

# Under the Government of Sympathy: Sentimental History in Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*

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## Summary

There has been an ongoing debate about the meaning and significance of sympathy in nineteenth-century American literary culture, about its role in the public sphere and its function in the reproduction of social relations. Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827) is set in the aftermath of the 1637 genocidal war between the Puritan colony in Massachusetts and the Pequots. In this study I explore how a frontier romance raises questions about the role of sympathy in the narration of traumatic histories. I argue that Sedgwick seeks to find in the rhetoric of sympathy a means of imagining a reconciliation between the Puritans and the Pequots, and then also of reconfiguring the relation between the United States and the American Indian in antebellum America. At the same time her text self-reflexively interrogates the efficacy of sympathetic strategies to reconcile these communities. *Hope Leslie* emerges from this as a text that examines the curative potential of sympathy in the public sphere.

## Opsomming

Die belang en betekenis van meegevoel in die negentiende-eeuse Amerikaanse literêre kultuur is die onderwerp van 'n voortdurende debat. Oor die rol van meegevoel in die publieke sfeer asook die funksie daarvan in die handhawing van sosiale verhoudings bestaan meningsverskil. Catharine Maria Sedgwick se *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827) handel oor 'n liefdesverhouding ná die bloedige oorlog van 1637 tussen die Puriteinse Kolonie in Massachusetts en 'n Indiaanse stam, die Pequots. In hierdie artikel verken ek hoe hierdie teks aanleiding gee tot vrae oor die rol van meegevoel in die vertelling van traumatiese geskiedenis. Ek voer aan dat Sedgwick deur simpatieretoriek poog om haar voor te stel dat versoening tussen die Puriteine en die Pequots moontlik is. Sy poog ook om die vooroorlogse betrekkinge tussen die Verenigde State en die Amerikaanse Indiane deur simpatieretoriek te hervorm. Terselfdertyd besin die teks oor die bydrae wat simpatiestrategieë tot versoening tussen hierdie gemeenskappe lewer. *Hope Leslie* wys in hierdie studie sy waarde as 'n teks wat die helende uitwerking van meegevoel in die publieke sfeer ondersoek.

May 19, 1836. Sir James Mackintosh has an admirable argument for fictitious writing which all who have dabbled in it should cherish: "Fictitious narrative, in all its forms, epic, poem, tale, tragedy, romance, novel, is one of the great instruments employed in the moral education of mankind, because it is only delightful when it interests, and to interest is to excite sympathy for the heroes of fiction – that is, in other words, to teach men the habit of feeling for each other." (Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Life and Letters of Catharine M. Sedgwick*, 1872: 254)

Catharine Sedgwick must have experienced a jolt of recognition when she jotted down in her journal these words by the celebrated Scottish jurist and historian, James Mackintosh. Sympathy is an essential component in her works. Her first, the domestic novel *A New-England Tale* (1822), declares "there can be no enduring love without sympathy" (1852: 189), and mounts a critique against "Calvin's gloomy interpretation of Scripture" (1872: 193) by arguing for tolerance and humanity's potential for moral development. Sedgwick's second novel, *Redwood* (1824), leaves little doubt that sympathy activates the affective attachments linking the classes and regional cultures of the early American republic. These novels anticipate *Hope Leslie* (1827), not only in their preoccupation with how sympathetic modes of relation – biological, emotional, or psychological – regulate personal relationships, but how sympathy operates within the public sphere, where it enables different forms of communal and cross-cultural relationships. At the same time, this novel – a frontier romance set during the aftermath of the 1637 genocidal war of the Puritans against the Pequots – explores the efficacy of sympathy as a means of mending political and historical wrongs and wounds.<sup>1</sup> In part, Sedgwick seeks to make the Pequots sympathetic by endowing them with "elements of virtue and intellect" (1998: 4) denied them in previous accounts of the war, and to reconcile the Puritan colony and the Pequots through the affective bonds linking these communities.<sup>2</sup> She seeks as well to interrogate Puritan historiography and

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1. During the nineteenth century, "Pequods" was the favoured spelling of the name of this American Indian nation.
  2. Cotton Mather, for example, describes the Pequots as a nation "of wretches, whose whole *religion* was the most explicit sort of *devil-worship*" (1820: 479-480). Sedgwick's attempt to mend relations between the Puritans and the Pequots suggests that *Hope Leslie* is an early example of the political use of sympathy to reconfigure the national community that Jane Tompkins (1986: 135), amongst others, attributes to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.



colonial practices. But by the 1820s, when *Hope Leslie* was written, few American Indians were left in the southern and eastern parts of New England where the Pequots resided. Three years after the novel's publication Andrew Jackson would sign the Indian Removal Act. Writing about the Pequot massacre within this context, and drawing typological associations between John Winthrop's Puritan colony and Jacksonian America, Sedgwick is apprehensive about the conciliatory potential of "feeling for each other". *Hope Leslie* exposes a crisis in nineteenth-century notions of sympathy in which the reconciliatory possibilities of sympathy are articulated together with a history of wounds questioning these prospects.

Responding sympathetically to the plight of others is an act fundamental to *Hope Leslie*: it produces many of the novel's events and allows Sedgwick to position those characters with a capacity for sympathy against authorities, frequently patriarchal, whose actions are unconstrained by sympathetic feelings.<sup>3</sup> In fact, in the sympathetic economy of the novel, acts of compassion are repaid in kind. This economy links together characters in a network transcending colonial or national affiliations and resembling Sedgwick's description of "a chain ... that encompassed all the faithful, from the bright spirits that wait around the throne of heaven, to the lowliest that walk upon the earth" (1998: 338). The initial link in this chain is forged when the children of the Pequot chief Mononotto, Magawisca and her brother Oneco, are adopted by the Fletcher family at the behest of John Winthrop. With their mother dead after her captivity in Boston, the family treats the children compassionately. Later on, we are told that Mononotto's wife sheltered two English girls and returned them to their community (1998: 58). But when Mononotto reclaims his children, the Fletcher family is decimated. As a result, Everell Fletcher faces execution in retribution for the death of Mononotto's eldest son at Mystic, Connecticut where Puritan militia attacked a defenceless Pequot settlement, slaughtering nearly everybody. Disobeying her father, Magawisca intervenes in the execution and sacrifices an arm to save Everell's life. Years later, Magawisca attempts to reunite Hope Leslie, the other heroine of the novel, with her sister Faith, who, spirited away by the Pequots as a child, has married into their community. She does so after Hope Leslie helps the old Pequot Nelema escape execution following accusations of witchcraft. Magawisca is captured by the Puritan settlement and this time Everell, together with Hope, comes to her rescue. This binds them together and leads to their marriage. Sedgwick describes this binding by linking it to their shared sympathy for Magawisca: "They breathed their silent prayers for her ...

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3. cf. Philip Gould's *Covenant and Republic: Historical Romance and the Politics of Puritanism* (1996: 91-133) for an account of how Sedgwick's novel negotiates prevailing notions regarding republican virtue and manhood.



there was a consciousness of perfect unity of feeling, a joy in the sympathy that was consecrated by its object” (1998: 354). But affective connections bind together more characters than Hope and Everell; the sympathetic relations produced in the novel also link Magawisca, Nelema, and the other members of the Fletcher family. Sedgwick, as I will show, draws upon discourses of sympathy to reimagine the ways whereby disparate selves and cultures coexist.

Here, then, lies the intersection between Sedgwick’s novel and discourses regarding sympathy in early-nineteenth-century America. The term sympathy has long served to designate not only feelings of sentiment or compassion, but also of connection and identification. As Daniel Wickberg clarifies, even before it came to name a process of identification or a sharing of feelings, sympathy referred to “a way of being that unified mind, body, society, and nature into an integrated pattern” (2007: 144). In this scheme, sympathy does not depend on the individual or consciousness; it refers to unifying structures and correspondences immanent to the world.<sup>4</sup> During the early republican period, however, sympathy is increasingly internalised as the power whereby one identifies with somebody else. Sympathy, as Elizabeth Barnes puts it, “proves a mediated experience in which selves come to be constituted in relation to – or relating to – other imagined selves, while those other selves are simultaneously created through the projection of one’s own sympathy” (1997: 5). Understood as a mediatory form of identification, sympathy provided one of the means whereby the early republic reimaged itself as a coherent national community.<sup>5</sup> This mode of sympathetic identification, sourced from works such as Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, formed the groundwork for nineteenth-century notions of sympathy, which saw it sentimentalised as an emotional response to suffering, and, correspondingly, identified with the domestic sphere. This relocation of sympathy from the public sphere to the domestic did not strip it of its political efficacy, but rather brought public and private spheres closer together. As Lauren Berlant argues, the rhetoric of sentimentalised sympathy, prominent in texts such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, “gains its authority not in the political domain, but near it, against it, and above it: sentimental culture entails a proximate alternative community of individuals

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4. cf. Michel Foucault’s discussion in *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* of sympathy as a form of resemblance. He notes that sympathy “excites the things of the world to movement and can draw even the most distant of them together .... [I]t attracts what is heavy to the heaviness of the earth, what is light up towards the weightless ether” (2002: 26).
  5. cf. Julia Stern’s *The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel* (2008) for an account of the role of sympathy in the imagining of the early republican community.



sanctified by recognising the authority of true feeling – authentic, virtuous, compassionate – at the core of a just world” (2008: 34-35). In some respects, though, Berlant is restating claims made for sympathy by the Unitarian minister and abolitionist William Ellery Channing, an acquaintance of Sedgwick’s, about whom she writes that “it would be impossible to live within the sphere of Mr. Channing’s influence without being in some degree spiritualized by it” (1872: 181-182).<sup>6</sup> In his *Emancipation*, Channing argues as follows:

What, let me ask, is woman’s work? It is to be a minister of Christian love. It is to sympathize with human misery. It is to breathe sympathy into man’s heart. It is to keep alive in society some feeling of human brotherhood. This is her mission on earth. Woman’s sphere, I am told, is home. And why is home instituted? Why are domestic relations ordained? These relations are for a day; they cease at the grave. And what is their great end? To nourish a love which will endure forever, – to awaken universal sympathy. Our ties to our parents are to bind us to the Universal Parent; our fraternal bonds to help us to see in all men our brethren. Home is to be a nursery of Christians; and what is the end of Christianity but to awaken in all souls the principles of universal justice and universal charity? At home we are to learn to love our neighbor, our enemy, the stranger, the poor, the oppressed. If home do not train us to this, then it is woefully perverted.

(Channing 1841: 45)

For Channing, a more just and ethical community emerges from the reawakening of sympathetic attachments between people within the domestic sphere, which becomes central to his vision of a reconstituted nation. His account of sympathy is instructive since it makes it clear that sympathy can be understood as a form of governmentality in the Foucauldian sense. That is to say, it both constitutes a commonality mimetically doubling vertical and horizontal family relations, whilst producing subjectivities for whom interiority and compassion (or virtue) are identical. Fulfilling a totalising and individuating role, sympathy combines, in Channing’s account, the task assigned to it in the early republic, to enable disparate selves to identify with one another, with the affective role attributed to it within nineteenth-century sentimental culture.

I have spent some time discussing the changing, multiple roles of sympathy in the early republic and nineteenth-century America since it appears that *Hope Leslie* occupies a point in this itinerary where it, like Channing’s account, invests in sympathy as a relational mode determining both selves and the community they inhabit. Within the novel, Magawisca, Hope, and Everell form the metonymic sketch of a community irreducible to but overlapping with the Puritan colony and the Pequots. Like Channing,

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6. Following the example of her brothers, Sedgwick converted to Unitarianism during the 1820s.



Sedgwick frequently turns to the rhetoric of the family to figure this grouping. As Judith Fetterley has pointed out, “Sedgwick carefully positions Everell as Hope’s brother” (1998: 498), while Everell also addresses Magawisca as if she were his sister: “And why not now, Magawisca, regard me as your brother?” (p. 349), he asks, reminding the reader that when Magawisca saved his life, he “pressed her to his heart, as he would a sister” (p. 97). According to the logic of filial attachment, these relations make Hope Magawisca’s sister as well. Thus, as Sandra Zagarell observes, Sedgwick carefully constructs the relation of Hope and Magawisca as that of “metaphoric sisters. Their first meeting takes place in the Boston cemetery in which their mothers are buried .... [They] share a symbolic Puritan father, ... and they are literal sisters-in-law” (1987: 237-238); she might well have added that both of them are also Everell’s metaphoric sisters. In this network, filial attachments are not restricted to the domain of the family proper, but weave together a different kind of family altogether, one formed by ties of sympathy rather than blood and heritage.<sup>7</sup>

The importance of sympathy to this filial arrangement becomes apparent early on in the crucial fourth chapter of *Hope Leslie*, where Magawisca narrates to Everell the history of the massacre at Mystic, Connecticut, which she witnessed. His response to her testimony is to “express to Magawisca, with all of the eloquence of a heated imagination, his sympathy and admiration of her heroic and suffering people” (Sedgwick 1998: 56). Everell’s emotional sympathy is important to this exchange, but so is his imaginative capacity to momentarily share her feelings and view her Pequot tribe in the same manner as she does. Yet, by investing narrative authority in Magawisca and making Everell her captive audience, “unconsciously lending all his interest to the party of the narrator” (p. 50), Sedgwick duplicates in this scene the relation between a sympathetic reader and a text. That is to say, Everell functions as a stand-in for the reader, while Magawisca’s narrative voice blurs into that of the novel. The effect of this arrangement is that Magawisca’s narration of the massacre appeals not only to Everell’s sympathy but also to that of Sedgwick’s nineteenth-century readership, which included audiences in New England and New York, as well as international readerships.<sup>8</sup> The significance of this transposition

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7. Cindy Weinstein has argued that sentimental literature imagines the body politic as being formed by the breakdown of family ties based on traditional notions of blood relations and consanguinity, and the subsequent formation of families based on choice and contractual relations (2006: 18). While she does not address *Hope Leslie*, I would argue that the same argument is applicable to this novel.

8. In France and England, Sedgwick’s novels were often mistaken for those of James Fenimore Cooper, suggesting that they were read by the same audience.



becomes clear when we consider Sedgwick's revision of historical records in her narration of the massacre. In colonial and American histories, this massacre was depicted as Puritan vengeance for the murders of the English traders John Stone, John Norton, and John Oldham.<sup>9</sup> Sedgwick, however, suggests that these killings took place *after* the massacre at Mystic, thereby reframing them as reprisals on the part of the Pequots. One of the effects of this transposition is that the fate of the Pequots at Mystic and the actions of the survivors are made more sympathetic to Sedgwick's readership. Moreover, Sedgwick is asking her readers to treat official histories with suspicion, and to consider alternative possibilities that would cast a different, less complimentary light on Puritan history – a history enshrined during the antebellum period as a direct precursor to the American Revolution. Again, Everell is used to model this mode of engagement for Sedgwick's audience:

In the relations of their enemies, the courage of the Pequods was distorted into ferocity, and their fortitude in their last extremity thus set forth: "many were killed in the swamp, like sullen dogs, that would rather, in their self-willedness and madness, sit still to be shot or cut in pieces, than receive their lives for asking at the hands of those into whose power they had now fallen." Everell's imagination, touched by the wand of feeling, presented a very different picture of those defenceless families of savages, pent in the recesses of their native forests, and there exterminated, not by superior natural force, but by the adventitious circumstances of arms, skill, and knowledge, from that offered by those who, "then living and worthy of credit, did affirm, that in the morning, entering into the swamp, they saw several heaps of them (the Pequods) sitting close together, upon whom they discharged their pieces, laden with ten or twelve pistol bullets at a time, putting the muzzles of their pieces under the boughs within a few yards of them."

(Sedgwick 1998: 56)

Moving freely between extracts from Hubbard's account of the war against the Pequots and Everell's sympathetic reconstruction of the fate of the remaining Pequots, Sedgwick anachronistically juxtaposes a sympathetic consciousness familiar to us from nineteenth-century discourse to a colonial history bereft of sympathy.

Dana Nelson, however, has suggested that Sedgwick retreats from this "sympathetic construction of the racial Other" (1992: 73) in the very next chapter of *Hope Leslie*, where the novel's retrospective narrator reminds "our readers" that the Puritan colonists were an "exiled and suffering people" struggling in the wilderness to restore mankind's "religious and

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9. cf. William Hubbard's *A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New-England, from the First Planting Thereof in the Year 1607, to the Year 1677* (1803: 16-23). *Hope Leslie* pointedly refuses the possibility of a relationship with Hubbard when John Winthrop advances this idea.



civil liberty, and equal rights” (1998: 75) – a description that directly conflates the Puritans with the revolutionary generation.<sup>10</sup> For Nelson, this description supplants Everell’s horror at the actions of the Puritan militia, and marks a moment in the text where Sedgwick acquiesces to contemporaneous accounts of the Puritan colonists. This may very well be the case, but it is equally possible to argue that Sedgwick is inculcating in her readers a sympathetic yet critical mode of reading. In her instruction book for young women, *Means and Ends, or Self-Training*, she instructs her readers: “When you read, do not *take for granted* .... Pause in your reading, reflect, compare what the writer tells you with what you have learned from other sources on the subject, and above all, use your own judgment independently” (Sedgwick 1839: 249). The narrative offered in *Hope Leslie* asks for exactly such acts of discrimination, in which canonical and contemporaneous histories are not taken at face value but parsed critically even while the possibility is kept open that a more sympathetic account of historical events and their actors can be reconstructed by Puritan women and their antebellum counterparts.

Sympathy, then, operates on two axes in *Hope Leslie*. It informs the relations between characters, whilst also having a temporal dimension. To juxtapose sympathetic and official accounts of events is to create the conditions for a contemporary readership to enter into an affective relation to past events, and empathise with the fate of the Pequots. Dominick LaCapra has asked whether “historiography in its own way may help not speciously to heal but to come to terms with the wounds and scars of the past” (2001: 42). Such rapprochements, he suggests, would come from allowing affect and empathy (a term he substitutes for sympathy) into the process of history writing, which would politicise historiography and counteract its numbing objectivity. The densely layered historical palimpsest Sedgwick creates suggests that she might very well have intended a longer, sympathetic history of the American Indian than her focus on the killings at Mystic suggests. Clearly the fate of Faith, Hope’s sister, parallels that of Eunice Williams – a distant relative of Sedgwick’s. Faith is taken captive together with Everell, enters into marriage with Magawisca’s brother and ultimately refuses to return to the Puritan colony. In 1704, in Deerfield, Massachusetts, a French-Indian war party attacked the home of Reverend John Williams, killing his wife and two of his children, while taking him and his remaining

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10. For a similar reconstruction of the Puritans as being linked typologically to the revolutionary period see Daniel Webster’s *A Discourse Delivered at Plymouth, December 22, 1820*, in which he speaks of “principles of civil and religious liberty” (1821: 10) as an inheritance bequeathed to antebellum America by the Puritan colonists.



children captive.<sup>11</sup> The seven-year-old Eunice Williams would later adopt American Indian ways and marry François Xavier Arosen, a Kahnawake Mohawk. The narrative of the killing of members of the Fletcher family and Faith's marriage introduces these events from 1702 into the early-seventeenth-century time frame of the novel, and, by extension, explains them as part of the Pequots' reprisals against the Puritan colony. Furthermore, Magawisca risks her life to save Everell on a mountain in the area where the town of Stockbridge would later be established. Stockbridge would become the site of an Indian mission from where the Stockbridge Indians would rally in support of the American Revolution. The first removal of the Stockbridge Indians to New York State took place in 1784; members of the tribe moved to Indiana in 1818, then moved again in 1821 to Wisconsin where they were joined between 1822 and 1829 by the New York members of the tribe. Much of the Stockbridge land would fall into the hands of the Williams and Dwight families, distant relatives of Sedgwick's family, and finally into the hands of the Sedgwicks themselves.<sup>12</sup> This then is the site where Magawisca shields Everell's body with her own from her father's tomahawk, creating a scene that overtly associates her with the figure of Pocahontas and Everell with John Smith, as many a nineteenth-century reader would have recognised.<sup>13</sup> Pocahontas emerges unscathed though, while "the stroke aimed at Everell's neck, severed his defender's arm" (Sedgwick 1998: 97).

What is clear then is that Sedgwick creates a historical palimpsest in which American Indian history, partially filtered here through her own family's history, is reconfigured as what Anthony Bogues describes as a history of "repeatable wounds" (2010: 41). For Bogues, racial slavery "was ... a layered traumatic event that created the ground and opened up the space for another series of traumatic events that made history a catastrophe, thereby creating a social wound" (p. 43). American Indian history is similarly catastrophic for Sedgwick, and made up out of bodily and social wounds. Against this history, she seeks to imagine a different one in which

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11. cf. John Williams's *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* (1853), for an account of the attack and the removal of him and his children.
  12. For more on the Stockbridge Indians, and their connection to the Sedgwick family, see Karen Woods Weierman's "Reading and Writing *Hope Leslie*: Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Indian 'Connections'" (2002).
  13. cf. Robert Tilton's *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative* (1994) about the uses of the Pocahontas legend in nineteenth-century America. His work includes a brief discussion of *Hope Leslie* (1994: 77-81). According to the Pocahontas legend, based on a revisionary account offered by John Smith himself, the young Pocahontas saves Smith's life by shielding his body with her own.



sympathy, rather than trauma, provides the frame whereby events and characters are understood. Her reimagining of Pocahontas's legend is exemplary of this urge to reimagine the historical archive, even as it points towards the complexity of, and tension within, such an undertaking. The sympathetic bond between Everell and Magawisca drives her to intervene in his execution. As she puts it, "I have bought his life with my own" (Sedgwick 1998: 97). The wound she suffers serves to confirm the link between him and her. Yet, because it invokes the Pocahontas legend, it also speaks of a history of betrayal, colonialism, and violence, frequently covered over exactly through the invocation of such tales as the one about Pocahontas and John Smith. Furthermore, she does indeed exchange herself for Everell. He is free to return to the Puritan community; while she returns to her father, wounded, and when we see her again she speaks and acts for her father and the remaining Pequots. The possibility of a romance between her and Everell gestured to earlier in the novel has vanished, with her firmly declaring "the Indian and the white man can no more mingle" (p. 349); their shared history has been coloured by too much betrayal and vengeance. The bond between her and Everell is then confirmed and severed simultaneously when she saves his life.

Two overlapping narratives regarding sympathy emerge from the scene where Magawisca saves Everell's life. The first suggests that sympathy creates bonds across the divide between the Puritans and the Pequots that are strong enough to counter parental, or any other, authorities. It is in this spirit, then, that Everell and Hope will disobey John Winthrop to save Magawisca from captivity. The other suggests that bonds of sympathy stand in an uncertain relationship to a public sphere constituted by violence and trauma. Traumas, such as Mononotto's loss of a son and Magawisca's, disassociate action and affect, separating out the affective sphere of sympathy and the public world of politics and violence. This separation is made visible again in the novel when it becomes clear that the Puritan leaders will not allow their private sympathies to interfere with Magawisca's trial. It might very well be the case that *Hope Leslie* is exactly about the disjointed, perhaps severed, relationship between sympathy and what I have described here as a catastrophic history made up out of repeatable wounds. It is perhaps the case that an additional and complementary narrative plays itself out when Everell escapes execution. Emily Budick has persuasively argued for the ubiquity of the "akedian romance" (1989: 37) in early American literature. This romance takes as its typological frame the Puritan conception of America as Israel, and seeks to forge an American covenant via an act of sacrifice. As Budick puts it, for "the American Puritans, the sacrifice of Isaac locates the transitional moment between the loss of Eden and the covenant with Israel and with the saints. It also defined and guaranteed the essential movement of American history, from its exodus from England through its entry into Canaan to its



establishment of a Puritan theocracy in the new world” (p. 37). The akedian romance re-enacts the moment of sacrifice when the covenant passes on to America, but with one fatal error: characters in these romances sacrifice “the son that their own fathers had not sacrificed” (p. 44), thereby attempting to fulfill biblical typology by conflating the suspended sacrifice of Isaac and the Christian sacrifice of the son. Mononotto’s attempt to execute Everell does not follow this narrative pattern obviously. Yet, if Everell and Magawisca are, metaphorically speaking, siblings, Mononotto is, in turn, father to Everell, which would bring this scene closer to what Budick takes as the primal scene of the akedian romance: the attempt to bring about a new covenant for a people via the sacrifice of a son. Yet no contract or law is established via the interruption of Everell’s execution. Rather than resulting in a new contract between the participants in the scene, it becomes another instalment in the history of wounds the novel narrates. This would suggest that Sedgwick identifies, via her revisionary accounts, an unruly anomie at the heart of Puritan covenantal thinking, where the rule of sympathy is threatened and even supplanted by violence and trauma. That is to say, what is severed is the possibility of a covenant based on sympathy between the Puritans and the Pequots, and this becomes the anomie haunting the history Sedgwick narrates.

It would appear then that *Hope Leslie* both recuperates sympathy as a viable affective bond between America and the American Indian, and diagnoses an anomie haunting national fantasies of the founding and expansion of the United States. To make this argument regarding Sedgwick’s text, however, runs against the grain of much of what we know about the novel’s historical context, as well as numerous treatments of it by critics since its recuperation by feminist interventions in the canon of nineteenth-century American writing in the 1980s. By 1827, when the two volumes of *Hope Leslie* were first published, the frontier romance about American Indians was increasingly in vogue. James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* appeared a year earlier, while Lydia Maria Child’s *Hobomok*, significant for its portrayal of a Puritan woman’s marriage to an American Indian, appeared in 1824. By the 1830s, with the works of Robert Montgomery Bird, James Fenimore Cooper, James Hall, and William Gilmore Simms, this subgenre would be well established in American literature. During the Jacksonian period – marked by Indian removals and the rapid internal colonisation of the continent – these works provided sanction for the westward movement of the United States and managed the portrayal of this expansion; they naturalised the disappearance of the American Indian, while at the same time recuperating for white settlers those characteristics of the American Indian they could appropriate without



disturbing their racial integrity.<sup>14</sup> The relation between *Hope Leslie* and the virtual consensus concerning the naturally and inevitably vanishing American Indian in the frontier romances of the 1830s remains a point of critical contention. According to Sandra Zagarell, the novel capitulates superficially to “the formulas by which frontier and historical romances cast historical movement as progress” (1987: 239), which is to say in terms of the expansion of the United States. Yet for Zagarell to stick exclusively to this reading is to miss how Sedgwick critiques historical narratives regarding the founding of the United States and the American Indian, as well as how her representational practices in the novel struggle “to expand what America meant” (p. 242). Judith Fetterley, though, argues that Sedgwick’s novel is filled with contradictions, since she discovers that she can only make her argument for gender equality at the expense of participating in “the ideology of removal, the ‘inevitable’ and ‘natural’ disappearance of the Indian” (1998: 513). That she refuses to do so fully is, for Fetterley, to her credit, but does little more than support Dana Nelson’s claim that *Hope Leslie* is “finally a mixed bag” (1992: 77). Lucy Maddox makes perhaps the strongest claim for Sedgwick’s complicity with ideologies legitimating Indian removal, arguing that she ends up “confirming the Puritan idea that the Indians are predestined to become extinct, since the only way they can be saved is to imitate white women, and stop being Indians” (1991: 110).

There are ample grounds in *Hope Leslie* for readings such as those by Maddox and Fetterley, which take it as symptomatic of the broader historical currents in the period concerning Indian removal. When Magawisca bids farewell to Everell and Hope, they are united by their shared sympathy for her; she, with the remaining Pequots, is relegated to “the deep, voiceless obscurity of those unknown regions” of the “far western forests” (Sedgwick 1998: 359). The Pequots are written out of history; indeed, the “voiceless obscurity” of the place they are removed to makes it difficult to imagine that any history concerning them can be recovered. From this perspective, the novel’s representational project parallels and completes the attempts at Indian removal that gained momentum in the 1820s and the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which authorised the removal of American Indians to territories west of the Mississippi. The legal grounds for this act were already established by the landmark Supreme Court decision regarding *Johnson v. M’Intosh* of 1823. In his opinion on the case, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Marshall described the

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14. There are numerous accounts of the ideological work done by the frontier romance within Jacksonian America. For two accounts that explicitly link this genre to questions about American imperialism and Indian removals, see Eric J. Sundquist’s *Empire and Slavery in American Literature, 1820-1865* (2006), especially Chapter 2, and Lucy Maddox’s *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Indian Affairs* (1991).



Indians as occupants of their land, the same land over which the United States had sovereignty due to rights of discovery and the Indian's failure to domesticate and cultivate the land.<sup>15</sup> By expropriating Indian land, and relocating it under the sovereignty of the United States, Marshall's opinion enabled the removals of the 1830s. Sedgwick also disconnects the Pequots from their land and removes them into obscurity. What is more, in an address to *Hope Leslie's* present-day audience, the novel's narrator shifts the American Indian into an anachronistic space that is no longer coeval, in Johannes Fabian's sense, with the present but figured as a "dusky region of the past" occupied by "tribes of human beings, who lived and died, leaving scarcely a more enduring memorial than the forsaken nest that vanishes before one winter's storm" (1998: 86) – a discursive strategy common to colonial narratives.<sup>16</sup>

Read as a frontier romance symptomatic of the politics of Indian removal and colonisation, *Hope Leslie* appears to be haunted by traces of the colonial politics and policies of the United States. What role, if any, can be assigned to sympathy within this context? Does it serve merely as a rhetorical disavowal of the real historical processes and consequences of Indian removal, a disavowal licensed by the fact that the object of sympathy has been shifted to a position no longer coeval with that of the sympathetic observer or reader? This is certainly the mode according to which sympathy operates in Joseph Story's 1828 address commemorating the bicentennial of the founding of Salem, Massachusetts. In his address, the Associate Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court at once asserts that the Indians encountered by the Puritans possessed only a "temporary ... and limited" (1828: 72) right of occupancy to their land under the discovery doctrine, and exonerates the Puritan settlers by claiming they did not assert their legal right to the land, but "constantly respected the Indians in their settlements and claims of soil" (p. 73). Indeed, for Story, the land passed into the hands of new owners because the Indian, by "a law of their nature ... seem destined to a slow, but sure extinction" (p. 74). He finds "in the fate of these unfortunate beings, much to awaken our sympathy" (p. 74). Story narrates elegiacally in his address, "I see them leave their miserable homes, the aged, the helpless, the women, and the warriors, 'few and faint, yet fearless still'" (p. 76). Story's sentimentality is the affective equivalent of his exoneration of the Puritans for their role in the colonisation of the United States. Its

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15. cf. Lindsay G. Robertson's *Conquest by Law* (2005) for an account of this case and John Marshall's opinion.

16. For the formulation concerning anachronistic spaces I am indebted to Anne McClintock's "'No Longer in Heaven': Gender, Race, and Nationalism", where she uses it to describe the "colonial journey" as proceeding backward to "a prehistoric zone of linguistic, racial, and gender degradation" (2004: 101).



effects are exculpatory: it exonerates the sympathetic observer “of these unfortunate beings” by substituting feelings of sympathy for more compromising emotions concerning guilt and complicity. At the same time, these feelings of sympathy produce their own object by melancholically sentimentalising the Indian as an already lost figure. That is to say, Story’s melancholic discourse performatively installs the American Indian as a figure that is no longer coeval with the present-day United States and, thereby, recursively, as a figure that can be sympathised with and eulogised. Amy Kaplan has forcefully argued that sentimentality and sympathy are central to how nineteenth-century America imagined the domestic in relation to the foreign, and that the rhetoric of sympathy often “underwrites a vision of national expansion” (1998: 587). Story’s double disavowal, of complicity and the coeval existence of the American Indian, as much confirms Kaplan’s argument as it clarifies what is at stake in Sedgwick’s deployment of a rhetoric of sympathy in *Hope Leslie*. It is not only a matter of the efficacy of sympathy, or its relation to traumatic histories. Both Story and Sedgwick turn to a discourse on sympathy at junctures where what is at stake is a matter of arranging environments, of arraying figures near and distant in space, and figures past, present, or receding back in time. Is Sedgwick, like Story, relocating the figure of the American Indian in a remote past where it can be regarded as a sympathetic victim?

Sedgwick was present at Story’s 1828 address, and recounted in her letters that she went on to dine at the Judge’s house after the delivery of his oration. Of the address itself, she writes that it was received well by the “homogenous population” of New England. In New York, where there is no “common sentiment” (1872: 201), she intimates it might have been less well received. Did Sedgwick then find “common sentiment” with Story in *Hope Leslie*, published the previous year? Late in *Hope Leslie*, when Magawisca is brought to trial on suspicion of conspiring against the colony, she, facing the hostile Puritan community, anachronistically paraphrases Patrick Henry’s famous words, saying to John Winthrop, “I demand of thee death or liberty” (1998: 309).<sup>17</sup> The effect of this utterance is instantaneous: the hostile crowd shouts as one “liberty! – liberty! Grant the prisoner liberty,” while Winthrop is overcome with tears, experiencing such sympathy and sentiment for her that “his voice failed him” (p. 309). When Magawisca exits the courtroom, we are told the crowd and jury are uneasy, “their reason, guided by the best light they possessed, deciding against her – the voice of nature crying out for her” (p. 310). Later, when Magawisca departs, Everell says to her that she needs to “come back to teach us to be happy” (p. 352). What lesson can Magawisca teach the Puritan colony? The previous

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17. “Give me liberty, or give me death” is a quote attributed to Patrick Henry’s 1775 speech to the Virginia Convention, and is remembered as the rhetorical claim that persuaded the Virginians to enter the Revolutionary War.



scene in the courtroom suggests that it is one of liberty, which is defined in part by her resistance to being tried under laws that are not those of her people. Sedgwick is slyly suggesting an alternative genealogy of the American Revolution, locating its origin not in the Puritan colony but in the woman defending herself at a Puritan trial. Moreover, the effect of her defence on the crowd at the trial, as well as on John Winthrop, seems to be to create a distinction between their emotional and rational responses, their actions and their thoughts. In this sense, they are mimetically doubling the same structure of subjectivity attributed to her throughout the novel: from her first appearance until her departure, she is represented as negotiating between the demands of her community, her rational assessment of Puritan-Pequot relations, and her affective responses to Everell and Hope. That is to say, within the logic of the novel, she is unveiled at the courtroom as the source of a mode of consciousness or interiority that needs to mediate between public demands and private desires, a form of interiority, then, identical to that of nineteenth-century individualism.<sup>18</sup> Eric Lott has remarked that “the blackface phenomenon” was constituted by “slippages, positives turning to negatives, selves into others, and back again” (1993: 124), since it depended simultaneously on an identification with, and a disavowal of, the racial other. A similar drama of identification and disavowal plays itself out in Magawisca’s court appearance. Yet, rather than understanding it in terms of blackface minstrelsy, we might view it as part and parcel of Sedgwick’s narrative investment in sympathetic identification, which also mediates between the self and the other. Sympathetic identification transforms the Puritan colonists into subjects endowed with a desire for liberty and a sense of interiority, while the catastrophic history they and Magawisca are part of compels them to disavow her and imprison her as a threat to the colony. From this perspective, Everell’s demand that she should return to the colony to “teach” is an attempt to negotiate this impasse, as well as to restore the source of American individualism and desire for liberty to the nation. It expresses a melancholic yearning for a mode of sympathetic identification untrammelled by histories of war and trauma.

Rather than denying coevalness to the American Indian, therefore, Sedgwick frames this figure as the missing, yet not fully absent, element in a history stretching from the Puritan colonies to Jacksonian America. That is to say, as the disavowed origin of the American self, this figure is never fully present and recognised as such. At the same time, however, it has not simply disappeared. Instead, it has left permanent traces in the very self that

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18. Gustavus Stadler makes a similar point in his “Magawisca’s Body of Knowledge: Nation-Building in *Hope Leslie*”, suggesting that Magawisca’s courtroom appearance “instigates the system of privacy, of individuality that these fictional colonists will need in order to become a modern American nation” (1999: 52).

seeks to disavow it. The narrator of *Hope Leslie* describes how, in the nineteenth century, American Indians would make pilgrimages from the west to those sites in New England where their villages used to be. These figures are regarded with “a melancholy interest by the present occupants of the soil” (1998: 90), the narrator suggests, in a statement that both denies narratives concerning the naturally vanishing American Indian and links American Indian history to questions concerning land, ownership, and colonisation. Yet the melancholy of these observers speaks both of a lingering sympathy for these dispossessed figures, and of a self-interested melancholy, mourning an abjected part of its own story and history. “Mysteriously have our destinies been interwoven” (p. 201), Hope says to Magawisca, in a remark that encapsulates Sedgwick’s sense of the ongoing relation between the American Indian and the United States, a relation of sympathy but also of wounding.

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