2001

Hope Leslie and early American histories of puritan settlement

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.rg3s-cxf6>

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HOPE LESLIE
AND EARLY AMERICAN HISTORIES OF PURITAN SETTLEMENT

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of English
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Priska Pittet
May 2001

UMI Number: 1403986

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ABSTRACT

HOPE LESLIE AND EARLY AMERICAN HISTORIES OF PURITAN SETTLEMENT

by Priska Pittet

This thesis addresses Sedgwick's depiction of Puritan culture in Hope Leslie. It first reviews modern criticism of Hope Leslie; second, focuses on early nineteenth-century histories written by authors from New England to discuss the attitudes revealed by these historians about the Puritan past; and third, explores the text of Hope Leslie in order to draw conclusions about Sedgwick's characterization of Puritans in the novel.

My close-reading of Hope Leslie reveals that Sedgwick presents a very sympathetic Puritan community and not the male-dominated, oppressive, and inflexible social system portrayed by current critics. This positive description of the Puritans is in conformity with histories of her time. Furthermore, both the Puritans of Sedgwick's novel and the Puritans of the histories exemplify many characteristics that are cultural ideals of early nineteenth-century Americans. This similarity between early nineteenth-century histories of Puritan settlement and Hope Leslie not only illuminates Sedgwick's patriotic and didactic intentions, but also proves her positive attitude towards the American past.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My greatest thanks belong to Professor Engell, the most inspiring teacher I have ever worked with, whose knowledge and thought-provoking insights helped me deal with the complexities underlying early nineteenth-century American histories and historical novels; whose wit, encouragement, and support never failed; whose availability did not stop during summer vacation; and whose meticulous comments on and editing of my drafts enabled me to grow both as a critic and as a writer. Thank you. In addition, I would like to thank Professor Kichung and Professor Keesey for their thorough reading and criticism of Hope Leslie. My husband also deserves a big thank you. He repeatedly and patiently listened to my rambling trains of thoughts, and shared in my pains and joys.

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Introduction

Catharine Maria Sedgwick's historical novel, Hope Leslie, was published in 1827. It appeared at a time when citizens of the United States were once again focusing their attention on the nation's past, the first period of interest having occurred immediately after the Revolutionary War. In the 1820s, the historical novel, initiated by Scott's Waverly, created a means for American fiction writers to rethink their past. Sedgwick's Hope Leslie deals mainly with two aspects of the past: first, the settlement of the Puritans in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, their creation of a secure community, and their reaction to problems arising within the new community; second, the relationship between the Puritans and native tribal peoples. Sedgwick's novel was an immense success both in America and in Europe, and the author was soon regarded among her contemporaries as a major figure in the development of American literature. However, Sedgwick was forgotten by later generations who stamped her novels as too simple in structure, too sentimental and didactic. But in the 1970s, Sedgwick's novels, especially Hope Leslie, attracted new attention from critics. Feminist scholars played the major role in rediscovering Sedgwick and in stressing her importance in literary history. In 1987, a new edition of Hope Leslie was finally published, the first since 1872. Renewed interest in Hope Leslie has been marked by the appearance of numerous articles since the 1970s, especially in recent years.

Since the novel has been treated mainly by feminist critics, it is not surprising that the present perception of Hope Leslie is uniformly feminist. Many of these critics lay much stress on women as victims because they believe that in Sedgwick's novel male Puritans have supremacy over women and have established a uniform, oppressive, and

inflexible social system. They further believe that in her novel, Sedgwick reveals a non-conformist, revisionist attitude towards the American past, thereby attacking the injustices of her own male-dominated society. In addition, they argue that Hope, the white female heroine and representative of oppressed American women, is the only person within the Puritan system who questions her society and acts against it.

By placing Sedgwick and her novel in the historical, cultural, and ideological context of her time, I would like to contribute to a new understanding of Sedgwick's depiction of the Puritans and of her heroine. In doing so, I hope to provide a new perspective from which historical novels such as Sedgwick's can be viewed. In Hope Leslie, Sedgwick's intention is neither to attack the American Puritan past nor to accuse her male contemporaries. On the contrary, Sedgwick shares the national pride of most of her contemporary fellow Americans and with them believes in progressive history, the American republic, and humane Christianity. Following the spirit of her time, Sedgwick uses the historical novel first to glorify contemporary America and those people--the Puritans--who had laid the foundation for this progressive and happy nation which she and her contemporaries enjoy, and second to define those values which will best preserve a "free" republic.

My close-reading of Hope Leslie will prove that Sedgwick presents a very sympathetic Puritan community and not the oppressive system portrayed by current critics. This positive description of the Puritans is in conformity with histories of her time. Furthermore, Hope, the female heroine, is not the only person who questions certain flaws within the Puritan system; rather, she is joined in this endeavor by various male characters. But even more importantly, Hope, together with a number of male characters,

support ideals in full accordance with the beliefs of early nineteenth-century liberals and tolerant Protestants. My reading of the novel will therefore dispute the gender-based arguments of current feminist-oriented critics.

My conclusions of Hope Leslie will be based not only on a close-reading of the novel, but also on readings of four histories written during Sedgwick's time. The first histories of colonial America appeared in the 1790s and continued to appear sporadically thereafter. However, the greatest boom of these histories occurred at the time Hope Leslie was published and shortly after. In my study I will comment briefly on, without exploring fully, the reason for early nineteenth-century Americans' increased interest in history. Since Sedgwick is descended from Puritan ancestors, my study compares her novel to histories by authors from New England who, like Sedgwick, are confronting their own past. These histories are revealing. Whether composed by men or women, they bear an astonishing resemblance to each other and to the description and characterization of Puritans in Hope Leslie. Sedgwick and her contemporaries who are historians of New England depict Puritan virtue or Puritan "flaws" in similar ways. "Flaws" is put in quotation marks because in both the histories and Hope Leslie most Puritan error is explained, and, to a degree, excused. Furthermore, both the Puritans of Sedgwick's novel and the Puritans of the histories exemplify many characteristics that are cultural ideals of early nineteenth-century Americans: thus, for example, the *benevolent* Christian and the virtuous *republican* play central roles in these texts. This similarity between early nineteenth-century histories of Puritan settlement and Hope Leslie not only illuminates Sedgwick's patriotic and didactic intentions, but also proves her positive attitude towards the American past.

The following study first reviews modern criticisms of Hope Leslie; second, focuses on each of the four primary histories to discuss the attitudes revealed by New-England historians about the Puritan past; and third, explores the text of the novel in order to draw conclusions about Sedgwick's depiction of Puritan culture. This procedure allows me to treat the similarities and possible disagreements between the views of Sedgwick and the historians. Since my aim is to promulgate a new understanding of Hope Leslie, my reading of the novel will make up the largest part of my study.

Modern Criticism of Hope Leslie

The feminist movement starting in the 1960s immediately influenced literary criticism. Feminist critics turned their attention to books written by women who were hitherto neglected. Sedgwick was one of these women. These critics rightly insist on Sedgwick's participation in developing a literature which is typically American. Thus, Mary Kelley notes that "Sedgwick 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" (xxi). On the other hand, these critics are mainly concerned with women's issues. Therefore, they read Hope Leslie as a story about a woman's inferior position in society and her struggle to free herself from men's domination. Sedgwick's choice to write about the New-England Puritans is particularly suited to feminist interpretations since the Puritans, and especially those of New-England, are supposed by most modern readers to have been a severe and intolerant people who believed in a God-given patriarchy.

Two modern assumptions about Puritanism particularly influence current critics' interpretation of Hope Leslie. First, most modern readers associate Puritanism with religious and civil intolerance. In A Glimpse of Sion's Glory (1987), Philip Gura provides a thorough insight into Puritan ideologies and mentions the reason for the hard-line attitude of the New-England Puritans. Gura argues that the need to "settle a wilderness and codify their ecclesiology" (5) forced Winthrop and other Puritan leaders to turn against their previously espoused principle that individual religious consciousness supersedes formal civil and religious laws. While Gura understands the motives which induced the New-England Puritans to condemn people of different faiths, most feminist

critics, together with most modern readers, consider only the result of their actions, namely the Puritans' insistence on religious uniformity, order, and discipline. Second, these critics emphasize what Gura reveals as the typical current view of New-England Puritans, that is, their "profoundly conservative social vision, epitomized in Winthrop's eloquent defense of a hierarchical society in his 'Model of Christian Charity'" (78). The idea behind Winthrop's model was to unite the colonists under a social covenant in which each person should not only work for the good of the whole colony, but also occupy a specific place in society determined by God. In this model, women are indeed subordinated to men.

Such modern views of the Puritans--their subordination of women and their religious intolerance in general--are reflected in feminist interpretations of Hope Leslie. Thus, Kelley makes the following statement about the Puritan community of Hope Leslie:

Precisely because it challenges an order based upon patriarchy, Hope's rebellion is far more threatening than any man's. The seventeenth century, as Sedgwick pointedly reminds her readers, was an 'age of undisputed masculine supremacy.' . . . Men, constituted with sacred and secular authority, were invested with dominion by the ultimate patriarch. God, the Puritans declared, ordained a hierarchy that entailed female subordination in both the public and private realms. (xxxiv)

Kelley projects her negative opinion about historical Puritanism onto the fictional Puritans of Hope Leslie. The last two sentences of her statement are not drawn from Sedgwick's novel, but from Winthrop's *Model of Christian Charity* which Gura mentions as often cited by contemporary scholars. However, our modern perception of Puritanism

does not necessarily correspond to the views held by Sedgwick's contemporaries in the early nineteenth-century. Though Sedgwick at one point describes the seventeenth-century as an "age of undisputed masculine supremacy" (16), she hints nowhere at the implications Kelley infers from this one statement. God is not mentioned in the novel as having ordained women's subordination, nor is Hope treated differently because she is a woman. Yet like Kelley, most critics read the novel according to their general knowledge of Puritanism. Carol C. Singley points out that one of the novel's main foci is on "a rigid and intolerant Puritan system, intent on order and suppression of women" (110). Singley repeats our modern perception that the Puritans are inherently "intolerant" and "rigid"; her concern for feminist issues then leads her to conclude that such a system must necessarily be oppressive toward women. Furthermore, critics believe that women living within this Puritan system are not only forced into subordination, but must also be subject to punishment in case of disobedience. For that reason, critics such as T. Gregory Garvey believe women to be victims who "risk punishment" (294) by a repressive and frightening patriarchy.

These assumptions further lead most current critics to agree about Sedgwick's supposed intention in her novel. They postulate that Sedgwick deliberately depicts an earlier repressive social system in order to mirror her own misogynistic society. Thus, Dana Nelson mentions that the novel reveals "Sedgwick's subversive political commentary on the patriarchal assumptions of both the Puritans and her contemporary male audience" (194). Louise Cheri Ross presents Sedgwick as an active feminist of her own time who in her frontier novel reveals "both Puritan and nineteenth-century society's mistreatment of women" (339). These and other critics stress the gender struggle which

they believe is explicitly depicted in the society of Hope Leslie and implicitly evoked in the world of nineteenth-century America. Thus, while women like Sedgwick and Hope are fighting for their rights, men are trying to keep them subordinated by refusing them political and public authority.

Current critics also refer to what they believe are the different means used by men in the novel to limit inherent rights of women. For such critics, any convention in Hope Leslie concerning religion, sentiment, womanhood, romance, or marriage is depicted by Sedgwick as a means by which patriarchy limits women's space and rights. For Suzanne Gossett and Barbara Ann Bardes, for example, "Sedgwick implies that most women . . . are as good as imprisoned by social, religious, or marital restrictions" (23). Gould discusses the concept of citizenship as a means to restrict women to the home. Comparing at one point contemporary feminists with early republican women, he comes to the following conclusion:

One might conclude . . . by noting an uncanny resemblance between early republican women and contemporary feminists viv-à-vis masculine constructions of 'the public sphere.' Both vehemently contest its viability as a hermeneutic tool. *Hobomok* and *Hope Leslie* assail the misogynistic ramification of public, masculine citizenship. (113)

These and other critics believe that the so-called misogynistic practices they perceive in Hope Leslie are depicted by Sedgwick as potential threats to women's equal rights. According to these critics, therefore, marriage is portrayed by Sedgwick as a means to subordinate women to men, thereby limiting female political and social autonomy. Furthermore, such critics believe that in Hope Leslie Sedgwick criticizes religious and

sentimental concepts as well as the notions of both citizenship and womanhood because these cultural constructs associate the female character with natural passivity, motherly tenderness, and devotion to the family's well being, characteristics fit for the home, but not for public life. Thus, current critics are mainly interested in Sedgwick's novel as first a confirmation of their own concern about women having been suppressed throughout centuries by a male-dominated social system, and second, an indictment of this suppression.

Many current critics find further validation of women as victims in Hope Leslie by equating their situation with Sedgwick's sympathetic depiction of native tribal people. Sedgwick's concern about Puritan domination of Indians is extended to all subordinated groups within humankind, thereby reducing the Puritans' treatment of white women and Indians to a common denominator. Sandra A. Zagarell insists that in Hope Leslie racial minorities and women become equal victims of the white male Puritan who seizes domestic supremacy over women and political dominance over Indians (233). Christopher Castiglia presents the novel as a "subversion of . . . racist and misogynist assumptions" (4). Some critics even assume that everything in Hope Leslie revealed on behalf of Indians must implicitly include the white woman in that her fortune is at one with Indians. Thus, Nelson assumes that "it is the silenced object of Puritan representation--the Indians, and by inference white women--whose story speaks both emotively and truly" (197 emphasis mine). By equating women's lot in Puritan society with the place of Indians, these critics imply that early nineteenth-century Americans shared the late twentieth-century belief concerning women's political and civil rights and

that Sedgwick, since the new republic confined women to the home, must have felt as deprived of her inherent rights as did Indians.

Besides stressing the severity of Puritan culture towards both women and Indians, many critics point to what they consider Sedgwick's radical subversion in Hope Leslie of the social status quo. In their eyes, Sedgwick must be an early feminist because they see Hope invested by Sedgwick with the will to rebel against a rigid and intolerant Puritan system and to affirm women's rights. Singley, for example, asserts that Hope vigorously refuses to obey "traditional conventions imposed by her Puritan world" (110). Nelson contrasts the heroine with male Puritans by stating that Hope "often defies patriarchal authority, secretly moving to assert a humane justice toward people whom the Puritans would trample, like the unfairly harassed Nelema" (194). Hope's sense of "humane justice" is opposed to male Puritans' "unfair harassment." White men in Hope Leslie, these critics claim, form one coherent, unanimous, and dangerous unity against which Hope must assert herself. Thus, Hope becomes the only white defender of oppressed people.

When contemporary critics turn to the question of Hope's means to subvert her Puritan society, they usually stress her fundamental moral motivation. These critics declare that Sedgwick deliberately depicts Hope as subversive in order both to justify and demand women's right to be involved in political action, a right which will in turn prevent injustices provoked by patriarchy. On the one hand, many critics point out that Sedgwick's use of this moral device is in conformity with the early nineteenth-century belief that women are the natural guardians of morality and, therefore, important to the

moral continuity of the new republic. On the other hand, these critics underline Sedgwick's so-called revolutionary attitude. Garvey notes:

The threats which male authorities pose to the moral order . . . ultimately compel women to intervene on behalf of the innocent. Sedgwick's portrait of a public realm in which political considerations come before moral ones prepares the way for women's entrance not only onto the public stage, but into the realm of politics. (291)

Thus, critics like Garvey perceive Sedgwick as a social revolutionary who not only advocates inherent female virtues as necessary for an uncorrupted public realm, but also implicitly demands the right for women to enter "into the realm of politics."

Most critics also underline the correspondence between the morality of Hope and early nineteenth-century virtues based on the dictates of a humanitarian Christianity rather than on the Calvinistic doctrines which they believe dominated the previous two centuries of life in Anglophone North America. While Hope insists on Christian benevolence, personal conscience and sympathy--notions which belong to the humane Christian faith of the early nineteenth-century--her male Puritan counterparts, critics argue, cling to the severe religious doctrines of seventeenth-century orthodoxy. Erica Bauermeister's distinction between the heroine and "authority figures" is especially revealing:

The result of creating authority figures who are also church members and who use words such as 'duty' and 'sacrifice' to further their own plans is that the heroines not only challenge a patriarchal figure but implicitly criticize the use of organized

religion for selfish aims, reinforcing the value of a natural religion which follows the heart. (24)

According to Bauermeister and many other critics, the magistrates in the novel are hypocrites who use religion as a cover under which they pursue their own ambitions. By pretending to be dutiful church members and by asking common people to sacrifice their personal wishes for the common good, these magistrates merely ensure that they can retain authority over others. The heroine, on the other hand, is seen to represent a humane Christian faith emanating from the heart. Hope, Bauermeister remarks, listens to her own conscience, thereby resisting any religious belief imposed by an outside source.

Some critics also draw attention to Hope Leslie as a reflection of Sedgwick's personal experience with orthodox religion. According to Kelley, "Sedgwick also inscribed the deeply personal convictions that had led her from Orthodox Congregationalism to Unitarianism" (xxxv). For Kelley and other critics, the Puritans of Hope Leslie embody Sedgwick's negative experience with the orthodox faith preached by Congregationalists of her own time. Hope alone, in their eyes, perceives the hypocritical side of the Puritans' doctrinal teaching and actively resists any authoritarian demands which run contrary to humane Christian doctrines based on sympathy, selflessness, and generosity.

This unanimity of critical views raises certain questions and presents certain problems. Why this incredible agreement among current critics concerning the message of Hope Leslie? Furthermore, why is their point of view so radically different from critical views of the novel before the 1960s? Interestingly, Sedgwick's contemporaries seemed in no way offended by the content of Hope Leslie. On the contrary, they were

highly pleased with the novel's depiction of both the Puritans and the heroine. Most current critics confirm the novel's very positive reception by Sedgwick's contemporaries. Thus, Gossett and Bardes note that "Sedgwick's recounting of American history and dedication to republican principles earned praise from her reviewer, who noted Sedgwick's contribution to the public good" (19). In the eyes of this early reviewer, Sedgwick does not subvert early nineteenth-century society but rather actively engages in the depiction of virtues which further the common good. Early reviewers' admiration for Sedgwick is even more fully revealed by Kelley's comment that "the appearance of her third novel provided critics with further evidence that Sedgwick ranked with Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and William Cullen Bryant as a founder of American literature" (xi). As this statement reveals, Sedgwick's contemporaries were proud to consider Hope Leslie as part of the nation's literature.

When mentioning the novel's positive reception by Sedgwick's contemporaries, some critics try to explain why the novel—despite what they call its subversiveness—was acclaimed by both the general public and the critics. According to Gould, because feminine virtues such as benevolence and moral feeling were perceived by the new republic as important means by which to sustain itself, the public did not realize how women writers were using these values to subvert their society by redefining feminine virtues as active forces for both men and women, thereby annihilating spheres based on "gender-ideology" (91). While Kalayjian mentions the inability of early critics to detect the novel's hidden criticism "beneath a veil of conventional rhetoric" (114), Singley argues that the popularity of the novel is solely due to the "nation's appetite for historical fiction" (113).

Thus, the novel passes from being received as a positive, constructive work by its early nineteenth-century readers to the contemporary analysis of its content as culturally subversive. This radical shift in critical view is so striking that it raises a question: Is the current unanimity of critical perspective due to the nature of the text of Hope Leslie or to the particular cultural values that this generation of critics reads into the novel? Since the 1960s, people in Western cultures have become sensible of continued discrimination against women because of their sex; feminist groups have exerted themselves on women's behalf and insisted on equal rights in all spheres, including the social, cultural, political, and economic. This modern concern for women's rights dominates current interpretations of Hope Leslie and explains the radical shift in the critical view of the novel. Reading Hope Leslie through the lens of modern feminist assumptions, current critics postulate that the novel—despite the very positive reception of Hope Leslie among Sedgwick's contemporaries—not only invalidates early nineteenth-century concepts of womanhood and gender-spheres, but also attacks any patriarchal system in which men both dominate the home and claim the public sphere for themselves, thereby refusing women the right to participate outside the home. Furthermore, these critics believe that Hope is the only white person who criticizes this seemingly uniform repressive Puritan system. Hope thereby exposes the Puritans' intolerance and affirms her own benevolent and humane principles as those with which all humans should be treated. But to interpret the novel according to modern feminist beliefs is anachronistic. Instead of approaching the novel in the context of the cultural values of the early nineteenth-century, these critics use Hope Leslie to further late twentieth-century "women's" issues, thereby misreading Sedgwick's intentions.

A further problem lies in current critics' assumption that early Americans associated New-England Puritanism with the same negative connotations shared by most modern readers. However, as I will show in the next chapter, histories written by early nineteenth-century New-Englanders reveal a very different view of the New-England Puritans. Instead of describing these Puritans as intolerant and severe, early American histories praise their fundamental virtues. Thus, approaching the Puritans in Hope Leslie as severe and intolerant creates a late twentieth-century text—one that does not, in fact, exist—and misrepresents the early nineteenth-century text that Sedgwick actually wrote. Indeed, by insisting on the novel's condemnation of the Puritans, current critics make Sedgwick's novel itself anachronistic: in early nineteenth-century New-England, the Puritans were not yet subject to widespread condemnation. Ironically, while current critics project their own cultural judgment of Puritanism onto the Puritans in Hope Leslie, most of them fail to notice the specific early nineteenth-century cultural judgment of Puritanism incorporated in the novel's world. Hope Leslie presents the Puritans in terms of early nineteenth-century cultural ideals. Thus, the Puritans described by Sedgwick are associated with benevolent Christianity, individual liberty, political independence, and progressive history—moral principles at the heart of our national ideology after the Revolutionary War. Sedgwick does not describe the historical Puritans of the seventeenth-century, but fictionalizes them in her novel, thereby creating a reading of the Puritans specific to her time, not ours. The values Sedgwick chooses to depict in her Puritans are overwhelmingly positive, and they are values of her contemporary society. Perceiving the nature of Sedgwick's nineteenth-century cultural judgment of Puritanism is essential to any truly historical study of Hope Leslie. Indeed, the novel mirrors

judgments repeatedly contained in histories of Puritan settlement written by New-Englanders in early America. Thus, Sedgwick's view of the Puritans seems consistent with the world in which she lives; she wholeheartedly participates in the largely positive cultural judgment of Puritanism typical of her time. Because Sedgwick perceives the Puritans in the same light as her contemporaries—a positive light—her purpose in portraying them as she does in Hope Leslie is nearly opposite from the one stated by the recent critics discussed in this chapter.

Michael Davitt Bell and Edward Halsey Foster are the only critics who read Hope Leslie in a significantly different manner. Though Foster confirms that Sedgwick and her fictional heroines provide feminist theorists with examples of female independence (23), he asserts that her novels reflect the views of nineteenth-century "Jacksonians and Unitarians" (22). In his analysis of Hope Leslie, however, Foster ignores the general Unitarian and democratic ideals which Sedgwick projects onto the Puritan community, describing instead the various—true and mythical—stories of Sedgwick's town and family reflected in the novel (78). In addition, Foster focuses on Sedgwick's depiction of "the thoroughly virtuous woman" (88) and contrasts Hope to her Puritan contemporaries who, though disinterested, "lack enthusiasm for life" (86). Unlike in my reading of Hope Leslie, Foster acknowledges no male Puritan as reflecting Unitarian, democratic principles.

Bell perceives Hope Leslie as a fundamentally conventional novel, that is, one similar in its ideology to other contemporary historical romances written by both men and women. According to him, early nineteenth-century Americans felt ambiguously toward the Puritans. On the one hand, they praised Puritan settlers for bringing civil liberty to

America. On the other hand, early nineteenth-century readers recognized that Puritans committed repressive acts (9-10). Historical novels of the 1820s, Bell argues, resolve these two contradicting points of view by separating the so-called bad Puritans from the good ones by juxtaposing repressive fathers with affectionate, moral, and virtuous daughters and sons (152). Thus, Sedgwick's depiction of both repressive Puritan fathers and the sympathetic, liberal Hope and Everell is nothing extraordinary in the eyes of Bell. According to him, "again and again the heroines' gay natural spirits are brought out through their opposition to the severity [of the forefathers]" (163). Furthermore, Bell stresses that in the early nineteenth-century both male and female writers of historical novels about the Puritan settlement substitute the same kind of heroine for a hero. He therefore disagrees with other critics who read Hope as a unique female heroine created by Sedgwick to subvert gender conventions. According to Bell, the choice of a heroine instead of a hero is typical of her period and due to her symbolic strength. The heroine, he argues, will transform society in terms of her inherent female virtues. She can, therefore, best present the transition from a repressive society to one guided by the benevolent heart.¹ In reference to Hope Leslie, Bell states that "here [in Hope Leslie] and elsewhere, the conventional heroine is used as a political symbol . . . Hope Leslie is liberty, she is progress" (170). In Bell's opinion, therefore, Hope is a highly conventional character. Yet despite his different reading of Hope Leslie, Bell agrees with other critics that Sedgwick depicts the Puritan fathers as repressive. As I will show in Chapter Three, Sedgwick presents most of her fictional Puritans--men and women, fathers and children--as

¹ *For further discussion see Bell 161-67.*

advocating or supporting ideals similar to her own Unitarian and liberal civil principles.
Her Puritan community therefore reflects virtue, benevolence, and morality.

Early American Histories of Puritan settlement

Histories of the seventeenth-century New England Puritans written by New-Englanders in the sixty years after the American Revolution reveal a strikingly consistent depiction of their subject. Unlike most modern readers and literary critics who emphasize what they consider to be negative aspects of the Puritans, early New-England historians focus on values which make the Puritans familiar to their own culture. These New-England historians believe in a close affinity between Puritan and early nineteenth-century culture, and therefore emphasize certain Puritan notions to make them coincide with their own understanding of virtuous civic, religious, and social behavior. In addition, these historians stress the Puritans' inherent morality and worthiness. While at times reflecting less glamorous aspects of Puritan culture, which seem to confirm the negative perceptions of Puritanism held by modern literary critics, early American histories mention Puritan "flaws" not to condemn the Puritan people but to excuse their imperfection by explaining why they had to act as they did and by insisting that they lived, as far as the spiritual state of the seventeenth-century allowed them, according to early nineteenth-century liberal values.

Though virtually all early nineteenth-century Americans believe in "liberty," they advocate different degrees of classical liberalism. So do the five historians I will discuss in this chapter. Relative to one another, Salma Hale is the most liberal; Jedidiah Morse, Elijah Parse, and Hannah Adams the most conservative; and Caleb Snow somewhere in between. The publication dates of their histories explain in part the authors' somewhat varied ideologies. Adams' A Summary History of New England appears in 1799, Morse and Parse's A compendious History of New England in 1804. At that time,

Congregationalist-federalist ideology—a blend of individualism and religious toleration with an acceptance of established religious and civil institutions—dominates New-England, while in other states republican-democratic ideals—religious freedom, direct popular democracy, and social mobility—begin to win the hearts of early nineteenth-century Americans. Thus, Adams, Morse (himself a Congregationalist minister), and Parse reflect the somewhat conservative tendencies of most New-Englanders at the turn of the nineteenth-century. Snow's History of Boston (1825) and Hale's History of the United States (1826) appear at a time when republican-democratic ideals gain more ground in New-England, a fact reflected in the views held by Hale and, to a lesser degree, Snow.

Whatever the shadings of their ideology, however, early New-England historians are all inheritors of the traditions of Enlightenment liberalism and all take pride in calling contemporary America the greatest and freest society on earth. In fact, the enthusiasm which early New-England historians show for the newly independent republic lies at the heart of their sympathetic reading of the Puritans. Adams, for example, states her admiration for the United States as follows:

The federal Americans are now recognized as a nation throughout the globe. From a comparison of their former with their present circumstanced, the mind is expanded to contemplate scenes of future grandeur, and is led to conclude, that the United States are advancing in knowledge and happiness, while the wealth and power of more ancient government is rapidly declining. The highly favored Americans ought to raise their minds in grateful aspiration to Heaven, that the fair prospect may never be reversed, by a spirit of anarchy prevailing among the people. (513)

Adams glorifies the American nation as pre-eminent in all aspects of life, from individual felicity to national prosperity. Like other historians of the period, she also believes in America's future glory and in the decline of earlier powerful nations. Furthermore, Adams asserts the nation's present and future greatness by emphasizing a doctrine of historical progress. Though the United States were still colonies as recently as 1776, Adams proudly claims in her History that "the federal Americans are now [1799] recognized as a nation throughout the globe." For Adams, America has not only evolved from a group of English colonies to an independent state, but has also developed into a strong nation that advances "knowledge and happiness." This rapid national development, Adams suggests, intimates America's future success.

Because early New-England historians firmly believe in America's progressive development, the study and writing of American history becomes for them a didactic enterprise. American histories of the early national period, they claim, not only trace the colonial origin of the newly independent, happy Nation, thereby revealing the motives which ultimately led to America's independence, but also teach the values and personal characteristics needed to preserve the present happiness of American citizens. Snow, for example, reveals that "a thousand endearments and ten thousand privileges enjoyed, invite us on every side to inquire into the character of the men that have preceded us" (1). Hale announces that the perpetuation of America's success depends on citizens' "adherence to the principles of their fathers" (466). Like the other historians, Snow and Hale use American history for a patriotic purpose--both to affirm the uniqueness and greatness of their new nation and to reveal the qualities that they think need to be preserved in order to perpetuate current happiness.

Searching for America's national character, New-England historians of the early national period inevitably turn to what they believe is the primal formative antecedent of the current nation: the Puritan settlement in New-England. As a consequence of their didactic and melioristic views, they project their pride in America onto the Puritans, praising them as the worthy founders of the newly independent, happy state. Snow's affection for the Puritans, for example, begins with his description of their departure for New-England:

In this fleet were congregated our fathers, with their wives and their little ones, about to quit forever their native country. . . . Let us pause a moment, and mingle our sympathy with their sorrows, 'as hand in hand we see them lead each other to the sandy banks of the brinish ocean.' (sic 24)

Snow sympathizes with the people who undertook the settlement of the New-England colony, and by calling the Puritans "fathers" Snow acknowledges them as the worthy ancestors of contemporary America. New-England becomes pre-eminent in these early histories because, these historians argue, the worthy Puritans reflect best the essential characteristics and values of contemporary America. However, the historians' purpose in portraying essential Puritan characteristics is ideological: they promote Puritan qualities that support their personal views concerning "liberal" values. But what values, principles, and characteristics do early New-England historians perceive as typifying the Puritans and ultimately, therefore, the citizens of the new nation?

All five New-England historians discussed here agree that the Puritans brought the principle of civil liberty to New-England. To define the civil liberty of the Puritan community, these historians resort to the general rhetoric of republicanism. Morse and

Parse use terms like "republican liberty" (111), "enlightened ancestors" (191), and "representative form of government" (104) to describe both the Puritans and their society. Adams mentions the Puritans' "republican habits" (349), and their "true republican spirit" (79). Hale adds to this list the Puritans' "personal dignity and independence" (464), their "liberal political principles" (442), their "republican spirit" (51), and their emphasis on "equal rights and privileges to all" (440). Adams, as a representative of the first generation of federalist-leaning historians, stresses that the key to success lies in America's adoption of principles that oppose any "spirit of anarchy" (513). The word "anarchy," which is a reminder of the France Revolution and ensuing terror, indicates Adams's mistrust of popular rule, a mistrust which leads her and other early nineteenth-century federalists to advocate ordered civil liberty. Hale as a second-generation liberal historian has more egalitarian principles in mind than do Adams, Morse, and Parse when he discusses the Puritans' "republican" principles. But they all agree that the Puritans espoused some form of republicanism, finding valid claims for their judgment in the Puritans' dismissal of hereditary public offices² and in their establishment of an early form of representative government.³ The emphasis of these historians therefore differs from that of most modern readers, who underline the Puritans' belief in a God-ordained social hierarchy in which a few elect individuals enjoy political power. Early national historians project their republican ideals onto the Puritans, thereby transforming their religious and hierarchical values into secular ones.

² See Morse III

³ See Hale 40; Snow 41

As a result, early New-England historians credit the Puritans with another form of civil liberty--America's political independence from England. Hale insists that:

Every man [in Puritan New-England] could regard those around him as his equals. The state of individual dependence being hardly known, all sense of dependence on the mother country was gradually lost; and the transition from a colonial to an independent condition was natural and unavoidable. (443)

Here Hale presents America's break from England as a "natural" consequence of the colonial past because, according to him, the Puritans lived by the very enlightened values that characterize contemporary America and which have led to national independence. Accordingly, Hale and the other national historians insist that the Revolutionary War marks the separation of America from England, but not from the early Puritans whose settlement in New-England mirrors the spirit of America's national independence.

This patriotic reading does not prevent early New-England historians from dealing with what modern critics perceive as the negative aspects of Puritanism. Thus, the same Adams who calls the Puritan colonies "republics," describes their government at one point as a "Jewish theocracy" (34). Likewise, Snow refers to Puritan Boston as a "religious society" (92), and Hale points out that the "customs, institutions [and] laws" (115) established by New-England Puritans were based upon religious concerns. Early national historians also acknowledge a certain severity in the Puritan religious legal system, which, they lament, involves both rigid punishment and loss of individual liberty.

Because this form of government contradicts the early nineteenth-century American ideal of a republic based on civil and individual rights, to the modern reader these early histories reflect incompatible views of Puritan values—one corresponding to

early nineteenth-century ideals, another affirming disturbing realities regarding Puritan society. Yet, New-England historians of the early national period perceive no contradiction in their description of the Puritans. They consider seemingly opposite aspects of the Massachusetts colony as inconsistent only on the surface. Whatever negative names--theocracy, rigid religious jurisprudence, or Jewish laws--these historians attach to Puritan society, they undermine, and to a degree dismiss these notions by explaining why Puritan New-England nonetheless reflects their own views of liberal civil values.

One recurrent trope by which these national historians judge New-England Puritanism revolves around a fundamental concern of the young Republic: the uneasy relationship between individual freedom, social responsibility, and civil order. To what degree and with what means, early nineteenth-century Americans ask, should the new republic control unsocial behaviors of individuals to ensure the stability of the state and the happiness of all citizens? Likewise, to what degree should individuals voluntarily subordinate self-interest to the welfare of the whole community? New-England historians' answers to these questions are reflected in their sympathetic reading of Puritan laws and Puritan government.

Despite the early national insistence on individual freedom, Adams, Morse, and Parse especially entertain distrust of complete personal liberty. Too much individual liberty, these historians argue, threatens the successful ordering of a society. Conservative-oriented early nineteenth-century Americans agree with these historians. Fearing party spirit and popular rule, they ask for a strong unified paternal government composed of well-educated leaders who, by ensuring order, promote progress and

happiness for all citizens. As Adams announces at the end of her History, she wishes for America's future that the "GENUINE LIBERTY, united with ORDER and GOOD GOVERNEMENT, may continue to diffuse their blessings through the widely extended union" (513). Because Adams, Morse, and Parse fear complete individual freedom, they perceive the famous speech made by Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts, not only as a valuable confirmation of their own understanding of civil liberty, but as a means to promote their own political ideology. As a result, Adams, Morse, and Parse refer at length to the governor's clarification of the term liberty:

Magistracy is certainly an appointment of God . . . we take an oath to govern you according to God's laws, and the laws of our country, to the best of our skill: if we commit errors not willingly, but for want of ability, you ought to bear with us; nor would I have you mistake your own liberty. There is a liberty of doing what we *will*, without regard to law of justice; this liberty is indeed inconsistent with authority; but civil, moral, *federal* liberty, consists in every one's enjoying his property, and having the benefit of the laws of his country. (Winthrop qtd. in Morse 214/ Adams 79-80)

After quoting this speech, these historians praise the wisdom of the governor and confirm the beneficial effect that Winthrop's speech had on the colony. Neither Adams nor Morse and Parse consider the religious framework underlying Winthrop's definition of liberty. According to Winthrop, personal liberty must be confined within the values of a God-ordained system. Likewise, the laws of God—the Bible—must always guide the individual and proscribe action. Neglecting the first part of Winthrop's speech—the insistence on "God's laws" and on a government by "appointment of God"—Adams, Morse, and Parse

focus on what matches their own views of regulated civil liberty. They too believe in the necessity of some sort of social subordination which secures an ordered civil and individual freedom. This emphasis on a balance between order and liberty allows these historians to praise Winthrop's speech as a perfect model of civil government and of true "civil, moral, *federal* liberty."

The necessity of social stability and good government is again brought forward when early national historians of New-England discuss the Puritans' rigid legal system. Thus, Adams mentions that the Puritan laws served as a means to secure both the colony's stability and the people's well-being (90). Snow too focuses on the beneficent effects of Puritan laws. Observing that "the most rigid discipline [was] enforced" (27) among the Bostonian Puritans, he nevertheless clearly approves of this "rigid discipline" because "thus they commenced their state, with the maintenance of dignity, sobriety, good order, and honesty" (27-28). By focusing primarily on the benevolent result of severe religious laws, Snow depicts the Puritans as good and wise rulers, who commit themselves entirely to the interests of the colony. This final outcome binds the Puritans to Snow's values: disinterested patriotism and the security of a happy state.

Yet all New-England historians of the early national period perceive in the Puritan emigration the best confirmation of this people's "liberal" and civil values. Though the historical Puritans in England were persecuted because of their religious faith, these historians frequently diminish the religious element. By doing so, they transform England's religious persecution into general religious, social, and political oppression. As a result, these historians believe that the Puritan emigration was based upon civil as well as religious motives. Snow, for example, claims that Boston "owes its origin to a spirit of

civil and religious liberty, which was excited to action by the persecution that prevailed in England" (2). Hale expresses the same idea, noting that "the persecutions they [the Puritans] endured rendered the principles of civil and religious liberty more dear to their hearts" (439). Hale's insistence on a plurality of "persecutions" leads to his view that the Puritans adopted general liberal principles.

As the above paragraph reveals, when treating civil affairs, historians of the early national period minimize religious motives to depict the Puritans as the founders of civil liberties in America. However, when these historians write about spiritual faith, they wish to show that the Puritans brought not only civil but also religious liberty to the new world. They therefore depict the Puritans' religiosity as a highly positive characteristic. Whether they call it "free enjoyment of religious privileges" (Snow 35), "liberty of conscience" (Morse 108), "complete religious freedom" (Hale 47), or "independent spirit in religion" (Adams 349), early national historians agree: England's persecution again serves as the impetus for inciting the Puritans to embrace the principles of religious liberty, a term which in the early nineteenth-century can mean anything from religious toleration to individual religious freedom.⁴

Though early national historians of New-England believe that the Puritans' religious values helped create what they consider their own liberal Protestantism, they again deal with Puritan realities that seem to contradict any correspondence between Puritan and early nineteenth-century religious principles. These historians principally refer to three related types of Puritan misconduct: the coercive power used by the

⁴ See Richard Vetterli and Gary Bryner. In Search of the Republic: Public Virtue and the Roots of American Government. (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1987) 141.

magistrates, the Puritans' insistence on uniformity in religious worship, and the harsh punishment or even persecution of those who express unorthodox religious opinions. Adams, for example, laments that the same New-England Puritans who had fled persecution began to impose "uniformity in religious worship" (53 and 93) and to punish dissenters. Snow acknowledges the "spirit of persecution" (75) that prevailed in Puritan New-England. The most critical utterance, however, in regard to the Puritans' religious affairs emerges in Hale's History:

Persecution made them [New-England Puritans] bigots; piety made them moral; poverty made them frugal; incessant toil made them gloomy and superstitious; their numerous clergy and well educated leaders made them venerate literature and the sciences. (45)

Hale calls the Puritans "bigots," "gloomy," and "superstitious," notions that confirm our popular modern perception of Puritanism; however, in his characterization of the Puritans, Hale clearly points out that their vices, as well as their virtues, had causes. Thus Hale and the other historians express great sympathy for Puritan imperfections, explaining why the Puritans had to live and act as they did and why they were in sum the most virtuous people of their time.

In order to explain this apparent paradox, these historians of New-England first draw on their conception that history is progressive. According to them, any Puritan misbehavior must be considered in the context of the spiritual and social values of the seventeenth-century. At that time, these historians argue, the whole of humankind was not yet so far progressed in civilization as to understand the true concept of religious freedom. Adams reveals this opinion when she addresses her contemporary readers:

To us, who live in an enlightened age, where the principles of religious toleration are clearly understood, the conduct of the early settlers of New-England must appear truly astonishing; and we may be led to asperse them with unmerited censure. In reviewing the conduct of those, who have appeared on the theatre of life before us, we ought ever to consider the influence which the prevailing prejudices of the age, in which they lived, must naturally have had upon their minds. It was late before the true grounds of liberty of conscience were known by any party of Christians. (102)

Differentiating her own "enlightened" time from the supposedly ignorant seventeenth-century, Adams appeals to her contemporaries to sympathize with the Puritans since they were guilty of intolerance only because they lived too early to comprehend religious liberty. Like Adams, other historians of the period believed that religious uniformity and the accompanying spirit of persecution were not specific Puritan flaws but part of a general misconception underlying earlier times of socio-religious development. Hale goes a step further, claiming that the New-England Puritans "exhibited less intolerance than was then displayed by every other nation" (39). Seen in the context of seventeenth-century religious beliefs, Hale argues, the Puritans are guiltless of intolerant actions since they represent the most enlightened people whom the seventeenth-century could produce.

Religious controversies within the young Republic also influenced early New-England historians' discussions of Puritan error. While early nineteenth-century Americans agreed that a free republic needed moral people and that religion was essential in teaching morality, they disagreed on how to achieve this goal. As the general religious disestablishment following the American Revolution indicates, many early nineteenth-

century Americans advocated religious pluralism, believing that people best commit to Christian morality if they are free to choose among the many existing Christian denominations.⁵ Furthermore, Universalist and Unitarianist movements (as well as other enlightenment forms of Protestantism, like Methodism) advocated that the human soul is by nature virtuous and has, therefore, access to God's divine teaching. As a result, these movements emphasized the right of each individual to rely on personal conscience in regard to faith and the responsibility of each citizen to become an example of Christian morality. Such beliefs, however, threatened Congregationalist-Federalist hegemony in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, the only three states that supported the existence of established churches--Connecticut until 1818, New Hampshire until 1819, and Massachusetts until 1833. Fearing that religious diversity leads to civil disorder and distrusting the innate goodness of the human soul, Congregationalists believed that to secure civil liberty people must be taught the one "true" Protestant faith--orthodox Congregationalism. Accordingly, Congregationalist ministers saw themselves as moral leaders of the American people and as guardians of a free republic.

Morse and Parse, both Congregationalists, excuse Puritan religious intolerance based on this ideal of a unified Christian commonwealth.⁶ They argue that "what have been considered as blemishes in their [the Puritans'] character" (113) proved to be an essential condition for the new colony to succeed. The Puritans had not only to confront the physical and natural dangers of the wilderness, but to establish a firm social system, the strength of which depended upon society's peace and harmony. "More liberality,"

⁵ For further discussion see Vetterli and Bryner 121-155.

⁶ See John A. Andrew III, Rebuilding the Christian Commonwealth: Congregationalists and Foreign Missions, 1800-1830. (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1976) 55.

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Morse and Parse claim, "would have introduced sectaries, which would have weakened the community by divisions, and profligates, who would have corrupted it by their vices" (113). Morse and Parse suggest that so-called "blemishes" signify necessary--if not always worthy--means by which the first settlers could establish themselves in New-England.

Similar arguments are expanded when early national historians of New-England deal with another aspect of Puritan intolerance: the sectarian conflicts arising within New-England and the Puritans' reaction to these events. In the case of the Antinomian controversy, for example, Snow presents Mrs. Hutchinson as a self-centered woman, acting from "vanity" (69) rather than spiritual concern. Furthermore, he points to the unhealthy "uproar" (75) that the Antinomian question provoked in Puritan New-England, thereby counterbalancing his criticism that the Puritan magistrates established very severe measures to prohibit dissenting people from coming into the colony. These severe measures are further excused when Snow notes that once the Antinomian conflict "happily subsided . . . all was tranquility and love" (92).

Even Hale, who is more religiously tolerant than Morse and Parse, uses such reasoning when presenting the conflict between the Puritans and the Quakers. Though he calls the Puritan laws against Quakers "cruel and impolitic" (48), Hale casts greatest blame on what he considers to be the "rude, contemptuous, and disorderly" (48) behavior of the Quakers. Rather than stressing the death penalty imposed by the magistrates, Hale emphasizes the Quakers' seemingly malicious provocation, which forced the magistrates to execute laws which were, to the credit of the Puritans, "soon afterwards repealed" (48). Morse and Parse also find fault with the Quakers who "were not persecuted entirely for their religion, but for disturbing society. For these disturbances, in a few instances, they

were treated too severely . . . [but they were] open enemies to the government itself" (236). Thus, for these historians Quakers, like Antinomians, endanger societal harmony; their actions as "open enemies" of order counterbalance and excuse Puritan intolerance.

While projecting positive religious and civil values onto the early New-England Puritans, these early nineteenth-century historians read into Puritan actions the kinds of social ideals which later arose from the loosening of Calvinistic doctrines in early nineteenth-century America. In nineteenth-century New-England, congregationalism was still the most wide-spread religious faith. Compared to Puritan congregationalists, however, the congregationalists of the early national period were influenced by the general cultural and religious acceptance of refined social values: active Christian benevolence, moral sympathy, and especially patriotic and domestic affection defined the new view of social relationships. Snow reveals the early nineteenth-century ideal of affection when describing the Puritans' departure from England:

'They [the Puritans] were about to leave the land of their fathers' sepulchres, perhaps forever; to break asunder those cords of affection, which so powerfully bind a good man to his native soil; and to dissolve those tender associations which constitute the bliss of civil society. (24)

According to Snow, the "cords of affection" attaching humans to family and country secure the happy continuation of "civil society." He therefore links affection to disinterested patriotism and republicanism and describes social interactions as based upon these early nineteenth-century principles. Snow notes, for example, that the arrival of the Governor's wife and children "afforded the Bostonians an opportunity to exhibit their attachment to Mr. Winthrop by one of those publick demonstrations, in which they

have always delighted" (sic 41). Whereas modern critics typically think of the Puritans as gloomy, Snow's Puritan "Bostonians" are joyous and affectionate, not stern or rigid. The other New-England historians of the early national period participate in this reading of Puritan social relations. Describing the Puritans' departure from England, Adams notes their "cordial attachment to 'the mother country'" (116). One page later, she adds the rhetorical question, "did ever children leave a parents' house in a more affectionate manner?" (117). Morse and Parse describe Puritan women as "affectionate wives" (181) and the Puritan settlement as a "benevolent enterprise" (III). According to these historians, the Puritans share in the early nineteenth-century values of benevolence, sympathy, and affection, values which they believe define the morally upright person and Christian.

One Puritan personage depicted in all early American histories marvelously embodies the religious, civil, and social characteristics which early national historians of New-England wish to preserve and foster in the young Republic: John Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts. Winthrop typifies both the "devout and practical christian" (Snow 102) and the competent and benevolent guide who, by ruling the people with a sympathetic, paternal authority, promotes the happiness of his people and their colony.

Only after establishing Winthrop as the most virtuous, benevolent, and wise ruler do the early national historians of New-England turn to some of his imperfections. These resemble the imperfections they perceive in Puritan society and the historians minimize and excuse Winthrop's religious and civil flaws in the same way, as well. Snow, for example, emphasizes the republican principles underlying Winthrop's intolerant behavior:

But though condescending and gentle on every occasion of personal ill treatment, yet where the honour of government or religion and the interests of the people were concerned, he [Winthrop] was equally firm and intrepid, standing foremost in opposition to those whom he judged to be really publick enemies. (103)

While the modern reader may perceive in the rigor of Winthrop what many now generalize as the stern, inflexible Puritan, Snow beholds the governor's austerity as a sign of his disinterested endeavor to secure the happiness and harmony of the colony. Snow also emphasizes that Winthrop distinguished between personal and public interests. The governor, Snow says, used harsh measures only if the country itself was endangered. Thus Winthrop's stern rulings do not reflect an intolerant spirit but rather patriotism and commitment to others. Likewise, Morse and Parse explain Winthrop's insistence on uniform religious worship as a proof that the governor "was firm and valiant for the truths of the gospel" (215). By focusing on Winthrop's unselfish and moral intentions to preserve "the truths of the gospel," Morse and Parse undermine the seemingly illiberal means by which Winthrop attains his aim. Like Morse and Parse, both Adams and Snow mention Winthrop's coercive measures in religious matters; however, they minimize this side of Winthrop by describing the governor's spiritual conversion to the principle of religious liberty while on his death-bed.⁷ Both Snow and Adams describe Winthrop's final—and for them truly enlightened—conversion, thereby returning to their idealized depiction of Winthrop, whom they believe symbolizes benevolence, patriotism, private piety and—despite all—liberality.

⁷ See Adams 93; Snow 103-4.

In addition to praising the New-England colonists and their leader for their believing in religious freedom, civil liberty, and social affection, early national historians unanimously laud the Puritans for their industry and enterprise, both of which, they argue, enabled America's national growth and prosperity. They insist that the harshness of the American wilderness inspired the Puritans with "the habits of industry and economy" (Hale 53). While Adams is especially pleased that the Puritans brought the American soil under both cultivation and civilization, Snow goes further by pointing to the commercial expansion of the Puritans, who "soon raised provisions enough for their own support, and an overplus for exportation" (121). Hale adds to these pictures of prosperity by emphasizing the personal gains resulting from habits of industry, habits which "gave a competency to those who had nothing, and wealth to those who had a competency" (53). Clearly, emphasis on commercial and capitalistic values—on national growth and prosperity, personal wealth and power, private enterprise and trade—describe early nineteenth-century ideals of the newly arisen entrepreneurial and trading classes.

Three of these histories of the early period also elaborate upon the Pequot War, which occurred in 1637 and was fought between the Pequot Indian tribe and the English colonies in New-England. This event proves to be the only subject about which these historians significantly disagree. While Hale wholeheartedly defends the cause of the Pequots, Adams and especially Morse and Parse support the New-England Puritans with some caveats. The reasons for their disagreement lie as much in the young Republic's changing Indian policy after the War of 1812 as in early New-England historians' personal religious and political inclinations. Until 1812, the American government, faced with the irreconcilable demands of frontiersmen, on the one hand, and of Indians, on the

other hand, tried to uphold legal if not ethical standards in its conquering of Indian territory. But many early nineteenth-century Americans also perceived Indian peoples as potential threats to the young Republic. They claimed that with European and British encouragement, some Indian tribes might endanger United States hegemony. The frontier War starting in 1812 and the accompanying War of 1812 ended European interference in American territorial affairs, established the sovereignty of America over various tribes, and marked the beginning of increasingly aggressive Indian policies followed by the United States. These changes led to various Indian-American Wars and culminated in the unscrupulous tribal removals in the 1820s and 1830s.⁸ These changes in Indian policy intensified the inner conflict experienced by many early nineteenth-century Americans who, though believing in American progress, were deeply troubled by what they felt to be intolerant behavior toward native tribal peoples. Early nineteenth-century citizens of New-England, where tribes had been decimated in earlier times, could now more easily question the young Republic's aggressive Indian policy,⁹ a fact which in part accounts for Hale's defense of the Indians in his History (1826). Whatever their opinion about Indian removal, however, early nineteenth-century Americans tried to make sense of what Roy Harvey Pearce calls "westward-moving colonialism" (66).

Supported by frontier stories depicting Indians as despicable and vicious, some conservative Congregationalists at the turn of the nineteenth-century were still influenced by New-England Puritan rhetoric: most New-England Puritans considered the Indians to

⁸ See William T. Hagan, American Indians. ([Chicago] U of Chicago Press, 1961) 55 and 66.
 Roy Harvey Pearce, The Savages of America: A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization.
 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965) 55.

⁹ See Hagan 69.

be evil descendants of Cain either inspired by Satan, or used by God to chastise his people for falling away from their mission in the wilderness.¹⁰ Thus the New-England Puritans judged Puritan-Indian Wars as battles between good and evil and Puritan victories as acts of divine Providence. However, even for orthodox Christians, this explanation was not entirely satisfactory.

According to Nina Baym, the moral conflict experienced by early American citizens brought into being the "ideology of Manifest Destiny" (103). Early nineteenth-century Americans, Baym says, believed that their nation was destined to expand, to establish on the whole continent its advanced political, social, and cultural values. This progressive, melioristic reading of history further supports the ideal of America's divinely ordained social mission: civilization will take its course and replace primitive, undeveloped cultures. The uncultivated Indians therefore must eventually give way to civilization.

Besides the notions of divine Providence, progressive history, and Manifest Destiny, a fourth ideology affects the American discussion about Indian removal: the romantic presentation of the "noble savage." Confronted with the growth of cities and industrialization and with increasing social and commercial changes, the people of the newly formed United States often react by idealizing what they perceive as uncivilized, primitive people such as the Indians. Thus, early Americans praise the Indians' affinity with nature, their simplicity and, ultimately, their heroic attitude in the struggle against civilization. Both the Indian Wars and removal of the early nineteenth-century and the ideologies of the period—divine Providence, Manifest Destiny, progressive history, and

¹⁰ See Pearce 58

the noble savage—determine the description of the Pequot War in the histories written in the early national period.

Writing their History in 1804, Morse and Parse, both Congregationalists, are at first critical towards the Pequots. Describing the Pequots as "warlike" and "fierce" (123) and ignoring any fault on the part of the New-England Puritans, Morse and Parse simply note that the settlers finally decided "to repel the evil" (125). Nonetheless, when describing an actual battle, even Morse and Parse sympathize somewhat with the fate of the Indians, calling the battle "a dreadful carnage" (183) and pointing to the "groans of the dying, the shrieks of the women and children, [and] the yells of the friendly savages" (184). The "evil" Indians have now become "friendly savages" in the eyes of Morse and Parse. Furthermore, these historians acknowledge the suffering brought on the Indian tribe by the Puritans, a suffering which affects both Indian women and children. When concluding their discussion of the Pequot war, Morse and Parse no longer present the War as a battle between good and evil, but as a conflict in which "one of the most formidable [Indian] nations" (186) disappeared.

Adams in 1799 too begins by presenting the New-England Puritans as protected from Indian "malevolence" (68) by God's divine intervention. However, when focusing on the cause of the Pequot War, Adams no longer hints at the malignity of the Indians, but rather reveals their "sagacity" (69) in recognizing that they must perish because of English expansion and progress. Furthermore, when describing the battle itself, Adams underlines that the Indians were fighting principally for "their country and existence" (71) and for their civil liberty, a value she praises and sees as justifying the Pequots' aggressive attitude toward the Puritans. At the end of the chapter, therefore, Adams no

longer speaks of the Pequots' "malevolence," but praises their heroic efforts to remain independent.

In contrast to Adams, and especially to Morse and Parse, Hale writing in 1826, consistently defends the rights of the Pequots. According to Hale, the Indians were inherently good and were friendly toward the New-England Puritans. The Pequots changed their amicable behavior only after realizing that they were endangered because of the Puritans' territorial "encroachment" (43), a word which points to the acquisitive fault of the Puritans. Hale, like Adams, invokes the early nineteenth-century ideal of civil liberty to defend the Indians. According to him, as soon as the Pequots understood that they had lost their lands, "the strongest passions were awakened which can animate civilized or savage man, the love of country and of independence" (53). Hale claims that independence and patriotism are the most cherished values of any human beings, values for which all people--savage and civilized--have a right to fight.

Thus, at the turn of the nineteenth-century the Congregationalist Morse and Parse recount the Pequot War in the context of the Puritans' religious vision, adding the early nineteenth-century perception of the noble Indian doomed to vanish by civil progress. Adams oscillates between the Puritan idea of Providence and the early nineteenth-century belief in American progress, between the ideologies of the "noble savage" and Manifest Destiny. Twenty-five years later, the War of 1812 having initiated violent Indian removals on the frontier, Hale in his History reflects the attitude of many liberal New-Englanders by ignoring the Puritans' religious excuses for extermination and by presenting the Indians as noble savages who heroically fight for both their survival and their independence.

The early nineteenth-century historians I have discussed, like late twentieth-century literary critics, understand New-England Puritanism in the context of their own time. Rather than dwelling on issues of gender, hierarchy, or cultural domination—as do critics of our day—these historians concern themselves with the glorious ascendancy of the new American republic, with the ideology of melioristic history, and with the preservation of both liberty and order. They firmly believe that their nation is the most advanced and enlightened social system in the world. According to them, therefore, the American nation is foremost in the chain of progressive history. Enthusiasm and excitement regarding the new American nation colors these historians' perceptions of their Puritan ancestors. Since they believe that the Puritans laid the foundation of what had become the most enlightened republic on earth, historians of the early national period look for Puritan principles that characterize their own time.

At the same time, early national historians of New-England use their presentation of New-England Puritanism as a propaganda tool. Early nineteenth-century Americans wanted to live in what they called a free republic; however, to secure this free republic, they envisioned different degrees of individual civil and religious liberty. Early nineteenth-century conservatives, like Adams, Morse, and Parse, and to a lesser degree Snow, believed in a republic which grants civil, religious, and economic liberty through the power of established churches and in a good and disinterested but powerful government. They therefore depict seventeenth-century Puritans as adhering to these values. Hale's depiction of the New-England Puritans mirrors his own more liberal ideology of religious freedom and political egalitarianism. By investing the Puritans with somewhat different civil and religious values, these historians indicate that they wish not

only to depict the nature of the young Republic, but also to promote their personal religious and civil ideals. The historical Puritan reality is not discarded, but rather assimilated into this early nineteenth-century cultural judgment of Puritanism. For all these historians, whatever their slight ideological difference, Puritans fundamentally advocated early nineteenth-century values. At worst, the Puritans manifested some imperfections, yet these errors arose from disinterested, worthy intentions and could be traced to the even greater imperfections of other seventeenth-century cultures. Sedgwick writes her historical novel Hope Leslie in this cultural context. I will now show that Sedgwick's novel consistently reflects the views of the Puritans held by the historians who were her contemporaries.

Hope Leslie

Like the historians I have discussed in the previous chapter, Sedgwick uses her portrayal of Puritans both to discuss the essence of American character and to promulgate her political and religious values. But as a Unitarian and democrat, Sedgwick, unlike many of these historians, represents the liberal wing of early nineteenth-century religious and political ideologies, both of which she advocates in Hope Leslie through her fictional Puritans. Compared to the Puritans described in early American histories of New-England settlement, Sedgwick's fictional Puritans are therefore even more progressive in their religious, civil values. Thus the characters Sedgwick depicts, whatever their social position or gender, typically espouse her progressive understanding of Enlightenment liberalism, thereby advocating her particular reading of early nineteenth-century American ideology.

Sedgwick's favorable view of the American nation appears in her journals, her letters to both family and friends, and her autobiography dedicated to her favorite niece, Alice Sedgwick. Discussing, for example, her childhood and her first contact with immigrant Irish people, Sedgwick notes in her autobiography:

Providence has sent the starving hewers of wood and drawers of water from other lands to us to be taught in our kitchen, and to [be] borne on by the mighty wave of progress that is steadily tending onward and upward here. It is not left to our choice. Providence makes of our homes Irish school-houses! of our mothers and daughters involuntary missionaries. (Kelley, The Power of Her Sympathy 52)

Like the New-England historians discussed in the previous chapter, Sedgwick emphasizes both the present prosperous state of the new republic, which can embrace "starving"

foreign people, and the nation's increasing wealth and "onward" advance. Sedgwick's emphasis on the nation's continuous "onward and upward" development connects her to the early nineteenth-century ideology of historical progress. For Sedgwick, divine guidance not only stands behind Irish emigration, but also prompts American women to participate in the national progress by teaching the Catholic Irish the true--liberal Protestant--Christian faith underlying the nation's prosperity.

In addition, Sedgwick, like many of her contemporaries, takes pride in the independent and liberty-loving spirit which she believes specifically characterizes early nineteenth-century Americans. In 1821, for example, Sedgwick mentions in her journal that one of the Irish immigrants in Quebec told her that the people of the United States were "'free and hospitable'" (Life and Letters 130). Liberty and friendliness differentiate the American people from those of other nations. Sedgwick's autobiographical description of her family is even more striking:

The first of our Sedgwick ancestors of whom I have any tradition was Robert Sedgwick, who was sent by Oliver Cromwell as governor or commissioner . . . to the island of Jamaica.¹¹ As I am a full believer in the transmission of qualities peculiar to a race, it pleases me to recognize in 'the governor,' as we have always called him, a Puritan and an Independent, for to none other would Cromwell have given a trust so important. A love of freedom, a habit of doing their own thinking, has characterized our clan. Its men have not been trammelled by old usages, but for

¹¹ Mary Kelly adds the following footnote to Sedgwick's assertion: "Colonist, soldier, and merchant, Robert Sedgwick (c. 1613-1656) settled in New England in 1636. During the next two decades, he served as captain of Charlestown, Massachusetts, helped to organize the military company for the colony, and served as a legislator in the General Court. . . . Neither commissioner nor governor, he did head a military expedition that Oliver Cromwell dispatched to fortify . . . the Island of Jamaica."

the most part have stood on those elevations that first catch the light and command a wide horizon. (Kelley, The Power of Her Sympathy 45)

Sedgwick delights in what she believes is the self-determining and freedom-loving disposition of her "clan" and proudly connects both herself and the whole family to this Puritan ancestor Robert Sedgwick. Furthermore, Sedgwick considers Puritanism and Independence as synonymous, reflecting those qualities which constitute the autonomous power of judgment and the discerning wisdom of Robert Sedgwick and his descendants, qualities enabling them to "command a wide horizon." Like her New-England contemporaries, Sedgwick is proud of her lineal Puritan descent, underlining not the difference but the affinity between her values and those espoused by her Puritan ancestors. Throughout her autobiography, journal, and letters Sedgwick thereby reveals that she shares the cultural judgment of Puritanism specific to her time.

This cultural judgment is not only reflected in her personal writings, but also throughout her fictional historical novel Hope Leslie. Accordingly, the Puritans of Hope Leslie resemble not the people conjured by contemporary literary critics, but those described in early American histories of Puritan settlement.

At the beginning of Hope Leslie, Sedgwick introduces the reader to the corrupt world of English royalists, contrasting their cultural view with those espoused by the Puritans, who have recently begun emigrating to the new world. Sedgwick emphasizes the difference between the wordly, hierarchical ideologies of the royalists and the egalitarian and spiritual principles of the Puritans. Though the Puritans' vision of society and religion looks somewhat different when applied in practice, Sedgwick depicts these people as adhering fundamentally to ideals based on the same principles fostering early

nineteenth-century civil and religious liberty. In order to emphasize the gulf between royalist and Puritan ideology, Sedgwick has Uncle William Fletcher, a royalist through and through, attack Puritanism. In his letter to young William Fletcher's father, Uncle William writes:

But above all, brother, as you value the temporal salvation of your boy, restrain him from all confederacy, association, or even acquaintance with the puritans. If my master took counsel of me, he would ship these mad canting fools to our New-England colonies, where their tender consciences would be no more offended because, forsooth, a prelate saith his prayers in white vestments, and where they might enjoy with the savages that primitive equality, about which they make such a pother. (8)

Uncle William perceives Puritans as dangerous and "mad" people with whom every good citizen should avoid "confederacy." What makes Uncle William so suspicious is the Puritans' indignation with any form of personal constraint. He understands neither "those liberty-loving Greeks and Romans" (8), nor these Puritans whose wish for liberty he contemptuously associates with "tender consciences" and "primitive equality," two notions that indicate Sedgwick's approbation of Puritanism as a nascent form of early nineteenth-century tolerant religious and egalitarian values.

Sedgwick herself emphasizes the difference between Puritan and English ideals when interrupting her narration to reflect upon Mr. Fletcher's emigration:

Fletcher obeyed the voice of Heaven. This is no romantic fiction. Hundreds in that day resisted all that solicits earthly passions, and sacrificed all that gratifies them, to

the cause of God and of man--the cause of liberty and religion. . . . Our fathers neither had, nor expected their reward on earth. (12)

According to Sedgwick, the Puritans subject worldly comfort and material considerations to the spiritual values of religious and civil liberty. Even knowing the complete deprivation in store for them, the Puritans cross the Atlantic and devote themselves wholly to these noble principles sanctioned by "the voice of Heaven." Sedgwick thereby agrees with New-England historians of the early national period: the Puritans of Hope Leslie strive to acquire what early nineteenth-century Americans consider their own liberal religious and civil values.

Like early national historians of New-England, Sedgwick also credits the Puritans with America's political independence from England. While Sir Philip Gardiner, a royalist and Catholic, condemns the New-England magistrates of Hope Leslie for breaking their allegiance with the king, the liberal Puritan, Everell, points out that by leaving their mother country for an uncertain home in the new world, the Puritan emigrants have shaken off the constraining and oppressing "yoke" (126) of tyrannical England and thus ensured the "right" (126) of America's national independence.

Only after having presented the Puritans as espousing early nineteenth-century ideals does Sedgwick depict Puritan imperfections regarding civil and religious liberty, imperfections which echo those discussed by early New-England historians of the national period. Mr. Fletcher describes the new settlement as a "religious republic" (16), indicating that theological principles underlie the government and influence Puritan state affairs. He laments that instead of promoting individual civil liberty, those regulating the community appear to install a government that "sometimes perverted to purposes of

oppression or aggrandizement" (16). According to Fletcher's first impression, the new settlement has moved far from a government based upon civil and egalitarian principles. While Mr. Fletcher, a spokesman for Sedgwick and her values, deplores the religious form of government, Gardiner contemptuously expresses himself about what he perceives to be the harsh religious Puritan laws. Calling them "Draco laws," he reflects upon the punishment the Puritans might inflict upon him were they to discover his true identity: he might face "copping of [his] ears--imprisonment--perhaps death" (200). But this harsh statement about Puritan laws is pronounced by one of the two evil characters in Hope Leslie, and thus Gardiner's perspective on Puritanism can hardly be taken as analogous to Sedgwick's. Nonetheless, the reader learns from Gardiner about the Puritans' possible severe punitive measures. Sedgwick herself mentions at one moment in the novel that "justice was proceeding in her stern course" (119), acknowledging a certain severity in the Puritan legal system.

Most current literary critics emphasize the occasional depiction of Puritan flaws in Hope Leslie and therefore claim that the novel condemns both the Puritan magistrates' oppressive civil behavior and, implicitly, America's early nineteenth-century male-dominated civil system. But in spite of occasional comments by characters such as Mr. Fletcher and Gardiner, the reader encounters not repressive magistrates but good and wise rulers--mainly represented by the historical character, John Winthrop--who commit themselves to establishing a secure settlement. Sedgwick employs Winthrop in order to highlight an issue central to early national historians of New-England, namely the relationship of individual civil freedom to social responsibility and social order. In her novel Sedgwick problematizes this issue by depicting events which provoke conflicting

sentiments within the community and which force Puritan authorities to set priorities. Governor Winthrop makes his priority as a ruler clear when dealing with the request of both Hope and Everell to release Magawisca, the Indian heroine, from imprisonment. Winthrop's reaction towards their entreaty is in no way oppressive. On the contrary, his response is sympathetic. Thus, he admits the "noble action" (274) done by Magawisca and expresses his respect for personal and even sentimental incentives to free the Indian. However, the governor also knows that as a leader he must have other considerations. He must be aware of political implications linked to Magawisca's imprisonment: The Pequots, he tells Hope, "are accused, and I fear justly, of kindling the enmity of the tribes against us. . . . It will be difficult to make a private benefit outweigh such a public crime'" (274). Winthrop's position is clear. He is the leader of the Puritan society and must therefore place private considerations below society's common weal. T. Gregory Garvey claims that, "the patriarchs have become corrupted by the very public realm they are responsible for managing" (293). But in Sedgwick's actual narrative, the magistrates have not become "corrupted" as Garvey puts it; rather, they must judge the question of good and evil in light of their responsibility "for the public realm." If Magawisca is indeed a political enemy who can bring danger to the community, the governor must not follow his kind feelings which would let her escape from prison. Thus, in the governor's whole conversation with Hope, the reader is never confronted with a "corrupted" statesman, but with a man who tries to manage the state in a just way and who devotes himself entirely to the welfare of the colony. This noble intention binds Winthrop and most Puritan leaders as depicted in Hope Leslie to early nineteenth-century values: disinterested patriotism, melioristic social advancement, and the security of a happy state.

In contrast to this sympathetic and disinterested Puritan magistrate, Sedgwick depicts a character who plots to promote his own advancement; this character is not a Puritan but the notorious Catholic and royalist Gardiner. He is the only person described by Sedgwick as having "enlisted against Magawisca, merely to advance his own private interests" (285). These "private interests" not only reflect Gardiner's inherent selfishness and immorality but also underline the merits of the Puritans whom he hates: unlike Gardiner, they base their actions upon what benefits the community. Even Mr. Fletcher, who first laments the loss of individual liberty, recognizes the need to guarantee the survival of the "public good" (161) in situations in which individual's interests are at odds.

Sedgwick also presents characters who would constantly misuse their civil liberty if they were not prevented by the Puritan magistrates. Interestingly, these persons—Gardiner and the Chaddock Company, a crew of sailors—are not Puritans. Unlike the Puritans, such people have come to the new settlement merely for their own amusement and profit, and their lawless actions endanger each Puritan citizen. Sedgwick reminds the reader near the end of the novel that "Chaddock (whose crew had occasioned such danger and alarm to Miss Leslie) was still riding in the bay with his vessel" (317). The real threat to individual civil liberty comes not from the Puritans but from non-Puritan characters living within the community. The Catholic Gardiner too threatens the heroine's personal freedom when he plans to abduct Hope from the Puritans and to force her into marriage.¹² Because such people as Gardiner and Chaddock jeopardize the foundation of the New-England community and therefore the civil liberty of individual persons, they provoke the

¹² See Sedgwick 317.

Puritan leaders to invoke a "stern justice" that severely punishes every threat to the community.

Though the Puritans of Hope Leslie are always concerned with the public good, Sedgwick depicts most of them as pursuing, or at least supporting, the principle of personal civil liberty, thereby affirming her belief that the Puritans adhered to values that led to early nineteenth-century enlightened culture. Most current critics of the novel neglect these various liberal-minded characters—most of whom are male—insisting instead that Hope Leslie presents a uniform, inflexible civil system, a system which is questioned and actively undermined only by one woman: the novel's heroine. Yet the very first male Puritan character described by Sedgwick exemplifies all the traits of an idealized early nineteenth-century American citizen of a most liberal persuasion. Mr. Fletcher's virtues strike the reader all the more in comparison to his illiberal uncle. While Uncle William is guided by royal authority, his nephew depends on his own thinking, a trait that elevates him above his uncle both intellectually and morally. At the same time, Sedgwick points out that Mr. Fletcher's independent spirit is the source of his denying allegiance to both the king and the royal courtiers, all of whom he recognizes as worthless rulers, "idols" (9) who falsely insist on their hierarchical, spiritual, and social superiority. Instead of believing in royal authority, Mr. Fletcher firmly adheres to early nineteenth-century "principles of religious and civil liberty" (10), principles to which he remains faithful even when he must decide between them and his love for Alice, the daughter of Uncle William. Having emigrated to the new world, he continues to support the "advancement of men's happiness" (15) through religious and civil liberty. While the ministers feel they must adapt their civil ideals to the necessity of establishing a community that holds

"discordant" (15) people together, Mr. Fletcher adheres to a more liberal ideology. Yet, contrary to Christopher Castiglia's claim that Mr. Fletcher shuns "the Puritan community by moving to a village on the edge of the new colony, then to the edge of the village, and finally to the edge of Puritan morality itself" (7), Mr. Fletcher never denies the morality or authority of the Puritan community and its leaders. He remains integrated in the new settlement, maintaining a good relation with even the highest ministers and relying on them as well as on the Bible for guidance. Mr. Fletcher merely avoids taking a role of leadership in society, since as an idealist he perceives that the principles of religious and civil liberty cannot exist fully within it. Though ultimately even Mr. Fletcher must make private concessions for the benefit of the whole Puritan community, Sedgwick clearly projects unto him the civic values of an early nineteenth-century liberal.

Sedgwick's portrayal of Digby, Mr. Fletcher's servant, is especially interesting since Digby espouses a seventeenth-century equivalent of the doctrine of individual civil liberty advocated by early nineteenth-century democrats. In addition, Sedgwick invests this servant with sound judgment, thereby promulgating her belief in ordinary people's capacity for self-government. Talking to Hope, Digby mentions his thoughts about individual liberty:

Why this having our own way, is what every body likes; it's the privilege we came to this wilderness world for; and though the gentles up in town there, with the Governor at their head, hold a pretty tight rein, yet I can tell . . . 'that he came not away from the lord-bishop, to put himself under the Lord-brethren.' . . . Times are changed--there is a new spirit in the world--chains are broken--fetters are knocked

off--and the liberty set forth in the blessed world, is now felt to be every man's birth-right. (225)

Unlike the Puritans described in early American histories of Puritan settlement, Digby believes in a universal individual liberty allowing men to share equal rights. Digby also points out that many other Puritans adhere to this new ideology. Furthermore, Digby, like Mr. Fletcher, is able to perceive and acknowledge the Puritan magistrates' deviation from the principle of civil liberty. But unlike most current critics of the novel, Digby does so without condemning the Puritan rulers as inherently bad. He rather undermines his own critical statement by insisting that "fettters are knocked off" in the new colony, thereby emphasizing not the Puritan magistrates' "pretty tight rein," but the fundamental principle of individual civil liberty established in the new world. Digby's personal belief in civil liberty is emphasized when Sedgwick comments that he was "bent on having his own way" (60) and that Digby "was not more willing than a domestic of the present day, to be worked like a machine" (59). Projecting her own values onto the Puritans, Sedgwick depicts Digby's principles as identical to the egalitarian ideology she claims for servants of her time.

Sedgwick's characterization of Everell as a youth of "unconstrained freedom" indicates that, like Mr. Fletcher and Digby, he is a Puritan who depends on his own judgment. Everell has an independent spirit which allows him to question possible injustices done by his own people. Thus, he assures Magawisca that he "can honour noble deeds though done by [his] enemies, and see cruelty, though inflicted by [his] friends" (46). Though identifying himself with the Puritan community, Everell nonetheless

separates his personal affection from universal morality. As a result, he can objectively judge between nobility and "cruelty."

Many of Sedgwick's other fictional Puritans best reflect their acknowledgment of the value of individual civil freedom by allowing Hope to affirm her independence. Whereas most current critics perceive the white heroine as suppressed by a male-dominated social system and as struggling "to sustain herself as an autonomous subject" (Singley 113), the majority of Sedgwick's Puritans are conscious not only of the heroine's individual freedom but also of her power over the whole community. Writing to Everell about her desire to make a family excursion to the nearby mountains, Hope notes, "your father acquiesced (as my conscience tells me, Everell, he does too easily) in my wishes" (99). As her parenthetical remark reveals, Hope knows that her desires are usually gratified and that her guardian's general habit is one of permissiveness and indulgence. Her recurrent affirmative statements such as "now I must have my own way" (103) indicate the degree to which Hope trusts not only in her own civil independence, but also in the Puritans' general indulgence of her requests. In addition to enjoying personal freedom, Hope trusts in her ability to make other Puritan characters submit to her will. When aiming to convince Barnaby Turtle, the prison guard, to let her visit Magawisca without Winthrop's permission, Hope self-confidently orders her companion Master Cradock to be quiet and to let her "manage with Barnaby Turtle" (305). Hope is convinced that Barnaby "in his eagerness to serve her" (307) will let her into the prison without passport. Such statements show that Hope lacks neither self-esteem nor autonomy. On the contrary, she expects to convince even Barnaby, representative of the Puritan legal system, to "serve her" rather than to follow prison rules established by the

magistrates. Hope's eventual success in getting her own way not only confirms her reliance upon civil liberty, but also proves that the male Puritans of Hope Leslie are men who allow Sedgwick's Puritan heroine great personal freedom. Indeed, these male Puritans openly admit both Hope's strong will and her persuasiveness. While Barnaby exclaims, "Lord help us, child [Hope], no, there is no denying you" (308). Mr. Fletcher explicitly confirms to Hope, "you touch at will every chord in my heart" (114). Likewise, Digby tells her, "it was pure mercy you chose the right way, for you always had yours" (225). These multiple assertions of Hope's personal freedom and authority show that most of Sedgwick's Puritans, including the men, adhere to the early nineteenth-century ideal of individual civil liberty, thus exploding the perception of current literary critics that Hope Leslie depicts a uniformly oppressive male-dominated society.

Sedgwick also constantly undermines her acknowledgment of a certain severity in the Puritan legal system. Throughout her narration, she either depicts Puritan magistrates as lenient in punishing various transgressors—if there is any punishing at all—or explains why their responsibility for the public good makes them on rare occasions recur to harsh punitive measures. Before turning to Winthrop's actions against Magawisca, for example, Sedgwick digresses from her narration to explain that an Indian has told the governor about a possible tribal attack on the New-England colony, that Winthrop has received a message from Connecticut which confirms this traitor's assertion, and that the governor has thought he could prevent the attack if he were able to imprison Magawisca. At the end of this long parenthesis, Sedgwick announces, "we have been compelled to this digression, in order to explain the harsh reception and treatment of Magawisca" (249). Instead of condemning Winthrop's conduct, Sedgwick awakens the reader's

understanding of the political reality faced by the governor, a reality which makes his concern for the colony's safety both legitimate and essential. Later, Sedgwick further undermines Winthrop's severe "reception" of Magawisca by depicting him as a ruler who not only defends the interests of the New-England colony but also supports "any kindness" (264) that will alleviate Magawisca's stay in prison, thereby revealing his fundamental decency.

While Winthrop has to keep Magawisca imprisoned for state reasons, he can freely indulge in his good will when faced with a transgressor of the law who does not endanger the community. As Sedgwick points out, "whatever secret suspicions the Governor entertained in relation to Everell Fletcher, his kind feelings, and the delicate relation to which he stood to that young man, as the son of his dearest friend . . . induced him to keep them within his own bosom" (264). The governor's silence undercuts any sense of the Puritans' so-called "stern justice"; rather than blindly applying the law, Winthrop weighs punishment and indulgence. Furthermore, when Winthrop considers the feelings of his friend, he shows his compassionate nature and benevolent judgment. Though Winthrop reflects that there are magistrates who seem to confirm the existence of a severe Puritan system, these "frail men" (264) neither appear in the novel as central characters nor influence the course of events in any significant way. Sedgwick makes sure that they remain in the background, while disinterested Puritans such as Winthrop run the community.

Contrary to the perception of many current critics that the Puritans in Hope Leslie inflict a severer punishment upon women than men, the entire Puritan magistracy judges transgressors according to age, not gender, stressing that the youthfulness of people such

as Hope and Everell excuses certain of their civil offenses. While the Puritan rulers write off Hope's verbal defense of Nelema as merely "the whistle of a bird," they cannot excuse the same behavior in a grown man. Accordingly, Digby is "publicly reprov'd" (109) for disagreeing with the magistrates' procedures. Likewise, Sedgwick contrasts the punishment inflicted upon Hope to that suffered by her guardian. Though it is Hope who disobeys the orders of the Puritan magistracy, they call Mr. Fletcher to account for her behavior. Even when Hope is moved to the Winthrops', where she has occasionally to undergo admonitions voiced by the family, she suffers in no way under her situation and remains a charming, joyful, willful girl admired by everyone, the Winthrops included. When the magistrates have to decide what punishment Hope and Everell should undergo for having liberated Magawisca, these rulers again emphasize the right of youth. Thus, the fictional Puritans portrayed by Sedgwick treat Hope and Everell alike, excusing their civil disobedience on grounds of their youthfulness. Such repeatedly lenient judgment undermines what the villainous Gardiner calls the Puritan "Draco-laws."

Some light-hearted and ironic statements in Hope Leslie further explode the theory that the Puritans practice an intolerant legal system. Barnaby, for example, is hardly a person to whom harsh magistrates would entrust the safe-keeping of prisoners. Instead of "strong nerves" and "a hardy spirit" (253), he has a benevolent heart that makes him side with prisoners rather than prevent their escape. Likewise, Sedgwick's uninterrupted transition from the magistrates' merciful judgment of Mr. Cradock and Everell to their inviting these pardoned men to the "break-fast-table" (343) indicates the fundamentally untroubled, jovial relation between Puritan authority and the common

people. Rather than stern justice, Sedgwick depicts a gentle legal system, one in which mercy and humanity substitute for grave punitive measures.

Like New-England historians of the early national period, Sedgwick believes the Puritan emigration to be the best validation of their progressive civil values. Interrupting her narration, Sedgwick reminds the reader of the disinterestedness involved in the Puritan emigration. Her tone is both didactic and uplifting:

In the quiet possession of the blessings transmitted, we are, perhaps, in danger of forgetting, or underevaluating the sufferings by which they were obtained. . . . No--they [the Puritans] came not for themselves--they lived not to themselves. An exiled and suffering people, they came forth in the dignity of the chosen servants of the Lord, to open the forests to the sun-beam, and to the light of the Sun of Righteousness--to restore man--man oppressed and trampled on by his fellow; to religious and civil liberty, and equal rights . . . to bring down the hills, and make smooth the rough places, which the pride and cruelty of man had wrought on the fair creation of the Father of all. (72-3)

Similar to early national historians of New-England, Sedgwick presents England in the guise of a general, undefined tyranny prevailing over all aspects of life. According to her, both "man oppressed" and the "cruelty of man" in England leads to the Puritans' demand for universal liberty, whether religious, civil, or political. At the same time, the metaphor of England's "hills" points to an oppression not merely religious, but more general: the hilly country erected by the oppressive hierarchical social order of an entire nation, a hierarchy which the Puritans, Sedgwick argues, destroyed when settling in the new world. More than any of the historians discussed in the previous chapter, Sedgwick here

emphasizes "equal rights." Both "equal rights" and the "hill" metaphor reflect egalitarian principles advocated by early nineteenth-century democrats.

But her progressive views are the most striking when Sedgwick depicts the Puritans' religiosity in terms of her Unitarian faith. Unitarianism grew out of the Protestant movements of the early nineteenth-century, all of which tried to adapt Christianity to the ideal of individualism, the rising socio-political leitmotif of the young Republic.¹³ Opposing more traditional Congregationalism, Unitarians advocated the existence of one benevolent moral being whose mercifulness is infinite and who teaches compassion and mercy rather than damnation and punishment. Furthermore, because Unitarians believed in men's inherent goodness, they rejected religious dogmas and insisted that the individual is capable of achieving salvation through living according to the moral teachings of this "Unitarian" god.¹⁴ Since Unitarianism remained a minority movement in the New-England of 1827, the Unitarian beliefs emphasized, rather anachronistically, by many of Sedgwick's fictional Puritans indicate the propagandistic tendencies of Hope Leslie. They also indicate Sedgwick's assimilation of New-England Puritan society to her personal religious faith. In short, most of Sedgwick's Puritans act much like early nineteenth-century Unitarians!

Reading into the Puritans the tenets of early nineteenth-century Unitarian faith, Sedgwick nevertheless laments some Puritan departure from her understanding of divine principles. The contradiction between the Puritans' religious ideology and their religious

¹³ See Stephen E. Berk, Calvinism versus Democracy Timothy Dwight and the Origins of American Evangelical Orthodoxy. (Archon Books, 1974) 76.

¹⁴ See Irving H. Bartlett, The American Mind in the Mid-Nineteenth Century. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1967) 8.

intolerance is accurately stated by Magawisca, when she says to Everell that "you English tell us . . . that the book of your law is better than that written on our hearts, for ye say it teaches mercy, compassion, and forgiveness—if ye had such a law and believed it, would ye thus have treated a captive boy?" (50). Many current literary critics feel that the religious flaws of Sedgwick's Puritans reveal her negative attitude toward the "intolerant" societies established by both seventeenth-century Puritans and early nineteenth-century Americans. But Sedgwick is not criticizing seventeenth-century Puritan or early nineteenth-century American societies; rather, she is participating in the cultural perception of Puritanism specific to her time. Like her contemporaries, Sedgwick does not point to Puritan religious flaws in order to condemn her ancestors. While explaining why the Puritans had to adopt some intolerant religious values, she undermines her critical statements by constantly portraying her characters as acting or as allowing other characters to act in ways that accord with the values of early nineteenth-century Unitarianism. Sedgwick thereby emphasizes that Puritan religious misconduct is an aberration in a culture guided primarily by liberal Christian principles.

Like her New-England contemporaries, Sedgwick excuses Puritan religious flaws on the grounds that history is progressive, on what she calls history's "slow progress to perfection" (16). At the same time, by labeling the Puritans in Hope Leslie as "reformers" (16), she indicates that these people were more advanced than any other group of the seventeenth-century. Thus, rather than condemning the Puritans' bigotry and persecutory spirit, Sedgwick judges Puritan error in the context of what she believes to have been the spiritual and social values of the seventeenth-century. Seen in historical context,

Sedgwick argues, the Puritans adhered to the most enlightened values that their dark age could produce.

Though Sedgwick acknowledges Puritan intolerance, in Hope Leslie she depicts a society composed largely of virtuous and sympathetic Puritans who attempt to preserve what they perceive to be the true Christian faith. Sedgwick thereby emphasizes the good intentions of those Puritan rulers who use coercive power. Thus, while Mr. Fletcher laments that the founders of Massachusetts Bay impose "shackles" (16) like those from which they have themselves escaped, he also justifies the Puritans' controlling attitude. Because the new settlement is disturbed "by the outbreak of heresies" (16), liberty must at times be restricted. Thus, the colony is confronted with two phenomena. On the one hand, the outbreak of heresies reveals the impossibility of a "truth-based," religious republic because not all people accept the same "established truth" (16). On the other hand, the leaders of the new republic try to impose upon others ideal religious principles. Because their religious government assures what the ministers believe to be true religious values, the Puritans' intention is laudable and noble, though their means to obtain "an established truth" may be questionable.

Here Sedgwick addresses a central issue of the young Republic: the proper balance between religious freedom and social order. As a Unitarian, Sedgwick, unlike early nineteenth-century Congregationalists, advocates the primacy of personal conscience and religious freedom. At the same time, however, she, like her Unitarian contemporaries, insists on religious responsibility and approves sectarian government, thereby asserting that individual religious principles must serve the self, all humanity, and

the common good.¹⁵ In Hope Leslie, Sedgwick problematizes this conflict between religious freedom and social order by depicting various-minded characters who must work together and who must deal with situations in which personal conscience and social stability seem at odds. For the most part, her Puritan characters succeed in reconciling them.

As Mr. Fletcher points out, for example, the Puritans have to deal with sectarian conflicts which "disturb" and, thereby, threaten the foundation of an ideal community. The first dissenting radical mentioned in Hope Leslie is the famous antinomian Anne Hutchinson. She is spoken of by Mrs. Fletcher as one who "presumed to disturb the peace of God's people" (19). Though Mrs. Fletcher feels sorry for Anne Hutchinson, she nonetheless perceives this woman as endangering the new community. That is why Mrs. Fletcher supports religious uniformity rather than individual religious freedom. Since Mrs. Fletcher, however, is not as sympathetic or developed a character as her husband, the reader tends to rely on the opinion of Mr. Fletcher, who brushes Mrs. Fletcher's opinion aside, thereby indicating that he believes Mrs. Hutchinson's disturbances to be trivial and harmless. In contrast to this antinomian woman, Gorton and his people, a heterodox sect, embody a dark force, at least in the eyes of the ministers, because they openly deny Puritan authority and Puritan "sacraments" (164). No wonder then that the refuted ministers try to secure their position by using coercive power and by calling upon notions of duty and obedience to authority. Though the magistrates may have formerly preached religious liberty, they must now recognize that absolute religious freedom disturbs community.

¹⁵ See Rush Walter, The American Mind of America: 1829-1860 (New York: Columbia UP, 1975) 273.

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Even excepting people of heretical views, Sedgwick depicts a great variety of religious opinions within the Puritan community of Hope Leslie, thereby emphasizing the difficulty faced by the Puritan leaders to assure social harmony in a community composed of various-minded people. Among the leaders, for example, conflict of religious opinion is apparent when Magawisca stands trial for espionage. During this trial each magistrate judges her according to his fundamental religious belief. At one extreme is Reverend John Eliot, a man of compassion. He argues that the law of "forgiveness" (283) should rule. Eliot perceives himself as part of the holy mission to build up a godly realm in the wilderness. Because he embodies the early nineteenth-century principle of benevolent Christianity, he does not pursue this aim by applying hard laws against outsiders, but by preaching mercy. In direct contrast to Eliot, the reader meets "a man of metal to resist any fire" (293). This intolerant, orthodox character only appears during Magawisca's trial. Sedgwick never names him, calling him either "the magistrate" (87) or "a gentleman" (87/93), thus stressing not the person, but the opinion he holds. This magistrate condemns Magawisca as being in "confederacy with Satan" (293). He takes the most orthodox or reactionary position among the magistrates. His opinion, however, is an exception. Winthrop, the highest "shepherd" of the community, is described in a very positive light in this trial. In fact, his Christian compassion seems ultimately as great as Eliot's, and it dominates the trial. When, for example, the bigoted magistrate proposes Magawisca's condemnation, the governor intervenes and warns him that "as Christian men" (288) they must consider the case carefully. At another point, Sedgwick mentions that Winthrop's "voice failed him; his heart was touched with the general emotion, and he was fain to turn away to hide tears even more becoming to the man, than the magistrate" (293). In fact,

the issue of the trial lies in this distinction between the man and his function as magistrate. As leaders, the ministers must find a common working ground. They establish religious laws and values to build a unified society out of various-minded people. In order to keep unity and order, the ministers have to act according to established religious laws, even though they as men might feel differently. Governor Winthrop too must surrender personal compassion to political and social solidarity in order for these men to secure order; yet in spite of this heavy duty, his demeanor and statements show compassion.

Like New-England historians of the early national period, Sedgwick points to some less glorious religious aspects of Winthrop while still maintaining the liberality and nobility of his character. Her description of Winthrop's features is especially revealing. The vague hint regarding the governor's "religious disposition" (144) is preceded by an explicit remark that his eye, the window of the soul, expresses gentleness. Sedgwick thereby draws attention not to Winthrop's religious intolerance, but to his benevolent nature. At the same time, she describes Winthrop in terms that many modern readers might associate with the typical stern, "solemn and forbidding aspect" (144) of the Puritans. But Sedgwick focuses on what she believes is behind this so-called "forbidding aspect," praising those "private" (144) compassionate characteristics which make up Winthrop's worthiness and morality. Subsequently, Sedgwick depicts the governor's private virtues—Christian benevolence and disinterested patriotism—as constantly affecting his political rule, thereby presenting him as an exemplary public ruler.

Sedgwick returns to Winthrop's "religious disposition" (144) when she discusses the magistrates' benevolent judgment of both Everell and Master Cradock:

Throughout the whole affair, Governor Winthrop manifested those dispositions to clemency, which were so beautifully illustrated by one of the last circumstances of his life, when being, as is reported of him, upon his death-bed, Mr. Dudley pressed him to sign an order of banishment of an heterodox person, he refused, saying-- '*I have done too much of that work already.*' (343)

This very death-bed conversion is depicted in the histories of both Hannah Adams and Caleb Snow. Like these New-England historians, Sedgwick indicates Winthrop's occasional coercive measures in religion only to focus on the governor's spiritual conversion to the principle of religious liberty while on his death-bed. In fact, Sedgwick annihilates Winthrop's intolerant side by depicting the fictional governor as if he were nearly analogous to the historical Winthrop after his conversion to benevolent Christianity. Thus, not only "throughout the whole affair," but also throughout Hope Leslie, the fictional Winthrop enacts his "dispositions to clemency."

Since most current literary critics perceive Sedgwick's fictional Puritans as identical with our popular perception of Puritan orthodoxy, they point to Hope as the only white person within the Puritan community who adheres to the tolerant religious principles taught by early nineteenth-century Unitarianism. It is, of course, true that Hope is perhaps the most "enlightened" Christian character, unconditionally affirming the principles of mercy and personal conscience and thereby advocating Sedgwick's own religious faith. Sedgwick points out that Hope has been conditioned to tolerance by being the child of parents "of variant religious sentiments" (123). Hope experiences her parents observing their respective religions and unconsciously recognizes that both take their beliefs seriously. Furthermore, in the new world surrounded by her Anglican aunt, Mrs.

Grafton; her indulgent progressive Puritan guardian, Mr. Fletcher; and her even more indulgent teacher, Mr. Cradock, Hope continues to perceive these "variant religious sentiments" (123) as equally valid. She knows that the Puritans' pretension to infallibility is false. Having this knowledge, she can expand her mind beyond sectarian denominations and embrace a religion that is "pure and disinterested" (123). Hope's faith allows for no human intercessor, but links her directly to God. Recognizing this same relation to God in Magawisca's description of the Great Spirit and responding, "No, Magawisca; there is no solitude . . . to a soul that thus feels the presence of God" (332), Hope advocates a seventeenth-century equivalent of early nineteenth-century non-dogmatic Unitarianism and of Unitarian/ Universalist sentiments about the "one" God of all peoples—including Indians. This "presence of god" within herself allows Hope to judge and act according to her own conscience. It gives her a wonderful confidence in her self and a freedom from interpretations imposed by society. In several passages of Hope Leslie, Sedgwick points to Hope's freedom of conscience. When Hope frees Nelema from her prison, she acts against the letter of the law, but readers—and, significantly, most of Sedgwick's Puritan characters—know that Hope has followed the teachings of "her own heart" (120), thus adhering to a higher law, namely the law of a benevolent God which, above all, commands compassion for the innocent. When asked by Winthrop to explain her unlawful absence, Hope again points to the Christian soul as a guide far above human laws: "I have offended, I know; but I should commit a worse offence—an offence against my own conscience and heart—if I explained the cause of my absence" (175). Hope is not a girl without law, but, as Everell puts it, a girl with an "unfettered soul" (280), who is therefore able to listen to her own heart. Relying completely on her personal conscience,

Hope can act against those Puritan laws which contradict God's teaching of mercy, thereby pursuing and advocating what she believes is each person's Christian task, namely to emulate the benevolent Father whose "compassion never fails" (244).

But contrary to what current literary critics claim, Hope is not alone in following her conscience. Everell has a similar confidence in his self and in liberal, Unitarian values. When confronted with the young Puritan maiden Esther who depends entirely on scripture, Everell explains that the highest law of God is "mercy, or compassion, or justice" (278), not biblical texts. Like Hope, he believes in a benevolent father who acts directly through the self. Furthermore, Everell acknowledges that God's fundamental teaching must prevail over all, even scripture. Thus, he summons Esther to follow true Christian values, namely "mercy" and benevolent "justice." According to him, to act otherwise reveals "slavish obedience to the letter of the law" (287). The phrase "slavish obedience" indicates Everell's belief that relying upon personal conscience allows moral, Christian freedom while depending on external human law fetters the soul to blind subjection. Everell not only teaches Unitarian religious doctrines, he also acts on them. Sedgwick explicitly notes that Everell "had left no means untried to help Magawisca, either of open intercession, or clandestine effort" (280). Everell does so without the instigation of Hope. Listening to his heart, he intercedes in the name of Christian morality. When Magawisca asks Winthrop in court to decide on the spot between her liberty and her death, Everell jumps up and exclaims, "'in the name of God, liberty!'" (293). Relying as much upon his heart as does Hope, he can intervene on behalf of Magawisca, thereby following God's rule of mercy. Indeed, Hope's complete trust in Everell's unfettered soul is revealed shortly after her appearance in the novel. Lamenting

Nelema's imprisonment in her letter to Everell, she affirms, "if you were here, I am sure you would devise some way to save Nelema" (110).

Hope finds another male Puritan who is more than willing to support her plan "to save Nelema": the Fletcher's faithful servant Digby, who helps to free not only Nelema but also Magawisca. When turning to Digby's involvement in Magawisca's liberation, Sedgwick points out that this servant discards political considerations put forward by the Puritan magistrates, relying instead entirely upon his "heart." That his heart has access to God's teaching becomes clear when he pursues with other Puritan men those Indians who have captured Everell. While his fellows are inclined to return to the settlement out of fear, Digby insists they continue the search, calling it a Christian duty: "I take a known duty . . . always to be a command from the Lord" (78). Digby judges his actions in relation to his "known" duty to God, thereby following the same Unitarian belief accepted by Everell and Hope. These three characters promote two fundamental principles. First, they put God's mercy and compassion foremost. Second, because each relies completely upon the individual Christian conscience, they side actively with those who suffer injustice. But their pursuit of benevolent Christian principles is facilitated by one important factor. In contrast to the Puritan rulers, they are free of social and political responsibilities; they can follow the teaching of the heart unencumbered by social considerations.

While a number of important men among the Puritans—foremost among them Governor Winthrop and Mr. Fletcher—are very conscious of the choice they must make when they substitute the interest of community for religious liberty, Esther takes society's laws at face value. She will not help Everell because she cannot distance herself from

orthodox Puritan views. Having been taught to rely upon the magistrates, Esther links her conscience to a monolithic interpretation of Puritan laws and Puritan authority. Nonetheless, unlike Jennet, the evil Puritan servant, Esther is a fundamentally good and virtuous character. Rather than condemning Esther's rejection of support for Everell, Sedgwick emphasizes the disinterestedness behind Esther's decision. Thus, Sedgwick notes, "perhaps there is not on earth a more 'difficult duty, than for a woman to place herself in a disagreeable light before the man she truly loves. . . . But no earthly consideration could have tempted her to waver from religious duty, as that duty was interpreted by her conscience" (277). Like other "good" characters in the novel, Esther bases her actions upon what she feels preserves her moral integrity, thereby putting morality above personal satisfaction. Like Mr. Fletcher, she would sacrifice her love rather than her spiritual principles. Thus, she remains true to her disinterested though rigid Puritan values, just as Hope, Everell, and Digby act in accordance with their own sense of duty, a duty which goes beyond a narrow construction of Puritan laws. At the same time, however, Esther undermines her own adherence to authority by indirectly helping others to accomplish those merciful acts which her heart approves, but which her obedience to authority prevents. Knowing that Hope's conscience, unlike hers, would approve of joining Everell, Esther deliberately tells Hope about Everell's plan to free Magawisca, thereby assuring that he receives the help needed to succeed. Hope is aware of Esther's ultimate, though indirect, undermining of Puritan laws. Reflecting upon Esther's silence, she concludes that her friend approves of "the delightful service that her [Esther's] severe conscience would not allow her to perform" (339). Unlike current literary critics who condemn Esther's "blind" obedience to authority, Hope knows that her

friend's fundamental feelings are in accordance with her own sense of mercy and compassion.

Not only Esther, but also Barnaby Turtle, the prison guard, shares the feelings of Christian mercy; discussing his work in prison, he insists that "there's no other place it [mercy] is more wanted" (253). Barnaby's compassion and humane feelings towards his prisoners undermine intolerance and severity. His employment in prison is all the more interesting considering that Winthrop chooses him precisely because of his being a "trust worthy, and a merciful man" (253).

In dramatic contrast to the early nineteenth-century Unitarian faith embodied by Barnaby, Esther, Everell, Digby, and especially Hope, Sedgwick presents two truly immoral and intolerant characters: Sir Philip Gardiner, the Catholic villain, and Jennet, the most inflexible of all Puritans in Hope Leslie. These two characters clearly differ from most Puritans of the novel. While Gardiner embodies what Sedgwick perceives to be the worst evils of the Catholic Church, Jennet reflects the bigoted side of Puritan religious orthodoxy. Christopher Castiglia rightly describes her as one who seeks "to out Puritan the brethren" (9). Jennet has no real authority within the community, but she sticks most rigidly to religious laws. Furthermore, she does so without seeing her own prejudices and without recognizing the true reason for religious rules. Contrary to the perception of most current critics of the novel, it is this female servant, not the ministers and magistrates, who truly embodies the creed that many modern readers associate with Puritanism: she believes in a punitive God, human depravity, evil spirits, and the religious duty of merciless action against those whom she considers inherently evil. While Sedgwick sympathizes with the Puritan magistrates of Hope Leslie, who must at times

abandon the principle of religious liberty because of their responsibility for society, her attitude toward Jennet is one of contempt. By associating Jennet with "one of those persons, abounding in every class of life, whose virtues are most conspicuous in 'damning sins they are not inclined to'" (141), Sedgwick stresses neither the person nor her Puritan heritage, but the opinion she holds, an opinion which echoes a rigid and extreme Calvinist belief in both human depravity and the necessity of punishment rather than mercy, an opinion that places her in a minority of one among Sedgwick's Puritan characters.

The degree to which Sedgwick abhors such doctrines espoused by Jennet is seen in her personal letters. Writing in 1821 to her brother Charles, Sedgwick mentions with delight that his previous letter counteracts "all the writers on human depravity . . . and all the [orthodox preachers'] misanthropic sayings" (Life and Letters 90). Sedgwick revolts against religious leaders who insist on the soul's inherent sinfulness, and she rejects orthodox scaremongers who attribute evil spirits to people of different faith. Jennet exemplifies this kind of orthodox person. In contrast to Sedgwick's typically worthy and benevolent Puritan magistrates, Jennet perceives the world in terms of good and evil, advocates retribution as the highest divine law, and constantly associates all Indians with the devil. While she names Nelema a "heathen hag" who reads the "devil's book" (38), she announces that Magawisca "knows everything evil that happens on earth" (67). Jennet's condemning attitude is not limited to the Indian people. Instead of feeling sorry for Mrs. Fletcher's brutal death, she blames her mistress for taking no actions against Magawisca and adds, "I suppose it was for wise ends she [Mrs. Fletcher] was left to her blindness" (67). Not mercy but retribution defines Jennet's world view. Sedgwick

separates Jennet from the other Puritan characters, mentioning, for example, that Jennet "was mainly occupied with her own remarkable preservation, not doubting that Providence had specially interposed to save the only life utterly insignificant in any eyes but her own" (68). The reader therefore knows that Sedgwick's fictional Puritans deny any "significance" to Jennet, the symbol of religious orthodoxy, thereby underlining how the rest of the community differs from this intolerant, self-righteous person. Thus, Sedgwick directs criticism of intolerance in the novel not at a male-dominated society—past or present—but at those very few people in both Puritan and (by implication) early nineteenth-century American society—men and women—who do not live according to the dictates of benevolent Christianity. Remarkably, the Puritans of Hope Leslie—except for this evil, orthodox female Jennet—have much more in common with the tolerant religious beliefs of Sedgwick's time than with any orthodoxy of the seventeenth-century.

No wonder then that Winthrop and most Puritan magistrates allow Digby, Everell, and Hope to follow their benevolent Christian "heart," which leads them to undertakings that are in fact similar to the magistrates' personal compassionate feelings. When Hope, for example, liberates Nelema from prison, the reader learns that the liberation is approved by the responsible Mr. Pyncheon. Thus, behind "stern justice" are men who can be moved to "joy" (121) if their proclaimed justice is foiled. Winthrop's pleasure in Magawisca's flight is proven when he takes little action to catch her: "all proper (though it may be not very rigorous) measures were taken by Governor Winthrop, on the following day, to discover the retreat of the fugitives; but the secret was faithfully kept while necessary to their security" (339). The reader therefore knows with certainty that Hope, Digby, and Everell do what most of their Puritan fathers feel in their heart, but

cannot act out themselves. Even Governor Winthrop becomes a subversive element. He does not take any measures demanded by the law until he is sure that the fugitive Magawisca is already safely beyond his power.

In addition to emphasizing the benevolent Christianity of her characters, Sedgwick depicts the Puritans of Hope Leslie as adhering to the social values of moral sympathy, domestic affection, and disinterested benevolence, values which reflect early nineteenth-century ideals. Among the characters who mirror these early nineteenth-century social ideals are Mrs. Grafton, Master Cradock, Digby, Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Pyncheon, Governor Winthrop, Esther, Hope, and Everell. While Mrs. Grafton is "kind-hearted" (28), Cradock has "inward feelings" (306). While Digby has an "affectionate heart" (214), Mr. Fletcher is one of the novel's "men of genius--the men of feeling" (15). Mr. Pyncheon is "the faithful, paternal guardian of his little colony" (67), a benevolent, disinterested ruler. Governor Winthrop is known by the "rare virtue of disinterested patriotism and by . . . even and paternal goodness" (144). The younger Puritan generation also reflects the early nineteenth-century social ideals of moral sympathy, domestic affection, and disinterested benevolence. While Esther is the "kind mistress" (137) in the eyes of her servant, Everell knows her to be "pure, disinterested, humble, and devoted" (207). Hope has both a "natural" and an "involuntary sympathy" for other people. Everell reveals a "frank, intelligent, benevolent countenance" (124) and has "good feelings" (209). While these Puritan characters sympathize with each other, weep over one another's lot, and display disinterested concern for their fellow citizens, the wicked characters, Gardiner and Jennet, act both selfishly and insensitively. Except for these two characters, the Puritans

most fully depicted in Hope Leslie reflect those social characteristics most valued by early nineteenth-century Americans: benevolence, sympathy, and disinterestedness.

Within this affectionate Puritan community, Hope makes friends with Esther. Many contemporary critics of Hope Leslie have dealt severely with Esther, and they often quote Hope's first critical perception of Esther, describing her as the "perpendicular niece" of the "straight-laced Mrs. Winthrop" (114). But Hope has a different view of Esther once she knows her more intimately. Hope reveals her growing friendship with Esther when she good-humoredly reproaches her, "thou hast never hinted to the friend [Hope] of thy bosom, that thou hadst seen . . . this youth, Everell" (133). And soon Hope tells Esther, "you are the one friend that I have loved gratefully, devotedly, disinterestedly" (276). Esther expresses her friendship in terms more physical than verbal. Thus, Esther, no longer "perpendicular," "folded Hope in her arms, and pressed her fondly to her heart" (340). Whereas many current critics of the novel emphasize the difference between the two young women, Hope and Esther do not perceive such difference as an obstacle to their love. Neither does Sedgwick. She explains how these young women build a close, intimate friendship: "Hope sometimes ventured to rally Esther on her over-scrupulousness, and Miss Downing often rebuked the laughing girl's gaiety; but, however variant their dispositions, they melted into each other, like light and shade, each enhancing the beauty and effect of the other" (139). Instead of focusing on outward characteristics, Hope and Esther value each other for what they share, namely a strong belief in God and in Christian benevolence and affection. Thus, Hope praises both Esther's "fervour of devotion" and her "tenderness of friendship" (217), characteristics which point to Esther's commitment to others. Esther knows that Hope always bases her

actions on benevolent principles. Accordingly, when Hope, confronted by her guardian and the Winthrops, refuses to account for her unauthorized leave on Sabbath night, Esther defends her friend, pointing out that Hope must have been "'on some errand of kindness; for . . . she had ever observed her [Hope] to be strict in all duties and offices of mercy'" (177). Thus, these Puritan young women compliment one another's strengths. Looking beyond apparent differences, they base their friendship upon those social values which create moral integrity.

Likewise, affection and deep love characterize the relationship between Hope and her guardian Mr. Fletcher. Mr. Fletcher is anything but an oppressive Puritan father. Sedgwick emphasizes twice that Hope grew up in a most tender environment, describing her guardian's home first as "an atmosphere of favour and indulgence" (122) and then as "an atmosphere of love" (122). Interestingly, Sedgwick describes Bethel in terms identical with those she attributes to her own childhood home. As she reveals in an 1823 letter to a certain Mrs. Watson, her "home . . . has been consecrated by the spirit of love. In all the changes that have taken place here, that affection which from our tenderest years presided over us, has still softened and blessed every vicissitude" (Life and Letters 161). Like Sedgwick's home, Bethel embodies a place where love reigns and where both Everell and Hope receive that affection which allows them to overcome "every vicissitude." Hope repeatedly shows her deep attachment to both Bethel and Mr. Fletcher. As for Mr. Fletcher, his love for Hope infuses his entire being. As he points out, Hope "hath inwrought herself with every fibre of my heart" (152). His affectionate devotion to Hope recurs again and again. Thus, he "tenderly pressed her hand" (270); exclaims, "'my child! my child! my precious child (336); and responds to Winthrop "in a tone of impatience

that indicated truly that the speaker, like an over fond parent, could better endure any reproach on himself, than the slightest imputation on his favourite" (153). Throughout the novel, Mr. Fletcher is an "over-fond" guardian who loves Hope unconditionally.

Mr. Fletcher is not the only male Puritan character in the novel who admires Hope. Though current literary critics insist that Hope Leslie shows women being constrained by stern and oppressive Puritans, Hope is in fact the favorite of the whole community. Cradock is devoted to her. When Hope tells her night-time adventure to her audience, he "sat before her . . . with an expression of complacent wonder" (270). His position is one of complete admiration, and the reader is not surprised that he follows Hope's will in doing whatever she asks him. Barnaby Turtle feels similarly. He shows an unmistakable devotion to Hope in exclaiming, "ask any thing, my pretty mistress, that's in the power of Barnaby Turtle to grant" (307). Digby addresses Hope as his "sweet mistress" (225) and declares her "an angel" who "had wrought for the innocent old woman [Nelema]" (113). Winthrop's admiration, though more down-to-earth, is unmistakable. When, for example, Hope tells Winthrop that he must allow her to speak "courageously" in behalf of Magawisca, the governor suppresses a smile and admits, "there is some touch of reason in thy speech, Hope" (273). Faced with such statements, the reader can hardly wonder how Hope is able to "undermine" Puritan society. Most of its members are already on her side.

While depicting her fictional Puritans in terms of early nineteenth-century ideals of sympathy, affection, and benevolence, Sedgwick also praises them for their enterprise and industry, thereby reading Puritanism in the same way as the writers of early national histories of Puritan settlement. Sedgwick portrays the first settlers as both "industrious

men" (5) and "enterprising proprietors" (16) and depicts how the Puritans' enterprising spirit transforms the unproductive wilderness into a cultivated and civilized land yielding both prosperity and wealth. Further emphasizing the Puritans' industry, Sedgwick reveals that the Puritan establishments "were illuminated spots, clear and bright lights, set on the borders of a dark and turbulent wilderness" (5). The late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century doctrine of progressive history clearly informs Sedgwick's presentation: civilized, "illuminated spots" substitute for the dark, "turbulent wilderness." These "illuminated spots" reflect the Puritans' clearing of forest land and their bringing the wilderness under cultivation. Furthermore, Sedgwick agrees with her contemporary New-England historians who perceived that the Puritans enabled both America's national prosperity and wealth and, ultimately, the nation's influential position among the major powers. Reflecting upon the colony's increasing prosperity, Hope points to America's future wealth, rhetorically asking "what may we expect for the future . . . if now it seems strange to us, that ten years ago, the best in the colony were reduced to living upon muscles, acorns, and ground nuts" (147). Basing her views on the rapid growth which has occurred within the colony so far, Hope predicts what the reader knows has become true: affluence and wealth mark the new republic.

Sedgwick further underlines the Puritans' industry by contrasting it to what she perceives to be the unproductive life of the Indian tribes. While the industrious Puritans cultivate and enrich the soil, "the indolent Indian" receives merely a "scanty supply of maize" from "the unassisted processes of nature" (17). Clearly Sedgwick believes the Indians are poor managers of the soil, preventing the land from prospering. Based on her belief that history is progressive, Sedgwick also makes an indirect comparison between

the Indians and the Puritans when she describes the Housatonick Indians as not yet so far advanced as to incorporate the true industrious spirit that would earn them the name "agricultural tribe" (85). Sedgwick's description of the unproductive Indians indirectly glorifies Puritan industry. This industry is reflected not only in the Puritans' "thriving colony" (125), but ultimately in the wealth and economic growth of her contemporary America.

Though Sedgwick belittles the Indians in her depiction of their economic skills, she glorifies them when presenting their confrontation with the Puritans. Like three of the four early American histories discussed in the previous chapter, Hope Leslie carefully expands upon the famous Pequot War, thereby indirectly addressing the young Republic's own conflict with various Indian tribes. As discussed in the previous chapter, after the War of 1812 the young Republic adopted increasingly aggressive Indian policies, which provoked Indian-American Wars on the frontier and forced Indian tribes to move to the West. In the 1820s Sedgwick and many other liberal citizens criticize Indian removal in the name of humanity and Christian morality.¹⁶ No wonder, then, that Sedgwick in Hope Leslie, like Salma Hale in History of the United States (1826), sympathizes with the cause of the Pequots and blames the white man for the Pequot War. Unlike current literary critics, however, who perceive Sedgwick's concern about Puritan domination of Indians as an analogy of what women suffer at the hands of both Puritan and early nineteenth-century authority, Sedgwick, like her contemporary New-England historians, actually depicts the Pequot War to reflect upon a disturbing reality of her time: the young

¹⁶ For further discussion see Harry L. Watson, Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990) 109.

Republic's aggressive behavior toward Indian tribes, a behavior most early nineteenth-century New-Englanders—men and women—criticize.

As the Preface of her novel reveals, Sedgwick, like Hale, bases her defence of the Indians upon the early nineteenth-century ideal of civil liberty. According to her, the Indians cherished the values of "patriotism" (6) and individual liberty, and acknowledged them as the only principles that make life worth living. That is why the Pequots "could not submit [to the English], and live" (6) and why preferring death to enslavement reveals their heroic and "high-souled" morality rather than what seventeenth-century historical presentations of the Pequot War call their "malignant obstinacy." Depicting the Indians as fighting for their civil liberty, Sedgwick also questions the young Republic's Indian policy: how can a nation that advocates civil and religious liberty support inhumane principles when dealing with Indian tribes?

Furthermore, Sedgwick, like Hale and Adams, presents the Pequot war not as a struggle between good and evil but as a battle in which Puritan arms dominate the Indians' primitive defenses. As Magawisca tells Everell, "those fearful guns . . . [the Indians] had never heard before" (49). Everell too begins to understand the true reason for the English success, noting that not Providence but "the adventitious circumstances of arms, skill, and knowledge" (54) allow the Puritans to defeat the Pequots.

When turning to the question of Indian character, Sedgwick is somewhat ambiguous. First, she blames the English for provoking Mononoto, the father of Magawisca and chief of the Pequots, to use violence. According to Sedgwick, his aggressive behavior results from "the wrongs he received" (56), from English territorial expansion, which destroys the independence and prosperity of his tribe. But after

depicting Mononoto's good nature, Sedgwick focuses on the Indian Sassacus, who embodies the contrary of "humane virtues" (56), thereby explaining, at least in part, some English injustices inflicted upon the Pequots. As both the brother of Mononoto and the co-chieftain of the Pequot tribe, Sassacus's behavior towards the English cannot be ignored:

The ambitious spirit of . . . Sassacus, had ever aspired to dominion over the allied tribes; and immediately after the appearance of the English, the same temper was manifest in a jealousy of their encroachments. He employed all art and influence and authority to unite the tribes for the extirpation of the dangerous invaders. (56)

Sedgwick distinguishes between benevolent and heroic Indians and Indians who, like the "ambitious" Sassacus, bring "cruelties and death" (56) upon the English. Though terms such as "encroachment" and "dangerous invaders" clearly accuse the Puritans of acquisitiveness, the presence of "ambitious" Indians not only contributes to inflame war between the Pequots and the English, but also partly explains why the Puritans believed the Indian race to be treacherous. These aggressive Indians, Sedgwick argues, are not motivated by the early nineteenth-century principle of civil liberty. Rather, they resort to war because they wish "to [have] dominion over the allied tribes."

The virtuous Indians, however, clearly dominate the depiction of native tribal peoples in Hope Leslie, and Sedgwick strongly agrees with those of her contemporary New-England historians who emphasize the heroic resistance of the Pequots. Magawisca illustrates the Indians' valor when she tells Everell, "our warriors . . . fought as if each man had a hundred lives, and would give each, and all, to redeem their homes" (48-9). Considering the importance of the domestic sphere in the early national period,

Magawisca's depiction of Indian men as mainly concerned for "their homes" adds further value to their heroic defense. Magawisca projects a similar heroic attitude onto Indian women. Emphasizing how they were defenselessly exposed to the English, she notes that "all women and children [sat] in family clusters, awaiting unmoved their fate. . . . Death was dealt freely. None resisted . . . not a sound escaped, save the wailings of the dying children" (51). Through the voice of Magawisca, Sedgwick not only acknowledges the suffering brought on Indian women by the English, but also praises the women's heroic—albeit passive—resistance. Sedgwick intends such Indian heroism and suffering to underline the inhumanity of those early nineteenth-century Americans—men and women—who support Indian removal.

Sedgwick's treatment of the Pequot War, like her views of the Puritans, reveals that she shares the general cultural attitudes of her time and place. Participating in the early nineteenth-century romantic belief in the "noble savage," Sedgwick idealizes her fictional Indians, emphasizing both their natural virtues and their heroic resistance to the English. She blames the Puritans' territorial expansion for causing the Pequot war and presents their technological advantages as defeating even the most heroic Indian opposition.

But Sedgwick also agrees with those early nineteenth-century Americans who believe that the ultimate destruction of the Indians is inevitable. And like them, Sedgwick justifies the vanishing of the Indian by invoking the ideologies of progressive history and Manifest Destiny, both of which claim that civilization will spread and replace less developed cultures. According to Sedgwick, tribal culture represents one of those "dusky" (83) and uncivilized stages of social development which exists in and irretrievably belong

to the past. Sedgwick thereby denies the Indians any right to future existence: they must give way to civilization, to "reasonable instructed man" (83). But though Sedgwick believes in Manifest Destiny, she, like Hale, disapproves of the young Republic's Indian removal policy because it contradicts her moral principles. Through Magawisca, who declares to the court of magistrates, "the white man cometh—the Indian vanisheth. Can we grasp in friendship the hand raised to strike us? Nay—and it matters not whether we fall by the tempest that lays the forest low, or are cut down alone, by the stroke of the axe" (292-93), Sedgwick problematizes the morality of the ideology of Manifest Destiny. To Sedgwick and to many of her contemporaries, "it matters" how Indians are treated, even if their cultures will inevitably disappear.

I have shown the ways in which Hope Leslie replicates most views found in early national histories of Puritan settlement. Rather than focusing on late twentieth-century feminist subjects, questions on class and gender hierarchy, the novel deals with issues of civil and religious liberty, social benevolence, economic prosperity, and Indian removal, issues of overriding importance to Sedgwick's time and place. Sedgwick thereby reveals her participation and interest in early nineteenth-century social and cultural questions. Indian removal, for example, forces Sedgwick and her contemporaries to deal with a political reality that makes the young Republic look anything but civilized. Though Sedgwick and her contemporaries believe in what they call enlightened civil and religious values, these values are not fixed. That is why Sedgwick and early national historians of New-England discuss and define their ideas about a free republic. Though there is broad ideological agreement among the historians I have discussed and, in turn, between Sedgwick and these historians, she represents a relatively liberal position among her

peers, espousing Unitarian and egalitarian principles. Sedgwick projects onto the Puritans of Hope Leslie these progressive ideals: most of her characters adhere to individual civil liberty, religious freedom, benevolent Christianity, social affection, and national prosperity. Thus, Sedgwick's fictionalized Puritans seldom display those intolerant and stern attitudes with which most modern readers associate the seventeenth-century historical Puritans. Instead, the Puritans of Hope Leslie mirror the virtuous people cherished by New-England historians of the early national period. This similarity between Sedgwick's fictional Puritans and those depicted by early American histories is central in understanding the cultural meaning of Hope Leslie.

Since Sedgwick's view of the Puritans is generally consistent with that of her contemporary New-England historians--women and men--her intention in writing about the Puritan settlement must be different from the one ascribed to her by most current critics of Hope Leslie. Rather than writing as a social revolutionary who condemns both Puritan and early nineteenth-century society, Sedgwick shares in the general enthusiasm and pride of her age regarding the new American republic, perceiving it as the most advanced nation on earth, one in which citizens enjoy civil and religious liberty and in which patriotic, disinterested republicans guide the nation. Likewise, Sedgwick transfers her approbation of contemporary America to her view of her Puritan ancestors, emphasizing their moral and social excellence and projecting onto them those liberal values in which she and her contemporaries take pride. Working within a broad nineteenth-century ideological framework, Sedgwick and early national historians of New-England present the Puritans in terms that match their personal religious and civil beliefs. As such, both Hope Leslie and early American histories of Puritan settlement have

propaganda value. Sedgwick in her novel invites the reader to look at the world in the way her most positive characters look at the world. The "good" characters--foremost Digby, Everell, and Hope, but also Winthrop, Mr. Fletcher, and a host of powerful Puritans--are models of religious, civil, and social principles which, if pursued by early nineteenth-century Americans, will lead the young Republic to moral and cultural goodness and to the state of a truly "free" nation.

Conclusion

My interest in the study of history and my master's degree in history help to explain my affection for historical novels and my desire to understand them within their historical, ideological context. It was in an American Literature seminar--The American Novel, 1790-1851--that I first read Hope Leslie. The novel fascinated me not only because of its historical content but also because of its engaging story full of adventure, misfortune, love, affection, and--I admit--sentimentalism. At the same time, I was intrigued by Sedgwick's positive depiction of the Puritans, a depiction which runs counter to today's popular conception of Puritanism. Most of Sedgwick's fictionalized Puritans excel in kindness and support Christian benevolence. To get a better understanding of the novel, I turned to modern criticism on Hope Leslie. To my surprise, most modern critics described the Puritans in the novel in terms of the popular modern view that they were dogmatic and inflexible. In addition, they analyzed the novel and Hope based on late twentieth-century feminist issues, which did not strike me as relevant when reading Hope Leslie. For these critics, Hope exemplifies the struggle of current feminists in their fight against an oppressive, male-oriented society to assert her--and, implicitly, women's--rights. This rather uniform critical reading of Hope Leslie excited my curiosity and my suspicion. Undertaking further readings about Sedgwick and early nineteenth-century America, I soon turned to histories of that time in order to understand how Sedgwick's contemporaries treated their Puritan past. The similarity between these early American histories of Puritan settlement and Hope Leslie was striking and confirmed my impression that Sedgwick's depiction of the Puritans does not mirror our popular view of Puritanism. Like the Puritans of Hope Leslie, those depicted in early American histories are an

affectionate people who, though not without flaws, espouse progressive religious, social, civil values. By then, I also knew that these progressive values ascribed to the Puritans match the cultural ideals of many early nineteenth-century Americans.

This affinity between Puritan and early nineteenth-century ideologies provides a crucial explanation for New-England historians'—and Sedgwick's—positive description of the Puritans. Eager to participate in the glorification of the new republic and in tracing its happy foundation and development, early New-England historians focus on certain aspects of Puritan culture that can be seen as harbingers of their own. Accordingly, these New-England historians emphasize Puritan values which they believe match their own principles, thereby creating a positive, sympathetic depiction of the Puritans. Espousing the cultural values and interests of her time, Sedgwick shares not only her contemporaries' pride in the current happy nation, but also their positive perception of Puritanism. In addition, Sedgwick uses her depiction of Puritanism—as do her contemporary New-England historians—to promote those values which she wants to have preserved in the young Republic. No wonder, then, that the reader is confronted throughout Hope Leslie with a community composed of virtuous and sympathetic Puritans who advocate late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century cultural notions such as humane Christianity, egalitarian principles, industry, and social kindness. No wonder, then, that Sedgwick's dealing with the Puritan settlement in Massachusetts reflects not some subversive feminist intentions, but the new republic's interest in the writing of history and in the American past. As discussed in my previous chapters, both Sedgwick and her contemporary New-England historians do not deny Puritan flaws; rather, they treat these flaws like a fond mother treats her child's occasional misbehavior, i.e.,

acknowledging some Puritan flaws does not diminish early nineteenth-century Americans' affection for their ancestors. On the contrary, believing in the Puritans' inherent excellence, Sedgwick and her contemporaries look for explanations to excuse Puritan error. In addition, they do not dwell on negative Puritan aspects, but focus on those characteristics which they believe prove the Puritans' pure and over-powering virtues.

While Sedgwick and her contemporary New-Englanders have patriotic and didactic reasons for their sympathetic depiction of Puritanism, most modern critics read Hope Leslie in the context of late twentieth-century concerns about women's rights (and, more broadly, oppression), on the one hand, and our unfavorable perception of Puritanism, on the other hand. As a result, these critics focus on what Sedgwick considers Puritan flaws. Projecting onto these flaws the popular negative connotations associated with Puritanism and judging the text in the light of feminist and neo-marxist values, most modern critics believe the Puritans in Hope Leslie to be intolerant and misogynistic. Because Hope questions and undermines what they perceive as an oppressive Puritan community, the heroine is celebrated as an early feminist who defends women's rights and defies male-dominated, inhumane laws and values imposed by her community. But this is not the text written by Sedgwick, or at least the one she thought she had written.

My study of history has shown me how difficult it is to overcome the tendency to project the values, concerns, and needs of one's own time onto another. So-called "historical truths" change over time, depending on the criteria with which each culture chooses to judge these truths. Likewise, the evaluation of a literary work like Hope Leslie must change over time, depending again on the criteria with which critics choose to judge

the work. Strikingly, the degree to which Sedgwick's depiction of the Puritans depends on the cultural values of her time reflects the degree to which most current critics' reading of the novel depends on the cultural values of their time.

However different my reading of Hope Leslie may be, I wholeheartedly agree with current critics that the novel has earned a place in literary history. Hope Leslie not only reflects the zeitgeist of Sedgwick's time, but also, as its wide-spread acclaim by early nineteenth-century Americans indicates, contributes to the development of a literature which is typically American. In addition to its historical importance, however, I believe that Hope Leslie as a literary work has intrinsic value. Cultural ideals may have changed in the course of the last 170 years, but the novel's depiction of characters who live in a fundamentally warm-hearted world, who assert moral integrity and social harmony, who suffer strokes of fate, and who find love and affection can captivate the imaginations and win the hearts of early nineteenth-century and modern readers alike.

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