusetts countryside, and just as it attracted Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd to make what would be Rebecca’s last voyage before her death, it also prompted Mr. Lloyd’s decision to settle and raise his daughter in the novel’s New England village.

According to Sedgwick, the value of independence in *A New-England Tale* is fortified by the importance placed on education for all social classes. She observes, “[t]here is nothing in New-England so eagerly sought for, or so highly prized by all classes of people, as the advantages of education” (51). Although boys and young men were educated to fill positions of leadership in the community, girls and young women were provided with a basic education that enabled them to read and understand scripture as well as fulfill the duties associated with their future role as wife and mother:

> The public, or as they are called the *town-schools* [italics in original], are open to the child of the poorest labourer. As knowledge is one of the best helps and most certain securities to virtue, we doubtless owe a great portion of the morality of this blessed region, where there are no dark corners of ignorance, to these wise institutions of our pious ancestors. (51)

The organization of an educational system in New England was a slowly evolving process, and Sedgwick includes the challenges of this endeavor in her novel. A school was finally established locally by the time Jane is a teenager, and as noted, it was closely
affiliated with the local churches. The schoolmaster, Mr. Evertson, offers Jane a teaching assistant position provided she can contribute the one hundred dollars for supplies, which are needed to provide schooling to a larger portion of the population. Mary tells Jane, “I told [Mr. Evertson], you was not quite fifteen; but he said, you knew more than most young women of twenty, and almost all the school loved and respected you” (63). To raise the money needed, Mary offers to find a market to sell Jane’s mother’s clothing and various baubles. Although an orphan, Jane exemplifies the intelligent and virtuous New-England woman that Sedgwick is advocating. Her acceptance of this position provides Jane with independence from her aunt and demonstrates how perseverance and hard work can benefit individuals from all social classes, preparing them for roles that contribute to the improvement of the community as a whole.

Sedgwick’s primary characters represent all the classes; her interest is in their interactions, which either promote or stall the progress of the village, and the new nation. She carefully crafts the descriptions of each character’s social class, which is closely affiliated with religious denomination, as well as individual and household finances. In doing so, she demonstrates the sort of contributions each class can offer the common welfare of the community, regardless of religious affiliation. Working from the poorest to the wealthiest villagers of Sedgwick’s New England model, I begin with crazy Bet. Introduced in the first chapter of *A New-England Tale*, crazy Bet’s tragic life is presented in precise moments that coincide with crucial events in Jane’s life, and her death marks the end of the novel: “This was a middle aged woman, whose mind had been unsettled in her youth by misfortunes” (13). As such, she was a vagrant “wandering from house to
house, and town to town” (13), and Sedgwick assures the reader “crazy Bet found a welcome wherever she went” (14). Transients such as she were not uncommon on the frontier, which is attested to in Sedgwick’s Preface to the novel: “the writer has attempted a sketch of a real character under the fictitious appellation of ‘Crazy Bet.’” Not uncommon of the lowliest of social classes, crazy Bet is accepted with her flaws and provided for within the different communities she frequents.

Polly Winthrop and John of the Mountain are two other characters whose lives Sedgwick elaborates on extensively. Both Polly and John are solid representations of the lower class and, from a social perspective, considered to be barely above crazy Bet. What does differentiate them, though, is that—while they may struggle to establish a homestead and daily sustenance—they do so without the reliance on others. Polly is the destitute widow with children to whom Jane’s father owed wages for her work as their domestic servant. Her appeal to Mrs. Wilson for the money owed by her brother and Jane’s terms of payment have been noticed above; what also deserves notice is Polly’s drastic reversal of fortune when her husband dies shortly before the birth of their fourth child and one of her children dies on the arduous journey to Mrs. Wilson’s. Instead of sympathy for Polly’s plight, Mrs. Wilson passes judgment immediately: “I suppose the town must take care of you,” to which Polly responds, “I did not mean to be a burden to the town” (70). She tells Mrs. Wilson that before her latest run of poor health and the death of her husband, had she been given her wages owed her she would have “calculated to hire me a little place, bought a loom, and turned my hand to weaving—I am a master weaver” (71). Her intentions to help care for her family and live independently are
immediately altered by death forcing her to rely on the charity of those around her, evoking sympathy in contemporary readers who have likely known someone similarly fated. Jane follows her conscience and steps up to pay her father’s debt. Because he still has the companionship of his wife, John is only slightly better off than Polly. Known by several generations locally, John lives with his wife in a hut just outside the village, and “gained a subsistence by making baskets, weaving new seats into old chairs, collecting herbs for spring beer, and digging medicinal roots from the mountains” (87). Recall John’s law-suit against the Woodhulls after they destroyed his humble home because it was on their property. Without a home, John and his wife are forced to take shelter with a charitable neighbor while pursuing the suit, not unlike the hospitality commonly extended to families whose homes are lost to fire in antebellum New England. When justice failed to prevail in court for John, Mr. Lloyd intervened to do what was right and provided him with the means to purchase land and build a new home. Polly and John are presented as humble, upstanding citizens, who have had their lives upset by the challenges of New England life. Frequently social class hinged upon circumstances beyond colonists control, and Sedgwick presents the negative and positive impact that one citizen can have on the welfare of individuals and the community.

As a domestic for Jane’s parents and then Mr. Lloyd, Mary Hull is Sedgwick’s presentation of the American working class at the turn of the nineteenth century. Much as Mumbet was to Sedgwick, Mary is also Jane’s cherished friend and confidant, and as with Mumbet, there is a historical bond between Jane and Mary, for Jane’s mother “had been essentially aided by [this] faithful domestic, who had lived with her for many years,
and nursed Jane in her infancy” (8). Sedgwick addresses her readers confiding, “We know it is common to rail at our domestics. Their independence is certainly often inconvenient to their employers; but, as it is the result of the prosperous condition of all classes in our happy country, it is not right nor wise to complain of it” (8). But in *A New-England Tale* Sedgwick’s focus is on the benefits of *shared independence* for all social classes as the pride of the young nation. She points out, “We believe there are many instances of intelligent and affectionate service, that are rarely equaled, where ignorance and servility mark the lower classes. Mary Hull was endowed with a mind of uncommon strength, and an affectionate heart” (8). With nothing in it for her, Mary looked out for Jane’s best interests after her mother’s death, and she was one of the few villagers willing to stand up to Mrs. Wilson on Jane’s behalf. Through her characterization of Mary, Sedgwick challenges the belief that domestics lack intellect and integrity and she makes the case that class distinctions are not simply dependent upon finances; social rank is influenced by rectitude and independence.

In the first chapter of *A New-England Tale*, Sedgwick elaborates on the qualities of Jane’s parents, including their mishandling of finances, which at their death leaves young Jane destitute. During her many years of toil living with Mrs. Wilson, Jane “was on an eminence of virtue, to which the conflicts and irritations of her aunt’s family could not reach” (75). Mary had indeed prepared her well for harsh service that would occupy her early and adolescent years, and although penniless Jane conducts herself without regard to class distinctions—hers or anyone else’s. Intellect and integrity lead to Jane’s vocation as a teaching assistant and, with Edward’s proposal of marriage, Mary points
out the privilege of class elevation marriage to Edward will provide her: “[Y]ou are going to have the pride of the county for your husband, to be mistress of the beautiful house on the hill, and have every thing heart can desire” (121). But when Jane discovers Edward’s character flaws as a manipulative lawyer and gambler, she calls off the engagement with no regard for his wealth. As the novel comes to a close Jane and Mr. Lloyd realize their love for each other and when they share their engagement with Mary, she tells them she suspected it all along: “[I]t is the nature of the feeling [italics in original]—it is the same in the high and the low, the rich and the poor” (180). Sedgwick creates an environment in which sentiment and feeling can trump the constraints of social class, even in nineteenth-century New England.

Mrs. Wilson, Jane’s aunt, rigidly adheres to the influence of wealth on social standing in A New-England Tale. Her finances and status in the church rank her among the middle class, but her coldness and judgment toward others makes her a poor example of the Christian responsibility Sedgwick is advocating. Of Mr. Elton’s three sisters Mrs. Wilson agrees to take Jane, but not without declaring, “I mean to do my duty by this child” (17). The eldest sister defaulted on her responsibility because she “was not so well off as either of her sisters,” and although the middle sister was financially secure she lacked religion (11, 12). Mrs. Wilson’s standing in the Calvinist church makes her primary objective to avoid public scrutiny by taking her niece into her home; she considered this her duty and nothing more. Her refusal to see the error of her selfish lifestyle makes her a character to be pitied, not despised, and Jane dutifully looks after her until her painful death from tuberculosis. Mrs. Wilson is more than a cautionary
character who represents the shift away from Calvinism in New England; she represents the incongruity of religion and intolerance that Sedgwick is advocating to transcend in the example of Jane’s compassion.

Sedgwick never directly identifies Robert Lloyd’s occupation, but she elaborates on the extent of his generosity toward others, the means of which place him roughly in the upper social class of the village. His wife passed away in the vicinity of our New England village and a portion of his decision to raise their daughter here stems from this. Here he aspires “to cultivate and employ a ‘talent for doing good’” (35). Mr. Lloyd’s finances are also enhanced by his adherence to modest Quaker living. Judging from his multiple discrete interventions to correct injustices, he fulfills the role of the heroic humanitarian. First introduced by his religion, Mr. Lloyd becomes a model of integrity in which his religion is secondary. Regardless of his financial status, he uses his class standing to serve the best interest of his neighbors, which, in turn, adds to the esteem in which he is held in the community.

The two Woodhull brothers and Edward Erskine are Sedgwick’s representation of the new Republic’s wealthy young citizens. Describing the lawsuit to Jane, John of the Mountain explains how the Woodhulls came into possession of the property on which John’s hut is built as part of their inheritance from their recently deceased father, the Deacon, and he summarizes their character as that of “two hard-favoured, hard-hearted, wild young chaps, . . . that think all the world was made for them, and their pleasure” (131). These two young men tarnish the association of higher social standing and wealth with their complete disregard for the wellbeing of all others in the village. By contrast,
Edward is esteemed for his intellect and knack for persuasion and represents the potential for redemption. An only child, he received “unlimited indulgence [that] made him vain, selfish and indolent,” but this was tempered “by a frank and easy temper” (77). Edward inherited a great deal of money from his parents’ estate as a young adult: “In short, he belonged to that large class of persons who are generous, but not just; affectionate, but not constant; and often kind, though it would puzzle a casuist to assign to their motives their just proportions of vanity and benevolence” (77). Mr. Lloyd and Jane serve to sway Edward’s conscience toward the improvement of others’ lives after a rash of bad decisions, one of which was his defending of the Woodhulls. Edward’s swift departure to the city of New York in his embarrassment when Jane revokes her acceptance of his marriage proposal, leads him to an encounter with John of the Mountain’s son, James, who is thought to be dead. Once settled in the city, he writes to Mr. Lloyd and concludes his letter with news of his encounter with James: “I told him, by way of a welcome to his country, I should pay his expenses home. This I hope you, Sir, will accept in expiation of all my sins against the old basket-maker” (172). Sedgwick uses this letter to confirm the positive influence community members can have on others; instead of resenting Mr. Lloyd and Jane, Edward finds himself inspired to make amends for his bad decisions.

Sedgwick creates a broad range of characters from different social classes and brings them together in A New-England Tale to show how diversity and a social conscience can lead to better living conditions individually and communally. In this tale, the wealthy are not always virtuous, while the poor strive for independence and self-sufficiency. For this community to thrive and enable citizens to be independent, social
class must be redefined from the status of wealth only and include standards of integrity and charity for the public good. Virtually all of Sedgwick’s characters have been affected by the death of a loved one. The death of Edward’s parents and that of the Woodhulls’ father left them with an inheritance that elevated their social status. By contrast, the death of Jane’s parents left her orphaned and destitute, while the death of Polly’s husband left her a widow and mother with little means to survive. Sedgwick creates an environment where social class can change rapidly, adding to the responsibility of those with more resources to help others in the quest for self-sufficiency.

*Hope Leslie’s Version of New England History and Character*

Set in Massachusetts of the 1640s, *Hope Leslie or Early Times in Massachusetts* (1827) helped establish the New England historical romance. Mary Kelley and John Matteson each provide an introduction to different publications of the novel, with Kelley introducing and editing one version in 1987, and Matteson introducing the Dover Edition in 2011. In addition to Kelley’s Introduction, I will be using the Dover Edition for citations to the text. In her Preface to *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick denies her story is based on real events, but she adds, “Real characters and real events are . . . alluded to,” she claims, “to illustrate not the history, but the character of the times” (3). Notwithstanding this statement, Sedgwick has done her research into local history and admits to taking liberties with the “chronology of the Pequot war” (3). In her attempt to make the “character of the times” resonate with readers, the allusion to “characters and real events” provides just the illustration of history she claims to resist. After referencing the strong Puritan character of New England settlers she confides, “Those who have not paid too
much attention to the history or character of these early settlements . . . will be surprised to find how clear, copious, and authentic are the accounts which our ancestors left behind them,” and she acknowledges having made “a patient investigation of all the materials that could be obtained” (3). In her Introduction, Kelley comments that in *Hope Leslie* “Sedgwick successfully blends the conventions of romance with historical realism to create a consciously American [italics in original] literary product” (xiii). Her reliance on history to enable her to demonstrate the character of some of the founding ancestors of New England results in the historicization she denies and the study that follows will again consider Sedgwick’s positioning and analysis of religion, politics, and social structures.

Sedgwick’s depiction of Massachusetts’ history and local characters inevitably includes the Puritan community that was dominant in the seventeenth century. Both Matteson and Kelley make interesting observations about her presentation of Puritan faith and Puritan characters. Matteson applauds Sedgwick’s “naming of her title character and her sister: Hope and Faith Leslie. The two names . . . accurately reflect the naming conventions of the Puritans, who frequently named their daughters after virtues” (xiii). He observes that Hope Leslie abides within the white community, while her sister Faith, “in the view of the English, [is] lost to the Indians who have abducted her” (xiii). Therefore, “if Faith is literally lost in *Hope Leslie*, the more secular virtue of hope remains as the vitalizing spirit of the English community” (xiii). Such hope does not necessarily mean the “conventions of the Puritans” persist. Kelley considers the merging of Puritan and Unitarian religious spheres that Sedgwick is developing: “Unitarians and their seventeenth-century prototype, Hope Leslie, insisted that sin could be resisted and
redemption achieved. Individuals, not God, were responsible for their fate” (xxxv). The reader bears witness to the changing views of the first American-born generation as they continue to resist the rigidity of the Puritans who first immigrated to New England.

Even as Sedgwick documents religious shifts in *Hope Leslie*, she also provides a very different version of both the Pequot War (1634-8) and the slowly changing colonial views of the character of the native Indians. Sedgwick’s variation on historic events is significant when considering that the Indian Removal Act (1830) had not yet occurred at the time this novel was published. During the seventeenth century, the tension between the colonies and native Indians is prevalent on the frontier, as is the uncertainty about the Indian question. In *Covenant and Republic*, Philip Gould looks at Sedgwick’s version of the Pequot War in *Hope Leslie* and claims that “she revised not only those Puritan histories that were being reprinted abundantly in her day but also contemporary histories appropriating the event as an instance of republican manhood” (60). He elaborates on the effectiveness of Sedgwick’s presentation of Magawisca’s account of the Pequot War in Chapter 4:

> By dislodging these stories from their traditional placement, Sedgwick is able to emancipate readerly sympathy for the Pequot, and thereby recover that element of pathos—that humanitarian impulse at the core of domestic ideology—which both Puritan historians and their early national descendents [*sic*] successfully suppress. (70)

This account comes just before a colonial version of the war is narrated, and satisfaction in the bloody victory is reported. Sedgwick’s revision of history redefines Gould’s
definition of “republican manhood.” Instead of pride that focuses on conquest, she inspires a national aspiration for “that humanitarian impulse” that truly defines republican manhood. At no point is Sedgwick prescriptive in resolving the Indian question, rather she presents her colonial and native characters in roles to which readers can relate: mothers, fathers, siblings, extended family and friends. This is at the heart of her revision of the chronology of history, the humanization of violent events intended to guide the priorities of New England citizens.

Sedgwick’s romanticized version of nature in A New-England Tale is equally as pronounced in Hope Leslie, but since the setting for Hope Leslie is seventeenth-century New England the romanticization is conflicted. Colonial settlement rapidly changed the wild landscape, and Sedgwick distinguishes between the native Indian and the English perspectives on this romanticized frontier environment. Sedgwick begins the novel with the voyage of William and Martha Fletcher and their children, joined by Governor Winthrop, from England to Boston, Massachusetts in 1630. By 1636 William leaves the rapidly growing community for the newly established frontier settlement in Springfield and names his residence Bethel (36). Sedgwick affectionately describes Bethel’s birds of spring as “those ministers and worshippers of nature, where on the wing, filling the air with melody; while, like diligent little housewifes, they ransacked forest and field for materials for their house-keeping” (63). When William’s oldest son Everell is fourteen, Governor Winthrop assigns a native Indian girl his age to be a domestic in the Fletcher home. This girl, Magawisca, is possibly Sedgwick’s most memorable heroine, and her relationship with Everell provides a means by which Sedgwick differentiates between
Indian and English passion for the frontier during the transition toward the development of the land and the young republic. The daughter of a Pequot chief, Magawisca proudly describes her home before the war began. The tribes’ “fort and wigwams were encompassed with a palisade, formed of young trees, and branches interwoven and sharply pointed. No enemy’s foot had ever approached this nest, which the eagles of the tribe had build for their mates and their young” (48). Sedgwick contrasts this natural coexistence with the Puritans’ utilization of this same piece of land:

[T]heir feet were planted on the mount of vision, and they saw, with sublime joy, a multitude of people where the solitary savage roamed the forest—the forest vanished, and pleasant villages and busy cities appeared—the tangled foot-path expanded to the thronged high-way—the consecrated church planted on the rock of heathen sacrifice. (75)

Yet the colonists could not tame the environment completely, as demonstrated by “a river that, swoln by the vernal rains, wound its way among the hills, foaming and raging like an angry monarch” (85). Later, Sedgwick shares a letter from Hope Leslie to Everell that reflects her observations of a New England autumn: “They say the foliage in England has a paler sickly hue, but for our western world—nature’s youngest child—she has reserved her many-coloured robe, the brightest and most beautiful of her garments” (103). While the Pequots’ lives were symbolically and literally “interwoven” with nature, the colonist’s relationship was one of reverence when they witnessed its fury, and authority whenever the landscape seemed to them docile.

Sedgwick also develops and measures the cast of characters in *Hope Leslie*
against her conception of nature. Her cast of major characters includes: Everell Fletcher, the hero of the novel; William Fletcher, Everell’s father and the guardian of Hope and Faith Leslie; Martha Fletcher, Everell’s mother; Hope (Alice) Leslie, one of the heroines of the novel and the eldest daughter of William’s first love; Faith (Mary) Leslie, Hope’s sister; Magawisca, a Pequot Princess and the co-heroine of the novel; Oneco, Magawisca’s brother; Nelema, an old Indian woman thought to be in communion with the devil; Mononotto, a Pequot chief and father of Magawisca and Oneco; John Winthrop, the Governor of Massachusetts Bay; Jennet, the overzealous Puritan domestic; Digby, servant to William and friend to Hope and Everell; Mrs. Grafton, Hope and Faith’s widowed aunt; Cradock, Hope’s tutor; Esther Downing, Winthrop’s niece and Hope’s close friend; Sir Philip Gardiner, a corrupt royalist disguised as a Puritan bent on marrying Hope for her inheritance; Rosa, Sir Philip’s lover who follows him to New England disguised as his male page.

In *Hope Leslie* Sedgwick develops and measures these characters using the same technique used to romanticize nature. When William travels to Boston to retrieve Hope and Faith, Mrs. Fletcher writes to update him on life at home. Of Magawisca she writes, “it appeareth impossible to her to clip the wings of her soaring thoughts, and keep them down to household matters,” and she continues on to express her concern about the bond forming between Everell and Magawisca, “Two young plants that have sprung up in close neighborhood, may be separated while young; but if disjoined after their fibers are all intertwined, one, perchance both, may perish” (32, 33). While William is still away, Everell tells Magawisca, “your voice is too sweet for a bird of ill-omen,” to which she
replies, “You call me a bird of ill-omen, . . . and you call the owl a bird of ill-omen, but we hold him sacred—he is our sentinel” (64). Soon after, two Pequots led by Mononotto invade Bethel to exact revenge for the death of his oldest son and the enslavement of Magawisca and Oneco. They kill Mrs. Fletcher and her infant son, taking Magawisca, Oneco, Faith, and Everell with them. Sedgwick points out the skill of Mononotto and his men in avoiding detection in the forest after this raid: “Caution is the instinct of the weaker animals. . . . Mononotto and his companions . . . remained as fixed and silent as the trees about them” (80). Meanwhile, within close proximity of their quarry, a six-man colonial search party stops to reconsider their pursuit of the natives and their captives, and after one of the men comments to Digby, “it is ill fighting with wild beasts in their own den,” they withdraw for the night (80). There is a duality of nature in Sedgwick’s dialogue between Everell and Magawisca, and Digby and the men; Magawisca and the natives embrace nature as a source of survival, while Everell, Digby and the colonists fear it as the unknown. These metaphors reflect Sedgwick’s diverse romantic impressions of the environment and demonstrate the influence of the environment on these two cultures.

Religion in New England: Diverse Spirituality in *Hope Leslie*

Sedgwick’s romanticized version of nature in *Hope Leslie*’s landscapes and characters is complimented by her skill in portraying the cultural dependence on Calvinist authority in seventeenth-century New England using both fictional and historic figures. In this novel Sedgwick incorporates four religious perspectives that were dominant in New England during this period: the native Indians’ belief in the Great Spirit; the Puritans’
adherence to Calvinism; the native Indians’ conversion to Catholicism under the influence of the French; and the immigrants continued loyalty to the Protestant Church of England. Although a variety of religious views appear in the novel, Sedgwick focuses most on the similarities and differences between Puritan faith and the Indians’ belief in the Great Spirit. She enhances this correlation with Magawisca’s version of the Pequot War that humanizes the violence that historic literature glorifies. This fictional manipulation of history enables Sedgwick to parallel Christian unity with the unification of the native Indians in the name of the Great Spirit.

Sedgwick begins her depiction of seventeenth-century New England history and spirituality in *Hope Leslie* with her introduction of John Winthrop. The novel opens in England, where William Fletcher and John Winthrop depart with their families on the *Arabella* in 1630. The first chapter closes with a commemoration of Winthrop’s voyage “to the land where his name will ever be held in affectionate and honorable remembrance” (13). Noted already is William’s move from Boston to Bethel, and Sedgwick describes the view from his newly established homestead with another allusion to one of the first Pilgrims, William Bradford and his *History Of Plymouth Plantation*. One side of the view from Mr. Fletcher’s home was of a clearing, “but all else was a savage howling wilderness” (17). William soon receives a letter notifying him of the death of his first love while she is en route to New England with her two daughters and widowed sister, Mrs. Grafton. Assigned as Alice and Mary Leslie’s guardian, William has them baptized “by the Reverend Mr. Cotton,” who changes their names “to the puritanical appellations of Hope and Faith,” respectively (29). Oneco accompanies
William to Boston, but William is held up by business commitments and poor health. He keeps Hope and her tutor Cradock with him and arranges an escort for Faith, Mrs. Grafton, and Oneco back to Bethel. Sedgwick thus begins *Hope Leslie* with a combination of history and fiction that reflect the dominant Puritan setting contrasted to the savage wild that Bradford’s text historicizes.

While William is detained with Hope and Cradock in Boston, Magawisca and Everell bond further, and Oneco becomes Faith’s protector and playmate. It is during this time that Magawisca tells Everell about her experience of the Pequot War. After Everell tells her, “as I have heard, our people had all the honour of the fight,” she rebukes him, “Honour! was it, Everell—ye shall hear” (50). She describes her oldest brother Samoset’s honorable death by beheading at the hands of the English while Mononotto was away at council. The English burned their huts and blocked their escape: “Some of our people threw themselves into the midst of the crackling flames, and their courageous souls parted with one shout of triumph; others mounted the palisade, but they were shot and dropped like a flock of birds smitten by the hunter’s arrows” (50). Magawisca estimates the death count in the hundreds and tells Everell how she, her mother, Oneco, and two younger siblings were the only survivors because they hid in a secret hole of sorts, covered by a rock in their hut. She questions the merciless murder of her brother and her people by these Christians, and Sedgwick validates Magawisca’s implicit perception of the conflict between Puritans’ religious beliefs and their practice: “Magawisca’s reflecting mind suggested the most serious obstacle to the progress of the christian religion, in all ages and under all circumstances; the contrariety between its divine
principles and the conduct of its professors” (52). Everell cannot respond to Magawisca and “mentally resolve[s] to refer the case to his mother” (52-3). Magawisca tells Everell that she and Oneco became servants at Bethel because “One of your soldiers knew my mother, and a command was given that her life and that of her children should be spared” (54). She reflects, “There are among your people those who have not put out the light of the Great Spirit; they can remember a kindness, albeit done by an Indian” (54). Her observation indicates that such Christian kindness is an exception, and not the rule. This is an account of the war that Everell and Sedgwick’s readers have not heard before and raises the question, “Which is the savage race?”

As Everell listens to Magawisca’s first-hand account of the Pequot War, he considers the English version of this history told and retold so often in the colonies, and Sedgwick again directs the reader to William Bradford’s History Of Plymouth Plantation. Everell “had heard this destruction of the original possessors of the soil described, as we find it in the history of the times” (55). He mentally cites Bradford’s version of the violence almost verbatim: “[T]he number destroyed was about four hundred;” and ‘it was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire, and the streams of blood quenching the same, and the horrible scent thereof; but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave the praise thereof to God’” (55). Sedgwick makes it clear that for Everell this is a “new version of an old story” in which Magawisca’s account puts “the chisel [of the story’s sculptor] into the hands of truth, and giving it to whom it belonged” (55).

Bradford’s “old story” by the victors is revised by the previously untold story of the victims of the violence, the Pequot Indians. Reconsidering her account of the Pequot
War, Everell expresses to Magawisca “his sympathy and admiration of her heroic and suffering people” (56). The Puritans claimed victory in the name of their biblical God, while the Pequot Indians refused submission in the name of the Great Spirit. Many of the Indians did indeed resign themselves to the flames, not convinced from the violence of the Christians that their God was superior, and not willing to be forced into servitude several entered the flames to join the Great Spirit. Sedgwick later relates that Everell “gratified [Magawisca’s] strong national pride, by admitting the natural equality of all the children of the Great Spirit” (271).

Sedgwick goes further than putting forth a parallel of national and religious pride and equality in *Hope Leslie* by representing the colonial and native Indian exacting of a life for a life. After Everell’s abduction from Bethel, Mononotto makes it clear to Magawisca that he is intent on avenging Samoset’s death with Everell’s. When Mononotto exacts the deathblow to sever Everell’s head, Magawisca intervenes by placing her arm in the path of the hatchet’s blade. She sacrifices her arm and Everell’s companionship for his life and freedom. Faith remains with Oneco and the tribe, while Everell returns to Bethel and shares the remainder of his childhood years with his father and Hope.

Not only are lives given and taken between the native Indians and New-Englanders, but Sedgwick also incorporates into *Hope Leslie* the removal of young adults from their family for mentoring by those who possess the virtues lacking. Once Everell reaches adulthood, William fulfills Mrs. Fletcher’s last request for Everell to spend a few years in England to gain worldly experience. He returns to Bethel when Hope is
seventeen, and Sedgwick explains how Hope has kept her “open, fearless, and gay character” among “the strictest sect of the puritans” (126). Sedgwick attributes this to the people Hope “most loved, and whom she had lived [with] from her infancy, [being] of variant religious sentiments” (126). From her earliest observances of her father, mother and aunt as members of the Protestant Church of England, to the New England community governed by Puritans, Hope learns to doubt religious “infallibility”: 

[And like the bird that spreads his wings and soars above the limits by which each man fences in his own narrow domain, she enjoyed the capacities of her nature, and permitted her mind to expand beyond the contracted boundaries of sectarian faith. Her religion was pure and disinterested—no one, therefore, should doubt its intrinsic value, though it had not been coined into a particular form, or received the current impress. (126-7)]

Her lack of interest in Puritan etiquette prompted John Winthrop and the other magistrates to have Hope removed from Bethel and placed in the care and guidance of Mrs. Winthrop in Boston. When it is discovered that Hope helped Nelema escape from her imprisonment for what the magistrates considered witchcraft in the healing of Cradock after a rattlesnake bite, William is chastised as a poor guardian and the correction of Hope’s indiscretion is mandated. The Winthrops’ pious niece, Esther Downing, had already been placed in Mrs. Winthrop’s care and it was thought that Esther would be a good influence on Hope. Esther was “bred in the strictest school of the puritans, their doctrines and principles easily commingled with the natural qualities of her
To William’s dismay, even as the decision for Hope’s removal to the Winthrops’ was being made, the magistrates were considering marriage matches. Winthrop informed William that the marriage of Everell and Esther may be in the best interest of the community, and proposed that Hope entertain a pairing with Sir Philip Gardiner, a newly arrived Englishman in the garb of a Puritan who was on the same boat that returned Everell to New England. To reinforce this decision, Winthrop presents William with a letter from Esther’s father, Mr. Downing. Mr. Downing cautions William that Everell’s potential marriage to Hope could endanger “his spiritual welfare,” and he invokes Winthrop’s “A Model of Christian Charity” to point out that “you in the new world, are as a city set on a hill” (156). William, who had envisioned Everell marrying Hope, tried to object and was censured by Winthrop: “to be serious, and surely the subject doth enforce us to it, I am satisfied that you will not oppose any means that may offer to secure the lambs of our flock in the true fold” (160). Sedgwick incorporates well-known historical characters, events and texts into *Hope Leslie* to suggest the physical, spiritual and emotional challenges the Puritans faced in the settlement and governing of New England. National pride was not yet an unifying force in the colonies, rather the responsibility of successful self-governance fell upon the magistrates to establish the perception of the Pilgrims’ divine right to the land and God’s approval based on their victory of force over the natives, thereby manifesting ecclesiastical pride and unity.

Her humanizing account of the spiritual pride and unity of the Pequot Indians contributes a perspective in Sedgwick’s fiction that makes *Hope Leslie* a uniquely
American version of the historical romance genre. Sedgwick reveals that Magawisca stayed by Mononotto’s side and remained faithful to the Great Spirit as “the priestess of the oracle” (201), while Faith and Oneco have become husband and wife. When Hope frees Nelema, Nelema vows to repay the kindness promising, “you shall see your sister” (116). Before dying from the long journey through the forest Nelema convinces Magawisca to aid in the arrangement of this meeting. Magawisca secretly meets with Hope in Boston to arrange a meeting between the sisters, forewarning her that Faith has forgotten how to speak English, and has married Oneco, to which she exclaims “God forbid! . . . My sister married to an Indian!” (194). Magawisca is first offended, but when Hope breaks into tears she gives comfort, assuring her that “your sister is what you call the christian family. I believe ye have many names in that family. She hath been signed with the cross by a holy father from France: she bows to the crucifix” (195). Thinking “any christian faith was better than none,” Hope responds, “Thank God!” (195).

Magawisca has compassion for Hope’s spiritual faith while revealing her own, “there may be those that need other lights; but to me, the Great spirit is visible in the life-creating sun. . . . I feel Him here,” covering her chest (195). All racial and religious pretensions dissipate between these two New England women who are brought together by their love for Everell, Oneco and Faith, but otherwise kept apart by each race’s battle for territory and brethren.

Domestic and Legal Puritan Politics in *Hope Leslie*

In *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick depicts the overlap of church and state in the regulation of Puritan life in New England that extends the magistrate’s roles in the community
beyond religion and into politics. During the seventeenth century, politics extend from the regulation of the domestic affairs of the home to the establishment and policing of a harsh penal system to regulate the society as a whole. Through Magawisca, Sedgwick puts forth the injustice and flaws of New England law, particularly in colonial politics with the native Indians. Her characterization of Sir Philip benefits the reader’s understanding of national politics with England, as well as exposing the flaws of the newly formed judicial system. Establishing the political landscape in *Hope Leslie* and properly positioning her readers in time, Sedgwick’s notable cast of New England religious and political figures lends credence to her unique version of the American historical romance.

Enabling her to relate the domestic political landscape of the Puritans in *Hope Leslie*: Magawisca is Sedgwick’s authoritative voice for the native Indians; *Hope Leslie* is the unbiased conscience, gauging justice; and Esther is the young Puritan role. Magawisca questions the validity of English law with the killing of Samoset: “You English tell us, Everell, that the book of your law is better than that written on our hearts, for ye say it teaches mercy, compassion, forgiveness—if ye had such a law and believed it, would ye thus have treated a captive boy?” (52). Yet English law was also questioned by the community it was established to protect. When Nelema is jailed for her unholy healing of Cradock, Sedgwick confirms Hope’s role in her escape, writing, “this was a bold, dangerous, and unlawful interposition; but Hope Leslie took counsel only from her own heart, and that told her that the rights of innocence were paramount to all other rights” (123). Sedgwick specifies the manner in which Hope polices her conscience by
her personal sense of justice and the result is censure by the esteemed Governor Winthrop. In Hope’s letter to Everell while he is in England, she gives William’s account of Winthrop’s decision prompted by suspicion of her role in Nelema’s escape. William tells Hope, “I have proved myself not fit to teach, or to guide thee—nor is your aunt. Madam Winthrop will give you pious instructions and counsel, and her godly niece, Esther Downing, will, I trust, win you to the narrow path, which . . . she doth so steadily pursue” (117). When Hope refuses to go William responds, “[Y]ou must go. Neither you, nor I, have any choice” (118). Hope’s perception of justice was seen as interference by Mr. Pincheon, one of the magistrates who inferred her guilt based on her response to news of Nelema’s escape and “felt the necessity of taking instant and efficient measures to subdue to becoming deference and obedience, the rash and lawless girl, who had dared to interpose between justice and its victim” (124). In New England, the church and Puritan magistrates reserved the right to intervene in both public and private affairs and interactions within the community, even transferring guardianship as a corrective measure.

The native Indian and Puritan domestic politics Sedgwick sketches for the reader are enhanced by her portrayal of newly forming national pride in relation to politics with England, yet that pride is hindered by Puritan censure. On Everell’s trip home to Boston from England, Sedgwick gives the reader a glimpse at New England politics of national independence from England and Puritan politics that justify their rights to the land. She relates a conversation between the yet to be formally introduced Sir Philip, and the Puritan elder travelling with Everell. Sir Philip comments, “The King, no doubt, . . .
would like to resume both power and possession; but still, I think we might retain our own . . . and what we have acquired, either by purchase of the natives, or by lawful conquest, which gives us the right to the vacuum domicilium” (129). In his essay “John Locke on the Possession of Land: Native Title vs. the ‘Principle’ of Vacuum domicilium,” Paul Corcoran identifies the difficulty verifying the origin of vacuum domicilium, and points out that what modern scholars recognize as “the common, dominant principle of British imperial policy is to be found nowhere except in very narrow early seventeenth-century Puritan theological doctrine as ‘vacant soyle’” (8). According to Corcoran, vacuum domicilium is a term that “can only be traced to the idiosyncratic and inconsistent usages by John Winthrop” (9). Sedgwick’s usage in Hope Leslie indicates that Sir Philip is referring to the Puritan’s dismissal of the native people, thus making their conquest legal. The elder gentleman responds, “I am happy to see sir, . . . that your principles, at least, are on the side of the puritans” (129-30). After exchanging conversation with the elder man and impressing upon him his Puritan alliance, Sir Philip engages Everell with inquiries about Governor Winthrop. Since Everell is headed to the Winthrops when they dock, he offers to provide Sir Philip with an introduction. Shortly after Everell’s return to Boston, William shares with him the decision recently made by the magistrates and relayed through Governor Winthrop that his relationship with Hope remain as that of childhood friends, and no more. When Everell objects, William reminds him of his responsibility to resign “individual wishes” for “the public good” (167). As if trying to convince himself he adds, “We who have undertaken this great work in the wilderness, must not live to ourselves. We have laid the foundation of an edifice, and our children
must be so coupled together, as to secure its progress and stability” (167).

Censure by the Puritan magistrates was not limited to marriages and civic duty, but also extended to interactions with the native Indians. Magawisca’s promise to Nelema to facilitate the reunion of Hope and Faith results in a covert meeting with Hope to plan the arrangements. Sedgwick attributes the secrecy of Magawisca’s meeting to “[v]ague rumours of [Indian] conspiracy reach[ing] Boston,” which placed the magistrates on guard for signs of aggression among the natives. Magawisca agrees to bring Faith to meet Hope in the Governor’s garden on an island in the harbor a few miles from town where Digby is the caretaker. Hope gets permission from Mr. and Mrs. Winthrop for an “excursion” (214) to the garden in the company of Esther, Everell, Mrs. Grafton, Cradock and Sir Philip. Once there, Everell awkwardly proposes marriage to Esther, thinking Hope is attracted to Sir Philip. Instead, Hope rejects Sir Philip and arranges to stay on the island overnight with Digby and his wife to attend to her secret rendezvous. When the sisters first meet, Hope calls her by her childhood name, Mary, but too much time has passed and she responds, “No speak Yengees” (234). Having covertly witnessed the earlier meeting between Hope and Magawisca, Sir Philip exacts his plot to reclaim Faith for the Puritans, earn Hope’s love and gain the approval of Winthrop by ambushing the reunion with the Governor’s guards. They capture Magawisca and Faith, as well as Oneco and Mononotto waiting in a canoe nearby in the dark take Hope. Everell and William try to intervene for Magawisca but Winthrop responds, “it yet remains to be proved, my friend, that your son’s redeemed life is to be put in the balance against the public weal” (241). The magistrates jail Magawisca as a conspirator against New
England, which leads her to believe that Hope betrayed their pact. For lack of a formal jail, she is taken to the home of Barnaby and placed in a locked room, where a cell within it holds the infamous Thomas Morton of Merrymount.

While Magawisca’s trial is being arranged, Sir Philip offers Magawisca the means to escape, on the condition that she take Rosa into the wilderness so he can marry Hope without the risk of her exposing him for not requiting her love (263-4). Magawisca refuses the offer, but before Sir Philip leaves her cell he enters Morton’s to ease his curiosity about the mental state of his old friend. Insane, Morton violently attacks him, requiring Barnaby to come to the rescue. Sir Philip hastily exits the cell, then grabs Barnaby “shaking him till his old bones seemed to rattle in their thin casement,” and pouring “out on him curses deep and loud,” leaving Barnaby mortified by his profanity. When Sir Philip tries to excuse his language and conduct, Barnaby sees through his façade and replies, “Ye spoke those evil words so glibly: it seemed like one casting away stilts, and going on his own natural feet again” (268). Barnaby is one of the first to see Sir Philip as a conman wrapped in Puritan clothing.

As this flaw in Puritan judgment of Sir Philip’s integrity is uncovered, Sedgwick sets the stage for the judicial process to take place against Magawisca as an Indian conspirator. Hope escapes from Oneco and returns to Governor Winthrop’s home to make an appeal for the release of Magawisca for which he scolds her: “You speak unadvisedly, Miss Leslie. I am no king; and I trust the Lord will never send one in wrath on his chosen people of the new world, as he did on those of the old. . . . I have but one voice in the commonwealth, and I cannot grant pardons at pleasure” (282). During this
interval Mrs. Grafton tries to acclimate Faith back into the family, but “all day and all night . . . she goes from window to window, like an imprisoned bird fluttering against the bars of its cage” (274). This setting re-familiarizes the reader with the immense historic tension between the Puritans and native Indians and demonstrates how easily someone like Sir Philip can manipulate the diplomatic affairs of New England to serve his own greedy interest. Fearing that Hope’s wealth and Everell’s lack of it would insinuate a monetary motive for Everell’s marriage to her and place suspicion in the minds of their brethren, the magistrates censure their childhood affection; at the same time the magistrates accept Sir Philip under false pretenses, enabling him to exploit colonial fear of Indian invasion to take advantage of the innocent and seek personal gain. The same principles that guide public and private politics are used to deceive the magistrates and distort the legal process with fraudulent representation.

Although the evolving New-England legal process was faulty in the seventeenth-century, Sedgwick acknowledges a thread of humanitarian impulse within colonial politics as well. She introduces another historic figure into Hope Leslie at Magawisca’s trial in front of the magistrates of Boston—Mr. John Elliot. Magawisca enters the courtroom accompanied by “a man of middle age” whose “expression of love, compassion, and benevolence, seemed like the seal of his Creator affixed to declare him a minister of mercy to His creatures” (292). When Everell asks who he is, a stranger responds, “That gentleman, sir, is the ‘apostle of New-England,’” prompting his recognition, “‘God be praised!’ thought Everell. ‘Eliot, (for he was familiar with the title, though not with the person of that excellent man) was my father’s friend! this augurs well
for Magawisca” (292). In Magawisca’s defense, “He intimated that the Lord’s chosen people had not now, as of old, been selected to exterminate the heathen, but to enlarge the bounds of God’s heritage, and to convert these strangers and aliens, to servants and children of the most High!” (293). After detailing the kindness of both her parents to the English before the war, and the sacrifice of her arm for Everell’s life, Mr. Eliot “dwelt on ‘the gospel spirit of forgiveness as eminently becoming those who, being set on a hill in the wilderness, were to show the light to the surrounding nations’” (294). Many in the courtroom were moved by this passionate plea until Sir Philip exaggerates what he witnessed at Hope and Magawisca’s private meeting. Without being sworn in, he tells the court, “he would not—he ought not repeat to christian ears, her invocations to the Evil-one to aid her in the execution of her revenge on the English” (296). His explanation for not sharing this information earlier is that “I was not upon oath then” (298). Winthrop has him sworn in and anticipating his continued deceit, Magawisca reveals a crucifix Sir Philip dropped in her cell. When the magistrates demand an explanation, Sir Philip denies that the crucifix is his, and Magawisca is ordered to give testimony of his solicitation for her freedom. Feeling pity for Rosa, Magawisca requests that “that poor youth” (302) be removed before she began her testimony. Rosa’s reaction to this request reveals her feminine affection for Sir Philip, and he cruelly kicks her away. Winthrop requests a personal meeting with Sir Philip, and fearing the prolonging of a court decision Magawisca uncovers her disfigured arm and appeals to him in the name of her mother, “I demand of thee death or liberty,” and “every voice, save her judges, shouted ‘liberty!—liberty! Grant the prisoner liberty!’” (304). Moved by this display, Governor Winthrop
adjourns court to permit time to speak with Sir Philip. Sedgwick uses this adjournment to convey the humanity that the Puritans attempted to temper with justice in New England.

With Magawisca’s fate in the hands of the New England judicial process, Sedgwick discloses the series of events in which civic and diplomatic justice is restored in *Hope Leslie*. While Winthrop waits to speak to Sir Philip, Sir Philip plots to kidnap Hope, but the plan fails when the ship he is on explodes in the harbor. In the confusion Oneco is able to secretly recover Faith from Governor Winthrop’s home. Simultaneously, Hope and Everell help Magawisca escape, and Esther returns to London with her father, and releases Everell from their engagement to pursue his love for Hope. This series of events demonstrates justice that surpasses Puritan law and racial prejudice as Magawisca and Faith return to their family and Hope and Everell are finally given the magistrate’s blessing for marriage with Esther’s gracious intercession. Sedgwick concludes this demonstration of Puritan civil and social politics with Governor Winthrop’s compassionate influence to exact leniency in light of Sir Philip’s deceit, and to restore order in New England. *Hope Leslie* integrates history with romance as Hope and Everell overcome the social and religious politics in New England to restore justice for the Puritans and the native Indians, and earn the magistrate’s marriage blessing.

Social Structure and Puritan Responsibility in *Hope Leslie*

In *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick offers a glimpse of the responsibilities of Puritans as they struggle to manage the challenges of their community, the natives, and the indoctrination of future settlers, while developing the politics of a young nation. She does this by incorporating historic figures, dates, and events into her fictional story centered on
the lives of the three primary characters, Hope, Everell, and Magawisca. The reader bears witness to the bonds of their interwoven childhoods, and Sedgwick gives an account of their struggle to conform to the rules and expectations New England’s rigid society has placed upon them as they approach adulthood. As expansion of settlements to the frontier continues, even the native Indians are regulated within a social structure New England effects through violence, religious conversion, and interracial slavery perpetuated by both the English and the Indians. In the struggle for civic and religious independence and survival, Sedgwick’s hero and heroines face the challenge of balancing justice and civic duty against religious expectations in the seventeenth century. In an environment where captives, English and Indian, are exchanged or culturally acclimated, legal guardianship is transferred without hesitation, mentors are assigned, and marriages are mandated or discouraged based on the interests of the community, Hope, Everell and Magawisca represent a shift toward individual moral integrity and autonomy that transcends social structures that regulate race and religion in New England.

Sedgwick incorporates historic characters in this novel to interact with and influence Hope, Everell and Magawisca in negative and positive ways. For physical and spiritual survival, the Puritans maintained constant monitoring of public and private dress and conduct. *The Journal of John Winthrop* elaborates on this expectation of submission to the regulation of the magistrates by pointing out, “if you will be satisfied to enjoy such civil and lawful liberties, such as Christ allows you, then will you quietly and cheerfully submit unto that authority which is set over you in all the administrations of it for your good” (Baym 186). Such surveillance enabled the magistrates to gauge a person’s
individual strengths and weaknesses and suggest the proper mentor or spouse to improve observed deficiencies to make them better Christians and citizens. Sedgwick could not have chosen a more recognizable representation of Puritan leadership than Governor John Winthrop. She incorporates knowledge of Winthrop’s voyage to New England and his role once there into the plot with skill. His legacy has been documented historically, but Sedgwick presents “the external man” as “the solemn and forbidding aspect of the times in which he flourished; though we know him to have been a model of private virtue, gracious and gentle in his manners, and exact in the observances of all gentlemanly courtesy” (149). In Hope Leslie she acquaints the reader with John Winthrop as a character true to historic accounts and locates him in her fiction as the Puritan patriarch over her fictional characters. This characterization is confirmed by the way Sedgwick describes his summation of the trial proceedings with the discovery of Sir Philip’s deception, and Winthrop takes into consideration the unique circumstances of Magawisca’s trial, noting, “this case, in the absence of a precise law, should be put under the government of mercy. His associates lent a favourable ear. . . . Most of them considered the offense very much alleviated by the youth of the two principal parties, and the strong motives that actuated them” (356). Sedgwick includes John Eliot as an example of an honorable Christian missionary to the native Indians. Eliot’s historic reputation as the “apostle of New-England” (292) lends credence to his fictional defense of Magawisca, and models the concept of Christian charity even toward the natives. Meanwhile, as Winthrop represents the authentic Puritan virtue and stern New England authority that looms over Hope, Everell and Magawisca, his authority is tempered with
compassion and understanding as the next generation is primed to increase the spiritual
bounty of god’s “chosen” people.

Sedgwick creates a balance by offering both kinds of characters in *Hope Leslie*: those who model desired behavior, and those who exemplify objectionable behavior. The rebellious Anne Hutchinson is casually referenced by Mrs. Fletcher, who, when William comes home troubled asks whether Anne had “again presumed to disturb the peace of God’s people” (18). But the infamous Thomas Morton of Merrymount serves as Sedgwick’s antithesis to Winthrop and Eliot. It is his initial alliance with Morton, revealed in his letter to Wilton, that divulges Sir Philip’s true motivation for coming to New England: fortune at any cost. In his letter, Sir Philip boasts the advantage Morton provided him by warning “against appearing in this camp without the uniform of the church-militant, alleging, that we must play the part of pilgrims, till . . . quite independent of the favour of the saints” (205). Hearing of Morton’s reported insanity, Sir Philip decides to gain the trust of the magistrates under the false pretense of Puritan faith and appears to them as the perfect candidate to marry Hope, thus acquiring her generous inheritance. Morton’s historic fate, and Sir Philip’s fictional one that culminates in his untimely death, serve as Sedgwick’s warning against perceptions of faith based more on appearance than practice.

In addition to her inclusion of some of the historic “best” and “worst” personages of seventeenth-century New England, Sedgwick also established fictional characters to fulfill the role of Puritan mentors for Hope, Everell and Magawisca. Winthrop places Magawisca and Oneco into the Fletcher home to work as domestics in exchange for their
parents’ prior kindness toward the English. His intention in doing so is that Mr. Fletcher and his family would act as Christian guides to redeem the young Indians and draw them into the “fold.” When Hope frees Nelema, it is William who is chastised: “her poor guardian was condemned to a long an private conference, on the urgency of reclaiming the spoiled child” (122). This conference results in the removal of Hope from Bethel and the reconsideration of Hope and Everell’s marriage. Hope is placed into the care of Mrs. Winthrop, whose influence is compounded by the presence of the Winthrop’s pious niece, Esther Downing. Esther, being “of a reserved, tender, and timid cast of character, and being bred in the strictest school of the puritans, their doctrines and principles easily commingled with the natural qualities of her mind” (138), was deemed the perfect role model for Hope and the ideal influence for Everell as his wife. William explains the decision to Everell: “We have laid the foundation of an edifice, and our children must be so coupled together, as to secure its progress and stability when the present builders are laid low” (167). Yet in *Hope Leslie*, cultural acclimation and mentoring works both ways. After hearing Magawisca’s account of the English violence against her family and tribe, “Everell did not fail to express . . . his sympathy and admiration of her heroic and suffering people” (56). He knows the English version of the Pequot War, but he becomes critical of the sacrifice of Indian lives when Magawisca details her experience of it. Additionally, in their private meeting, Magawisca reports to Hope: “your sister is well with us. She is cherished as the bird cherishes her young” and “she is dear to Mononotto as if his own blood ran in her veins; and Oneco—Oneco worships and serves her as if all good spirits dwelt in her. Oh, she is indeed well with us” (194-5). Sir Philip is able to
masquerade as a Puritan to gain the trust of the magistrates as a personal influence and marital candidate to balance Hope’s willfulness, but after learning of his false piety and noting that his body was never recovered after his untimely death, the magistrates observe, “Satan had seized upon that as his lawful spoil” (362). As much as the magistrates attempted to regulate social and spiritual affiliations to promote Puritan unity in *Hope Leslie*, they were ill prepared to compensate for diverse individual interactions with new immigrants and natives. Among Sedgwick’s “best” and “worst” in the novel, Hope, Everell and Magawisca become the mentors.

Antebellum Landscapes and Character Redefined in *A New-England Tale* and *Hope Leslie*

In *A New-England Tale* and *Hope Leslie* Sedgwick shapes the reader’s perception of the historical romance by incorporating in the novels the effects of religion, politics, and social constructs on the men and women of the young Republic as obstacles to frontier affairs of the heart. More than simply love stories that revolve around the heroine, these two novels focus on exclusively American challenges faced by both sexes during the antebellum period, and Sedgwick’s affinity for nature unites history and the natural landscape demonstrating “every familiar object has a history—the trees have tongues, and the very air is vocal” (*Hope* 17). Her consistent anthropomorphism and personification of nature in her characters become a means to measure both the landscape and Sedgwick’s cast of characters. Whereas Sedgwick’s own romance with nature resounds in *A New-England Tale*, that romance is conflicted in *Hope Leslie*, where she distinguishes between the native’s communion with nature and the English domination of
it. Her innovative approach to the American historical romance revises and expands the roles of men and women in New England, enabling Sedgwick to guide contemporary social priorities and inform modern readership.

Sedgwick integrates actual historic events and literature into *A New-England Tale* and *Hope Leslie* to effectively humanize the violence, making readers aware of the impact of these events on individuals and communities. In *A New-England Tale*, “Sedgwick’s Note on Shay’s Rebellion” in the Appendix describes the causes, violence, and disbandment of the rebellion to be sure the reader is cognizant of the history associated with the tragic site where Lucy took her own life when her innocent lover was killed while being used by the rebels as a shield. Sedgwick concludes her telling of the event in the Appendix by informing the reader, “If the remembrance of this commotion had not been preserved by the classical pen of [George] Minot, its traditions would, probably, expire in one or two generations” (*NE Tale* 188). In *Hope Leslie* Sedgwick effectively humanizes the Pequot War with Magawisca’s personal account of the violence inflicted upon her tribe, while immediately recalling to Everell’s mind William Bradford’s historical account as one of the founding Pilgrim’s of New England. Yet even considering Bradford’s reputation, “Everell’s imagination, touched by the wand of feeling, presented a very different picture of those defenceless [sic] families of savages,” inciting both his and the reader’s “sympathy and admiration” (*Hope* 55). Sedgwick’s inclusion of historic people, events and literature place contemporary and modern readers in historic time while her fictional characters offer a humanized perspective of the early challenges of the young Republic.
In the Preface of *Hope Leslie* Sedgwick mentions the extensive research she conducted in the writing of this novel, much of which is revealed in her characterization of the esteemed Governor Winthrop; Winthrop’s presence lends historical authority to this distinctly American fictional tale. Sedgwick includes Winthrop’s historic voyage to New England in 1630, when he assumes his historic role as the Governor of Massachusetts. She even gives the reader a “detailed description of the internal economy of a pilgrim mansion, not on apocryphal authority, but quoted from an authentic record of the times,” before providing a physical description of the governor (148). She claims, “Our humble history has little to do with the public life of Governor Winthrop, which is so well known to have been illustrated by the rare virtue of disinterested patriotism” (148), when in fact, Sedgwick’s “humble history” has everything to do with Winthrop’s public and private life in relation to the context of the novel. Winthrop’s inclusion in the cast of characters enables Sedgwick to transport her readers to a factual American setting where fictional characters transcend the well-intended Puritan doctrine to impart justice regardless of race or religion. Sedgwick uses Winthrop’s authority to represent the Puritan influence as the foundation of New England integrity, unity, and patriotism that transcends religion for both her fictional characters and readers.

*A New-England Tale* and *Hope Leslie* both defy the definition of the literary romance revolving around the heroine; Sedgwick makes the genre noticeably American by modeling the religious, political and social responsibilities of both the heroes and the heroines. In *A New-England Tale*, before Jane Elton and John Lloyd realize their love they must overcome public and private obstacles that, once conquered, enable them to
unite in marriage and maintain their civic duty to the young republic. Jane and John are Sedgwick’s nineteenth-century American models of morality, when Christianity was emphasized over religious affiliation; religion, education and politics converge in the young Republic to awaken a sense of national pride; and social classes were distinguishable, with all classes placing a priority on independence and education. Hope Leslie and Everell Fletcher are Sedgwick’s seventeenth-century American models of morality, when Puritan faith was the standard of Christianity; the close correlation of religion and politics as law constituted an obstacle to realized love in an environment where magistrates dictated civic responsibility; and social structures demanded Puritan responsibility that proved to be flawed and easily manipulated. As these four characters face moral and cultural challenges in New England, the reader bears witness to each hero and heroine’s moral integrity, making them perfect models of republican virtue in antebellum literature and part of the earliest distinction of the American historical romance that Sedgwick helped to establish.
Works Cited


