ABSTRACT

FELICIA HEMANS WRITES AMERICA: THE TRANSATLANTIC CONSTRUCTION OF AMERICA AND BRITAIN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by Amie Christine Fletcher

This thesis explores Felicia Hemans’s American wilderness poetry, specifically “Edith: A Tale of the Woods” and “The American Forest-Girl,” looking closely at how she uses the trope of captivity and Native Americans to take part in Britain’s political debates. At the same time, Hemans is also participating in transatlantic conversations with other women writers during the nineteenth century. In doing so, Hemans is redefining not only British but also American identity.
FELICIA HEMANS WRITES AMERICA:  
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Felicia Hemans Writes America: The Transatlantic Construction of America and Britain in the Nineteenth Century

Introduction

In *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Literature 1730-1860*, author Paul Giles recognizes the simultaneously tense and mutually productive political relations between England and America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Giles explores this contradictory relationship, claiming that it has its origin in the American Revolution. According to Giles, the American Revolution was more like a civil war, making it “less easy [for Britain] to demonize” their American opponents. In viewing the American Revolution this way, America becomes a nation that “embodies the same, yet other.” Here, Giles argues that America and Britain had “a shared heritage,” which allowed both nations to be “positioned as heretical alternatives to each other, uneasy mirrors […].” By being “uneasy mirrors,” Britain and America’s “discordances and discontinuities” were made visible through the other nation; they were, as Giles writes, both “reflected and refracted.”

For Giles, “this process of mutual mirroring and intertwining serves radically to destabilize authority, casting a disorienting shadow over British and American attempts to map out their territory, to circumscribe the boundaries of their national jurisdiction.” Because it is so destabilizing, this process also allows “alternative perspectives” to emerge, “where personal as well as cultural identities become liable to hybridization.”

Here, the relationship between Britain and America gets confused, and Giles oversimplifies it when he writes that “America, not France appeared as Britain’s alter ego, the kind of society it might be, but wasn’t.” Giles makes this claim because, as he writes, Britain “in the late eighteenth century […] was still concerned primarily with questions of liberty”; however, he is ignoring the early nineteenth century, when Britain became concerned with “questions of” equality. Because of this omission, Giles only

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2 Giles 123.
3 Giles 126.
4 Giles 185.
5 Giles 118.
recognizes how American’s shattered Briton’s perception of themselves. In this essay, I will examine the degree to which Giles’ “uneasy mirrors” equally shattered American’s identity, as British writers and their texts, specifically Felicia Hemans’s “Edith: A Tale of the Woods” and “The American Forest-Girl,” wrote “America.” By imagining an America that was better than that which Americans could imagine, British writer Felicia Hemans posits Britain as America’s “alter ego,” “the kind of society it might be, but wasn’t.”

Born in Liverpool in 1793 during “one of the most violent moments in Revolutionary Europe,”6 Felicia Hemans soon became “one of the most influential and widely read poets of the 19th century.”7 As England’s premier ‘poetess’,” Hemans displayed the “epitome of ‘feminine’ excellence,” becoming the “undisputed representative poet of Victorian imperial and domestic ideology.”8 In 1808, Hemans published her first volume of poetry, Poems, which contained both patriotic and political poems. After this publication, Hemans continued to explore political events in her poetry, “fram[ing] [her poems] in ways that would seem acceptably feminine.”9 As Gary Kelly writes in his introduction to Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Prose, and Letters, Hemans’s “popularity indicates that she successfully addressed the interest and values of the reading public in her time and through the nineteenth century.”10

With her “cosmopolitan and internationalist outlook,”11 Hemans increasingly and passionately “responded to the unfolding national and international politics of her day.”12 As she gained an “appreciative audience in America,”13 influencing the United States’ “emergent national culture, from the public to the private sphere,”14 her “poetics [soon became] a politics” that had both “human and social value.”15 Because of this, scholars

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9 Kelly 22.
10 Kelly 15.
11 Kelly 18.
12 Kelly 15.
13 Wolfson xvii.
14 Kelly 79.
15 Kelly 68.
have recently begun to deconstruct Hemans’s “Victorian construction,”\(^\text{16}\) which labeled her as a sentimental and “essentially feminine”\(^\text{17}\) poet, recognizing in her poetry her own “revolutionary potential.”\(^\text{18}\)

However, while scholars reinterpret Hemans’s literary identity, they do not recognize how her popularity in America corresponds to her “revolutionary potential.” It was precisely because of her popularity in America that Hemans was able to move beyond her “Victorian construction.” Many of her so-called political poems are set in the American wilderness, where, through the trope of captivity, Hemans “[allows] disturbingly familiar issues to emerge,” as “the foreign scene return[s] a sign of universal condition.”\(^\text{19}\) In particular, her poetry explores the “familiar issue” of nation-creation and national identity, and she employs both America as the “foreign scene” and other American women writers. As Giles writes, “[m]any English writers’ […]perspective[s] were informed to some degree by transatlantic horizons,” and “[t]he sudden emergence of the United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century not only gave Britain a new political rival, but also provided a disturbing alternative vision of how nature and society might be organized.”\(^\text{20}\) By taking part in transatlantic dialogues with these American women authors, Hemans wrote poems that constructed America, redefining both British and American identities.

In the first chapter of my thesis I will explore the ways in which Hemans, in her poem “Edith: A Tale of the Woods,” revises American writer Lydia Sigourney’s text, *Sketches of Connecticut, Forty Years Since*, to redefine British identity. During the early 1820s, when Catholics were granted emancipation, making Britain no longer a protestant-only nation, British people were forced to confront “otherness”; at the same time in America, Lydia Sigourney’s work was also calling for the redefinition of America and an American identity that would embody classical republican ideals. In each of these works, the authors place Native Americans in a central role, as they rescue the heroines from their captivity. By doing this, the authors imagine nations that attempt to “include” Native Americans, and this inclusion allows a reconstruction of both nation and national identities.

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\(^\text{16}\) Wolfson xvii.
\(^\text{17}\) Wolfson xviii.
\(^\text{18}\) Kelly 85.
\(^\text{19}\) Wolfson xvi.
\(^\text{20}\) Giles 120.
identity. In particular, in her poem Hemans’s “inclusion” of Native Americans mirrors Britain’s acceptance of their “other,” Catholics.

In the second chapter, I again explore the ways in which a transatlantic dialogue between Hemans and an American woman writer help reshape Britain and America. However, unlike the first chapter where Hemans revises an American text, this time it is the American writer, Catharine Maria Sedgwick in her text, *Hope Leslie, or Early Times in the Massachusetts*, who revises Hemans’s poem “The American Forest-Girl.” Again, in each of these texts the authors use Native Americans to think about the nation; but in this case they do so in order to consider the controversial issue of liberty versus slavery. As Giles writes the struggle between America and Britain, especially after the War of 1812, proved that each nation had “distinct conceptions of national identity”; for the Americans, “citizenship was an affiliation which could be chosen or bestowed voluntarily” while “for the British, then as now, no subject of the king could ever ‘alienate his duty.’”21 These respective definitions of nation become apparent in Hemans’s poem as well as Sedgwick’s novel, where both writers examine who is allowed to be an American citizen. In examining this question, Hemans engages in the colonial slavery debates in Britain during the 1820s and 1830s, where the British attempted to persuade the world, especially America, to follow their lead and abolish slavery. In her poem, she is able to imagine an America which the American writer cannot, affirming Britain’s superior status through this Utopian construction. While Giles writes that the “transatlantic division between Britain and America was to relativize the power structure of each country,”22 this thesis will show that the transatlantic conversations occurring between women writers during the nineteenth century reveal that more than “the power structure of each country” was being considered; indeed, the very identity of each country’s people was being considered as well.

21 Giles 120.
22 Giles 125.
Chapter One

Altering Nations: Lydia Sigourney’s *Sketches of Connecticut, Forty Years Since* and Felicia Hemans’s “Edith: A Tale of the Woods”

During the early 1820s, debates over Catholic Emancipation in England were forcing Britons to redefine not only their nation but also themselves. In *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, Linda Colley examines “how […] Britain [was] to be defined now that it could no longer rely absolutely on a sense of beleaguered Protestantism in regular conflict with the Other in the shape of Catholic France.” Just as the Catholic Question in the 1820s, so too the anti-slavery movement in the 1830s was “closely linked with […] other agitations over citizenship and the meaning of Britishness.” Here, I will argue that Hemans participates in the debates over Catholic Emancipation in England during the early 1820s through her poem, “Edith: A Tale of the Woods” (1827). Although these debates forced Britons to redefine themselves and their nation, Hemans’s poem re-envisions an American text, Lydia Sigourney’s *Sketches of Connecticut, Forty Years Since* (1824), in order, ironically, to redefine British identity. Both Sigourney’s *Sketches* and Hemans’s “Edith” attempt to redefine their respective nations. While *Sketches* attempts to redefine America, creating a Utopian nation that accepts all people as equals, “Edith” attempts to redefine Britain as a non-Protestant only nation.

Within *Sketches* Sigourney “address[es] a major political topic of the day,” the gap between the republican value of inclusiveness versus what she perceives to be America’s exclusive reality, “the nature of the American nation.” In “Expanding ‘America’: Lydia Sigourney’s *Sketch[es] of Connecticut*, Catharine Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*,” Sandra A. Zagarell writes that “Sigourney expanded a developing genre, the village sketch, to represent a locality with a diverse population as a microcosm of the nation at its founding.” Furthermore, Zagarell argues that the nation Sigourney constructs is a “deliberate” imagining of “an America grounded in inclusiveness and communitarianism.” While I agree that Sigourney’s construction of America is deliberate—she knew exactly what sort of nation she wanted America to be—I will argue that it is not a nation “grounded in inclusiveness and communitarianism”; instead, it is a

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nation grounded in a colonizing mission, in exclusiveness and conversion. Sigourney
does not imagine an America “grounded in inclusiveness and communitarianism” unless
those who make up the population of America, in specific Native Americans, first
“include” themselves in Anglo-Americans’ religious beliefs. It is only after Native
Americans exclude the beliefs of their culture that they are included in the community
that is America.

The America Sigourney creates in Sketches resembles her own politics. In her
article, “Reinventing Lydia Sigourney,” Nina Baym explores Sigourney’s political views,
examining how they surface in her writings. In specific, she writes that in Sketches
“Sigourney’s politics emerge as a self-conscious advocacy of the tenets of ‘classical’ (i.e.
conservative) republicanism in an age of nonsectarian evangelical Christianity on an
increasingly disputatious and fragmented religious scene; and as an effort to reconcile the
civic with the spiritual realms in an amalgam of Christianity and republicanism.”25 In
other words, Sigourney’s Sketches is a political manifesto that reveals her image of
America, however Utopian that image might be. According to Baym, Sigourney desires
a merging of government and religion, a “[reconciliation of] the civic with the spiritual
realms,” that occurs using “the tenets of ‘classical’ republicanism,” tenets that, as I will
discuss later, believe in equality, though they are “culturally chauvinistic.”26 Yet
Sigourney’s Sketches, as Baym writes, “[…] [is] internally fractured because [its] attempt
to affirm the progress of history is continually frustrated by the evident failure of
Christian-republican ethics to meet the single most important test of the moral caliber of
the American nation—the obligation to preserve the continent’s ‘aborigines’ by
Christianizing them and integrating them into American society.”27 Here, Baym is
suggesting that Sigourney’s “Christian-republican ethics” are ineffective in
“preserve[ing] the continent’s” Native Americans.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in America, two types of
republicanism existed: conservative and liberal. In her article, “Republicanism in Old

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25 Nina Baym, Feminism and Literary History: Essays (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992)
156.
26 Baym 163.
27 Baym 158.
and New Contexts,” Joyce Appleby defines republicanism as “something new,”28 “the conceptual equivalent of union in the nineteenth century and nation in the twentieth.”29 Using Bernard Bailyn’s 1967 work, Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, to examine what the term “republic” meant to “men of the Revolutionary era,” Appleby concludes that “an excursion into the colonial mind [proves] that Americans had formed their world view—more particularly, their grasp of political reality—from the republicanism of the English commonwealth.”30 Appleby argues that “our republicanism” is a combination of classical and liberal republicanism, that “[it] represent[s] the contending republican paradigms of Federalists and Jeffersonians.” Jefferson had a “liberal political vision,”31 looking to the future, not to the past. As Appleby writes, “freedom for [Jefferson] meant liberation[;] [c]ivilization’s spiritual and material advances depended upon free initiatives and creative intelligence.” Jeffersonian republicanism is a “new realm of voluntary associations—for worship, for study, for enterprise—[and] held out the wonderful promise of shedding past oppression.” According to Appleby, Jefferson’s ideas were new during the 1790s, a fact that “has been difficult for historians to appreciate.”32 Furthermore, she writes that “many eighteenth-century Americans thought within a classical republican frame of reference.”33

Whereas Appleby focuses on liberal republicanism, Linda Kerber and Richard Ellis focus on classical republicanism. In her article, “The Republican Ideology of the Revolutionary Generation,” Kerber examines how our ideas about republicanism and early America are being “reshaped.”34 Citing Gordon S. Wood’s book, The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787, Kerber defines classical republicanism. According to Wood, “Republicanism meant more for Americans than simply the elimination of a king and the institution of an elective system. It added a moral dimension, a utopian depth, to the political separation from England—a depth that involved the very character of their

29 Appleby 21.
30 Appleby 21-2.
31 Appleby 23.
32 Appleby 25.
33 Appleby 26.
Classical republicanism is, according to Wood, defined by “the inspiration of classical antiquity, self-disciplined civic virtue, and equality of opportunity.” In “Classical Republicanism, Commerce, and Civic Virtue,” Richard Ellis agrees with Kerber and Wood’s definition of classical republicanism, writing that “the key word in the language of classical republicanism was ‘virtue,’ by which was meant the willingness of the individual to sacrifice private interests for the good of the community.”

Sigourney’s mission in Sketches, to create a new American republic that embodies classical republican ideals, must reconcile the relationship between Native Americans and their Anglo-American neighbors. In her essay, Baym explores this relationship, looking specifically at the link between Native Americans and republicanism. She writes, “[i]n destroying the American Indians rather than domesticating them, republicanism ignored its commitments to civic virtue and […] Christianity neglected its imperatives of charity and of taking all souls as equals before God.” Here, Baym considers the destruction of Native Americans to be something other than “domesticating” them, not recognizing that domestication of Native Americans effectively destroys their culture.

In an attempt not to destroy Native Americans, then, in Sketches Sigourney tells the story of Oriana, an Englishwoman, who travels to America with her husband. Shortly after she arrives, her husband is killed and she is adopted by two, already converted Native Americans, Zachary and Martha, who previously lost their daughter. Sigourney creates a Utopian trinity between Zachary, Martha and Oriana, where Oriana, not the Native American, is being “domesticated,” or adopted. She also makes the Natives, when they rescue Oriana, the embodiersons of both republicanism’s “commitment to civic virtue” and “Christianity[’s] imperatives of charity and of taking all souls as equals before God.” Oriana’s Native parents are already Christians, so her task becomes to recognize the equality of the Natives and to encourage others of her race to do the same. While it is true that Zachary and Martha are Christians, not all of the natives are converts and not all of the Anglo-Americans accept Zachary and Martha as equals, so Sigourney

35 Kerber 478.
creates Oriana as a messenger of classical republican ideals in order to create a Utopian America.

By allowing the Natives to also embody classical republican ideals, Sigourney attempts to make up for Anglo-American’s treatment of them. In her memoir, *Letters of Life*, Sigourney comments upon Anglo-Americans’ treatment of Native Americans, writing that “our injustice and hard-hearted policy with regard to the original owners of the soil has ever seemed to me one of our greatest national sins.”37 Perhaps it is this opinion that causes her to devote “nine of the eighteen chapters […] [to] the remnant of the Mohegan tribe.”38 Yet at the same time, the chapters devoted to this topic are invented and as Baym writes, *Sketches* “concludes with three fantasy chapters.”39 It is within these last “three fantasy chapters” that Sigourney commits the “great national sin” she writes about in her memoir; in these last chapters, she colonizes the Native American community by conversion, thereby erasing their culture.

According to Baym, Sigourney’s “writing about American Indians can be seen as an attempt to influence the present moment in three ways. First, it argues for a sense of white responsibility toward the surviving remnants of Indian tribes; second, it tries to ensure that the Indian story become a part of American history no matter how badly the story reflected on white conquerors; third, it insists that the Indians were Americans.”40 However, this conclusion is problematic. First, the “sense of white responsibility” that comes out of *Sketches* is a missionary responsibility, which has Anglo-Americans responsible for the conversion of Native Americans. Second, and coming directly from the first point on “white responsibility,” Sigourney does not “reflect badly on white conquerors”; instead, she praises them and encourages them to proceed in their mission. Lastly, by claiming that “Indians were Americans,” Sigourney’s mission is complete; she unequivocally erases their culture, creating a new American republic.

Sigourney’s interest in Native American life as well as her “missionary perspective”41 reveals itself early on in *Sketches*. As early as Chapter Four, Sigourney uncovers one of *Sketches*’ purposes: to “rescue” Native Americans. Sigourney writes,

38 Baym 157.
39 Baym 158.
40 Baym 166.
41 Baym 163.
“[i]t has been mentioned that the tribe of natives, whose traditions we have partially gathered, retained amid its degeneracy, some individuals worthy of being rescued from oblivion.”42 Here, Sigourney admits that Native Americans are “others”; however, some are less “othered” and, therefore, “worthy of being rescued” from their “degeneracy.” With this statement, Sigourney begins her mission, which has Christian Anglo-Americans “rescuing” Native Americans from “oblivion”; in other words, Christian Anglo-Americans will colonize Native Americans through conversion/erasure of their culture.

Although Sigourney recognizes the strengths of Native Americans she, at the same time, still casts them as inferior to Anglo-Americans. For example, she comments in Sketches that “[t]he Indian possesses in such respects a native politeness, which might sometimes be a salutary model to more civilized communities. It is an accomplishment which their neighbours of Yankee origin might however be slow in acquiring.”43 Here, Sigourney recognizes Native American’s “native politeness,” writing that it “might sometimes be a salutary model.” Yet, she cannot fully accept Natives as teachers of Anglo-Americans, claiming that the “more civilized communities” are still not with Native Americans but with “their neighbours of Yankee origin.” Again, Sigourney divides Anglo and Native Americans, admitting that though the Natives have something to teach the Anglo-Americans, they are still not as “civilized” as them.

Sigourney attempts to exorcise her own biased divisions, but she does so only by making the Native Americans into Christians. Oriana’s Native parents, Zachary and Martha, are already Christianized. Sigourney writes: “Arrowhamet the warrior, or Zachary as he was familiarly called, by the name of his baptism [was] the firm friend of the Americans [during the revolution, and] his wife, Martha, who with him had embraced the Christian religion, was a descendant of the departed royalty of Mohegan.”44 While Zachary is a warrior and Martha is a “descendant of the departed royalty of [the] Mohegan,” they are “familiarly” known by their baptismal, Christian, names and as “firm friend[s] of the Americans.” Sigourney’s descriptions of Zachary and Martha, two Native Americans who have already “embraced the Christian religion,” forces the reader to question why Oriana is present in Sketches.

42 Lydia Sigourney, Sketches of Connecticut, Forty Years Since (Hartford: O.D. Cooke and Sons, 1824) 5.
43 Sigourney, Sketches 57.
44 Sigourney, Sketches 55-6.
Sigourney introduces Oriana prior to her husband’s death and by the time the reader is acquainted with the tale of her husband’s death, she has already been defined outside of that instant. Therefore, when Sigourney finally presents Oriana’s mourning scene at the end of Sketches, the reader already knows her purpose is unrelated to this moment: “My husband had scarcely time to draw his sword, when a volley of shot was poured upon us. A bullet pierced his breast, and he fell without life. I fell with him, senseless as himself. I recovered from my swoon to mourn that I lived, and to feel more than the bitterness of death. Sometimes I fancied that he clasped my hand; but it was only the trickling of his blood through my own.”

In this passage, Oriana’s husband’s death becomes, for a short time, her own. Just as her husband “fall[s] without life,” so too does Oriana, “falling as senseless as [her husband].” By falling with him, Oriana mourns not only his life, but also her own. However, she eventually “recovers,” recognizing that she is still alive. In this moment of deliberate survival, Oriana moves beyond the bitterness “that [she] lived” to acceptance; she becomes a political figure, advocating a new American republican founded on classical republican ideals.

Oriana’s mission is not one of religious conversion; instead, she is the messenger of conservative republicanism, sent to transform the thinking of both Anglo and Native Americans to create a more stable republic. To do this, Sigourney must provide a space where assumptions about Native Americans can be confirmed, challenged, and questioned, and what better space than one of captivity: “Thus I was in the power of beings, who I had ever contemplated as the most savage of mankind. I followed them, as we rove in a terrible dream unable either to resist, or to awake. […] Yet the captors, so far from testifying the cruelty I had anticipated, were attentive to my wants.”

Here, Oriana’s opinion of the Natives begins to change as she at first confirms her own opinion of Natives, thinking of them as “the most savage of mankind”; yet then this opinion is challenged when they do not “testify [to] the cruelty [she] had anticipated.”

Despite describing the Native Americans’ kind treatment toward Oriana, Sigourney still cannot portray the Native Americans as a kind people. Oriana still expects the worst, thinking “they were protecting [her] life with such care, in order to

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45 Sigourney, Sketches 266.
46 Sigourney, Sketches 267-8.
sacrifice it in that savage manner, of which [she] had frequently heard descriptions."  

However at the same time, Sigourney acknowledges the cruelty of Anglo-Americans, writing that the American Indian “prefer[s] the shelter of the forests, to the abodes of white men, whom [she] [finds] they still [consider] as intruders, and doubtful friends.”  

Sigourney recognizes Anglo-Americans’ ideas of Natives, when she acknowledges the “sacrifices” Natives make of Anglo-Americans, but at the same time she is also calling out Anglo-Americans as “intruders” and “doubtful friends” of Natives. To “rescue” both of these opinions from being the truth, Sigourney weaves a fantasy life among Oriana, Zachary and Martha.  

Sigourney’s “fantasy” begins when Zachary rescues Oriana from her captivity. Because Oriana’s mission is to convert her and other Anglo-Americans’ opinions regarding Native Americans, bringing these opinions closer to the embodiment of classical republican ideals, Sigourney’s Natives parents do not have to be “Indianized.” Indeed, when Oriana first sees Arrowhamet, he is less Native and more Anglo-American:  

I thought that I had previously seen him regarding me with eyes of pity, and said mentally, is it possible that Heaven will raise up in my extremity, a friend in this aged man? His eyes were raised upward, as if he contemplated the Maker of that majestic blue arch, where a few stars faintly twinkled. I said silently, can it be that an Indian thinks of God? Ah! I knew not then, of what deep devotion their souls were susceptible.  

At this moment in Oriana’s story, she only knows the Native as Arrowhamet, although the reader instantly recognizes Zachary. Arrowhamet is unlike other Natives Oriana has encountered; he has “eyes of pity” that are “raised upward.” Oriana is no longer surrounded by the “most savage of mankind”; instead, now she is surrounded by a friend. This Native “friend” is also a fellow Christian, forcing Oriana to question “can it be that an Indian thinks of God?” This question further defines Oriana’s purpose, to realize “what deep devotion their souls” are capable.  

Oriana’s ultimate purpose becomes clear when her whiteness is called into question. In her essay Baym argues that Oriana never loses her whiteness. However this argument only makes sense when examining Oriana’s relationship to Martha and  

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47 Sigourney, Sketches 268.  
48 Sigourney, Sketches 269.  
49 Sigourney, Sketches 270-1.
Zachary, her adoptive parents, and does not hold true for her relationship with the surrounding Native Americans. When writing about the relationship between Oriana, Zachary and Martha, Sigourney does not have to forfeit Oriana’s whiteness because, in many ways, Zachary and Martha are already “white.” However, the surrounding tribes are not “white”/converted and in order to fulfill her purpose, Oriana must sacrifice her whiteness. Oriana’s whiteness is called into question when interacting with the surrounding Native Americans because in order to convert them to Christianity, she must be accepted, and to be accepted she must “bec[o]me helplessly Indianized.” The language Sigourney uses when Oriana is with Martha and Zachary is less “Indianized” than when Oriana is with the other Natives:

But a mysterious personage had been added to that family, which had not within the memory of the young, comprised but Zachary and Martha. More than two years had elapsed, since a female had been observed to share their shelter, and to sit at their board. The Indians had remarked with surprise that she was of the race of the whites, young, and apparently in ill health, as she never quitted the mansion. They at first had testified some disgust, but as in their visits to the old warrior and his companion, she had always looked mildly on them, and spoken gently, they came to the conclusion, that ‘the pale squaw was wauregan,’ or good.

While Baym argues that Oriana maintains her “Englishness” throughout Sketches, this passage shows otherwise. Here, Oriana moves from being an English woman, “of the race of the whites,” to an American Indian, a “pale squaw [who is] wauregan.” At first, Oriana is a “mysterious personage,” who “surprise[s]” and even “disgust[s]” the Natives because of her race; however, they eventually change their minds after observing her “mild” and “gentle” character. Despite her “pale[ness],” the Natives no longer think of her as English; instead, they view her as one of their own, a “squaw.”

Oriana’s death marks the beginning of a new American republic, regardless of how Utopian it might be. Sigourney’s Oriana is excited in her mission and looks forward to her death because she knows that she will be leaving the Natives improved:

The old warriour, and his wife were seated in the room appropriated to their mysterious guest. Reclining in a chair, which the ingenuity of Zachary had so constructed as to answer the purposes of both seat and couch, and wrapped in a loose dress of light calico, she watched the rising

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50 Baym 159.
51 Sigourney, Sketches 56.
of the full, round silver moon, like one who loves its beams, yet feels that he must soon bid it a returnless farewell. But she, who, reduced to the weakness of infancy, might have been supposed to be the most agitated, was as calm and unmoved as the lake, on which shines nothing but the beam of heaven. Raised above every cause of earthly excitement, she seemed to have a foretaste of the happy consummation that awaited her.52

Surrounded by Zachary and Martha, Oriana knows she is bidding a “returnless farewell,” yet just as the chair she rests in was “constructed to answer the purposes of both seat and couch,” so too was Oriana constructed to answer the purposes of both Anglo and Native Americans, displaying both the importance of “equality of opportunity”53 and the power of “sacrifice […] for the good of the community.”54 As she dies, Oriana remains “calm,” looking forward to the reunion with her husband, “the happy consummation that await[s] her,” knowing that this reunion is an indicator that her mission is accomplished, that a new American republic founded on conservative republican’s tenets remains.

Specifically, Sigourney uses Natives Zachary and Martha to demonstrate Christianity’s belief in the equality of “all souls […] before God.” Instead of Oriana convincing the Natives that her God is also their God, the Natives convince her: “Sleep now, my daughter. I will pray thy God to protect thee. Thy God, is my God. […] Thou wilt no longer fear me, when though art convinced that our God is the same.”55 In this passage, both Oriana and her religion are adopted. Not only is Oriana Zachary’s “daughter,” but also “[her] God, is [his] God.” Sigourney makes Zachary the advocate for her Utopian American republic, using him to “convince” Oriana that “[their] God is the same,” thereby creating a new nation that recognizes the equality of all people.

In Sketches Oriana’s last words recognize her conversion, as she accepts the Natives as equals, but more importantly, reimagines her religion as one that also views the Natives as equals. Oriana’s final words focus on the equality of Anglo and Native Americans:

‘Whither I go, ye know,’ answered the same sweet, solemn voice, ‘and the way ye know. Hope in Him whom ye have believed. Like me, ye must soon slumber in the dust; but His power shall raise ye up at the last day. The Eternal, in whose sight shades of complexion, and distinctions of rank

52 Sigourney, Sketches 228,238.
53 Kerber 478.
54 Eillis 12.
55Sigourney, Sketches 275.
are as nothing, *He* who looketh only upon the heart, bless you for your love to the outcast, and lead you to that abode, where all which is benevolent, and pure shall be gathered, and sundered no more.’ ‘Weep not, mother! But lift your heart to the Father of consolation. I believe that whither I go, thou shalt come also. I shall return no more; but thou and thy beloved shall come unto me. There will be scarcely time to mourn, ere, like the gliding of a shadow, the parents shall follow their child.’

In this passage, Oriana’s Native parents embody classical republican ideals because they give “love to the outcast.” By doing this, the Natives are like “the Eternal, in whose sight shades of complexion, and distinctions of rank are as nothing.” Although the Natives are already converts to Christianity, Oriana realizes that Christian values require its followers to recognize the equality of all people. By the end of *Sketches*, Oriana recognizes this, creating a heaven that embraces equality, “whither [she goes], thou [the Natives] shalt come also.” Heaven and, more extensively, America are reimagined as places where “shades of complexion, and distinctions of rank are as nothing.”

Oriana’s purpose in *Sketches* is to transform the American nation into a new, more inclusive republic. Oriana is transformed by her experience with the Natives:

I have often exclaimed ‘Master! It is good to be here.’ Here I have learned to estimate a race, to which I had ever done injustice. Those, whom I had previously stigmatized as the slaves of barbarity, ignorance, and obduracy, were appointed to exhibit to my view continually traces of philanthropy, intellect, devotion, inviolable attachment, and deathless gratitude for trivial kindness; which, however the civilized world may affect to scorn in the cabin of the red man, she does not often find in the palaces of kings. Here I have felt, how vain is that importance which we attach to shades of complexion, and gradations of rank; how less than nothing the pageantry of pomp, and the tinsel of wealth appear, when ‘God taketh away the soul.’ The Almighty has here appointed me to realize the nature of those phantoms which had often held me in bondage, that renouncing all other dominion, my affections might own supreme allegiance to him. Her last request is that you would sometimes grant a visit, and a prayer to those, who were parents to her without the bonds of affinity; philanthropists, without the hope of the world’s applause; Christians, though proscribed as the heritors of a savage nature; and who will also, she trusts, be heirs of heaven, through faith in Him who hath promised that the merciful shall obtain mercy.

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57 Sigourney, *Sketches* 278.
Oriana’s exclamation in her letter, read after her death, marks her final transformation and the achievement of Sigourney’s fantasy. Instead of “stigmatizing” Native Americans, Oriana now praises them as “philanthropists.” Sigourney uses the “cabin of the red man” as the place where a new America can be reborn, because it embodies the ideals of classical republicanism, not housing judgments based upon “shade of complexion, and gradations of rank.” In this passage, Sigourney finally questions the truth of Native Americans’ inferiority, concluding that they may be the superior beings because “such kindness” is not “often [found] in the palaces of kings.” Although Sigourney concludes with Oriana’s plea, it is really Sigourney’s voice that is heard, begging her nation to change “its hard-hearted policy” toward the Native Americans, and recognize them as equals before God so that they may welcome them in the new republic of America.

A British re-envisioning of Sigourney’s Sketches, Felicia Hemans’s poem “Edith: A Tale of the Woods,” first published in New Monthly Magazine in July 1827, also relates the story of an Englishwoman who travels to America with her husband, a soldier in the British army. Like Oriana, Edith is also adopted by Native Americans after her husband is killed in battle; however, unlike Oriana’s adoptive parents, Edith’s are not Christians and it becomes her purpose to convert them. By the time of her death, Edith has successfully converted her Native parents, and Hemans has successfully, as Susan Wolfson writes in Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Prose, and Reception Materials, “reconceived the genre of the American frontier ‘captivity’ narrative, substituting its violence for a tale of domestic affections and Christian conversion.”

Just as Wolfson acknowledges Hemans’s ability to reconceive a text, so too does Michael T. Williamson acknowledge her ability to reconceive a genre. In his essay, “Impure Affections: Felicia Hemans’s Elegiac Poetry and Contaminated Grief,” Williamson focuses on what he calls Hemans’s “poems of mourning,” arguing that Hemans’s poems of death are not about male death as much as they are about what male death does to a woman. Relying on “Edith: A Tale of the Woods,” “The Domestic Affections,” Records of Woman, and other poems/collections of poems, Williamson asserts that Hemans depicts female mourners. However, it is not the construction of the

58 Wolfson 367.
woman as mourner that dominates Hemans’s elegiac poetry; instead, it is the act of mourning, “the business of articulating a response to death.”59 By focusing on women who are forced into a position of mourning, Williamson argues, “impure or contaminated grief” occurs, “impure” because women express their grief “indecorously,” which “impairs their ability to figure forth substitute figures for the dead.” Here, Williamson equates “impure or contaminated grief” with infidelity, or unfaithfulness. Because of their “impaired mourning,” then, Hemans creates, consciously, elegiac poems that have “the living not the dead as their true subjects.”60

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, one of Hemans’s elegiac poems Williamson pays particular attention to is “Edith: A Tale of the Woods.” Specifically, he writes that “Hemans shows in ‘Edith: A Tale of the Woods’ how mourning contaminates a woman and requires her, in a cruel contradiction, to atone for the way she has mourned her husband’s sudden, violent death.”61 He continues writing, referring to Edith as a “desolate survivor,” who “attempts to thwart death by immersing her hair and clothes in her husband’s blood.”62 According to Williamson, “Edith dies, then, not because her work on this earth is over, but because she has not been consoled by that work, because the kindness of her ‘native’ surrogate parents threaten to taint her ‘Englishness,’” and because her status as a survivor of a horrific scene of mourning simply cannot be resolved by a return to England or by the assumption of a fulfilling feminine vocation.”63 Here, Williamson argues that “the kindness of [Edith’s] ‘native’ surrogate parents threaten to taint her ‘Englishness.’” However, I will argue here that it is not her “parents,” but her purpose, which is to redefine the British nation, that “taint[s]” her “Englishness.” In achieving “Emancipation,” Edith loses her identity; therefore, she does “[die], then, […] because her work on this earth is over.”

In “Edith: A Tale of the Woods,” the setting is significant as it is a physical representation of Edith’s colonizing mission. Hemans describes the setting, writing that

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60 Williamson 20.
61 Williamson 20-1.
62 Williamson 21.
63 Williamson 22.
it is the “solemn” and “boundless woods of the great Western World.” Here, by use of the word “solemn,” the woods and, more extensively, the “Western World” are connected to religion. They immediately become a place where the wild, the “boundless woods,” meet the civilized, the “solemn.” It is in this religious yet mysterious place that Hemans introduces Edith. Edith sits: “One young and fair; and oh! How desolate!/But undismay’d; while sank the crimson light, and the high cedars darken’d with the night./Alone she sate: tho’ many lay around,/They, pale and silent on the bloody ground,/were sever’d from her need and from her wo,/Far as Death severs Life.” Here, Edith’s youth and beauty provide a stark contrast to the “bloody” scene. While the surrounding carnage, “tho’ many lay around,” separates the dead “from her need and from her wo,” Edith is completely consumed by her grief, unable to speak or move.

Unlike Oriana who recognizes the futility of saving her husband, Edith does not. Instead, Edith tries, unsuccessfully, to save her husband: “Of him alone she thought, whose languid head/Faintly upon her wedded bosom fell;/Memory of aught but him on earth was fled,/While heavily she felt his life blood well/Fast o’er her garments forth, and vainly bound/with her torn robe and hair the streaming wound,/Yet hoped, still hoped!” While Oriana is physically consumed by her husband’s death, Edith is mentally consumed by her’s, with a “memory of aught but him.” Edith also never loses consciousness as Oriana does, which makes it more difficult for her to accept her husband’s death or mourn her own, remaining life. Edith remains alert, “hop[ing]” for her lover’s life, attempting to save him by soaking his “life blood” up with her body. Instead of turning to imagination and “fancying” her husband’s life, Edith tries to bring her lover back from death by letting her lover’s blood become a part of her “robe and hair,” trying to “vainly [bind]” herself to him.

Edith’s mourning unlike Oriana’s is, as Williamson argues, ineffectual because she is not able to save her husband or, in the end, herself. Forced to make up for her ineffectual mourning, Edith turns to religion: “So bow’d she there,/Over the dying, while unconscious prayer/Fill’d all her soul.” Here, “unconscious prayer fill[s] all [Edith’s]
soul,” suggesting that Edith is not acting on her own but that some other force is acting for her. Here, Edith becomes a vehicle of colonization, for Christianity, at the moment her lover dies. Before Edith is left alone and “mute,” the scene is filled with violent action, leaving the woods a dark and red place. The only life present is Edith’s; the rest lay dead around her. There are no sounds except for Edith’s cries and screams. Edith is alone in a silent forest. Yet, after the violence and silence the scene changes. Now the setting is more peaceful, becoming brighter and noise-full: the woods are “[n]ow light, of richer hue,” where “fresh winds play’d,” “bright colour’d birds with splendour cross’d the shade, and “glad murmurs broke.”

This shift in scenery marks the entrance of the Native Americans who will become Edith’s adoptive parents. Sigourney’s text portrays a more explicit captivity narrative than the one that appears in Hemans’s “Edith,” which as Wolfson writes is more a tale of religious conversion than captivity. Because Hemans’s poem focuses on religious conversion, Edith’s encounter with the Natives has to be more subdued: “The widow’d Edith: fearfully her glance/Fell, as in doubt, on faces dark and strange,/And dusky forms.” Although at first afraid, her “fearful glance” eventually “falls,” and she only “doubts” the Native Americans. In order to succeed in converting the Natives, Edith cannot fear them for long; instead she must move beyond her fear in order to understand her mission. Edith begins to recognize that though the dead are “sever’d” from her “need,” the surrounding Native Americans are not. She understands that she needs to be the Native Americans’ daughter just as much as they need her to be, that her purpose is to convert the Natives, to build a bridge between her culture and theirs.

To accomplish this, Edith must “adopt” the Natives. Hemans writes: “But Edith’s face/Now look’d in holy sweetness from her place, And they again seem’d parents.” Here, the Natives “seem parents” to Edith. This is the moment when Edith realizes her “holy” mission, allowing the Natives into her life, to “[be] [her] parents,” and to convert them. Furthermore, Edith “guides” the Natives to assume her religion: “By the still beauty of her life, she strove/To win for heaven, and heaven-born truth, the

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69 Wolfson 367.
71 Wolfson 364. Lines 94-6.
love/Pour’d out on her so freely. [H]er voice was made/Ev’n such a breeze; and she, a
lowly guide./By faith and sorrow rais’d and purified./So to the Cross her Indian foresters
led,/Until their prayers were one.”72 Edith becomes a “guide,” leading the Native
Americans to Christianity, purification, civilization. Just as Oriana becomes one with the
Natives through baptism, so too does Edith become one with them through prayers.
Hemans continues to repeat the phrase “their prayers were one,”73 demonstrating the
permanence of the Native’s religious conversion, as their former culture is erased and the
Englishwoman Edith and her culture are adopted.

In both Sketches and “Edith,” the Englishwomen are dying, yet their death marks
a rebirth. Edith’s death marks the fulfillment of her purpose; she builds a bridge, albeit a
bridge built of conversion, between her culture and the Native American’s. Just as
Oriana looks forward to a reunion in heaven, so too does Edith; however, her reunion is
not with her lost husband, but with her Native parents once they die. While Oriana is
leaving Zachary and Martha behind, Edith must leave in order to reunite with her Native
family: “Now she might pass in hope, her work was done./And she was passing from the
woods away;/the broken flower of England might not stay/Amidst those alien shades; her
eye was bright/ Ev’n yet with something of a starry light,/But her form wasted, and her
fair young cheek/Wore oft and patiently a fatal streak,/A rose whose root was death.”74
At the beginning of the poem, Edith is also “hoping” to save her husband’s life, and now
she is “pass[ing] in hope” that she has rescued her Native parents. While a division still
exists between “the broken flower of England” and “those alien shades,” Edith’s death
will erase this division, by marking their own path to heaven.

In Edith’s final scene, the religious conversion of the Natives will become
permanent. At the same time, the new identity of Britons will be performed and to show
this, Hemans borrows language directly from Sigourney’s Sketches:

Unto her couch life’s farewell sweetness bore;/Then with a look where all
her hope awoke,/ ‘My father!’—to the grey-hair’d chief she spoke--/
‘Know’st thou that I depart?’—‘I know, I know,’/He answer’d
mournfully, ‘that thou must go/To thy belov’d, my daughter!’—‘Sorrow
not/For me, kind mother!’ with meek smiles once more/She murmur’d in

72 Wolfson 365. Lines 121-3, 128-32.
73 Wolfson 365. Line 137.
By referring to the Natives as “my father” and “kind mother,” and they referring to Edith as “my daughter,” Hemans is depicting a successful conversion, where all members adopt not only each other, but also the same, Christian God. The Natives are no longer “alien” to Edith because “[t]he Saviour’s prayer, which now [they] know” ensures that they have adopted her ways, and will follow her to “the better shore.” In her last breath, Edith acknowledges her importance, saying that “[she] shall meet [them] there [in heaven]”; once again, Edith has become a guide to the Natives, leading them to God, Christianity, conversion. Just as Oriana’s story ends with an image of heaven, so too does Edith’s, and for both, heaven becomes a place that accepts the converted Native. Although Edith is a “broken flower of England,” she leaves behind a new bloom, a new British nation where the other, Catholics, experience the same civil liberties as Protestants.

In Sketches of Connecticut, Forty Years Since and “Edith: A Tale of the Woods,” Lydia Sigourney and Felicia Hemans redefine their respective nations. While Sigourney struggles to create a nation founded on classical republican ideals, Hemans struggles to answer the Catholic Question. Despite each of these struggles, after conversion and death, new nations exist: America becomes a nation that accepts the Natives as equals, allowing Anglo and Native Americans the opportunity to live and grow together and Britain becomes a nation that emancipates Catholics, and is no longer Protestant-only. Although time can only ensure how well, if at all, these imagined nations will last, as one will read in the next chapter, for Britain at least the anti-slavery movement would help them accept Catholic Emancipation, and their new identity, because even “if [they] could no longer posture so confidently as being exclusively and uniquely Protestants, they could still see themselves as being different and better than their European neighbors and even their one time American colonists.”

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75 Wolfson 366. Lines 164-73, 179-81.
76 Colley 361.
Chapter Two

“Uneasy Mirrors”: Imagining the Nation in Felicia Hemans’s “The American Forest-Girl” and Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*

The argument Giles sets forth in *Transatlantic Insurrections*, stating that the “process of mutual mirroring and intertwining [between Britain and America] serves radically to destabilize authority,” is also useful when examining how Hemans’s poem “The American Forest-Girl,” which indirectly comments upon the colonial slavery debates during the 1820s and 1830s in Britain, influences Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie, or Early Times in the Massachusetts*. By imagining a Utopian nation, in “The American Forest-Girl” Hemans succeeds at creating a British identity that shows how Britain might overcome slavery’s “disorienting shadow”; yet in *Hope Leslie* Sedgwick’s imagined nation and American identity does not protest against slavery, and the injustices slavery produces persist. The “mutual mirroring and intertwining” of these two texts again reveals that it is the British author that writes America. Hemans asserts, twenty-six years before *Uncle Tom in England* would, that “England, perhaps more than any other nation, owes a duty to America,” and her poems suggests that “certainly no other people can perform such a duty so effectively as the English.”

The “abolitionist political project” began in Great Britain in 1772 with the Mansfield Decision, which stated that “slavery was not lawful in England”; specifically, Lord Mansfield proclaimed that “England was ‘a soil whose air is deemed too pure for slaves to breathe in.’” However, the slave trade was not “legally abolished” until 1807, and even after this slavery still continued in the British colonies. In her introduction to “The Emancipation Debate,” a volume in *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Writing in the British Romantic Period*, Debbie Lee cites Wilberforce’s “Appeal to the Inhabitants of the British Empire,” where Wilberforce states “that such a system should so long have been suffered to exist in any part of the British Empire will appear, to our

80 Mellor and Matlak 55.
prosperity, almost incredible.”81 Here, by calling attention to the “incredible” length of Britain’s tie to “such a system” as slavery, Lee recognizes Britain’s influence on other nations, especially America. Britain quickly turned their anti-slavery opinion into an opportunity to “transform the world overseas”82 by being the first nation to rid itself of slavery.

Although Britain officially abolished colonial slavery in 1833, it was not until 1838, with the passing of the Immediate Abolition Act, which called for the “immediate, not gradual abolition of slavery,”83 that Britain could accomplish its international mission: ridding the rest of the world of slavery.84 Lee writes that “for the British of the early nineteenth century, the ending of slavery was a major national and international step[,]” which “represented the dismantling of a system of labour [as well as] a system that united Europe, Africa, and the Americas[; however] … more than anything, it signified a profound step for the nation of British people—this debate initiated a review of not just the issues raised by the argument itself but their perceptions of themselves.”85

In “The American Forest-Girl,” Felicia Hemans alters “[British people’s] perception of themselves,” thereby indirectly taking part in the colonial slavery debates by imagining an America where the English are granted salvation, allowing them to feel pity for the Native Americans. In Memorials of Mrs. Hemans with Illustrations of her Literary character from her Private Correspondence, Henry Chorley uses Records of Woman (1828), which includes “The American Forest-Girl” though this poem was published in New Monthly Magazine two years earlier in April 1826,86 to introduce the “private” Hemans; in specific he writes that Records of Woman is the “[work] by which
she is most universally known." In this poem, Hemans aligns herself with the Evangelical Christians’ anti-slavery position, which practiced a “belief in humanity with a strong sense of individual guilt as well as a desire to relieve the sufferings of people through good works.” While Hemans’s work may have been known in America, her poem imagines an America that is in opposition to one of the key ways Americans imagined themselves. Hemans’s American forest-girl watches with “pity” and guilt as the Native Americans move to put the English captive to death. Her “desire to relieve [his] suffering” forces her to “intrude” upon the scene, saving not only the English captive but also the Native Americans.

As Chorley writes in his Memorials, “it may be well to allude to the fame which she had already gained in America by her writings”; he proceeds to note that “a host of imitators had sprung up there [in America].” As I will argue here, one “Hemans ‘imitator’” is Catharine Maria Sedgwick. While in her book Wolfson argues that “Felicia Hemans also read Catherine Maria Sedgwick’s Hope Leslie” as preparation for writing “The American Forest-Girl,” the evidence suggests the influence ran the other way. While Wolfson cites Chorley’s Memorials as the source of her claim, the only reference to Hope Leslie in this text simply states, “I send ‘Hope Leslie.’” Here, Hemans acknowledges her familiarity with Sedgwick’s work, yet the reference is too ambiguous to conclude that Hemans read Hope Leslie. In fact, Hope Leslie was not even published until 1827 in America, and 1828 in England, giving further proof that Sedgwick and her novel could not have influenced Hemans or “The American Forest-Girl.” Instead, as stated earlier, Hemans and her poem influenced Sedgwick.

Although Sedgwick published Hope Leslie with the intention of “fostering] a cultural identity other than that derived from the former mother country,” her text is a mirror, though an “uneasy” one, of Hemans’s poem; thus, just as Hemans is engaging in

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87 Henry F Chorley, Memorials of Mrs. Hemans with Illustrations of her Literary Character from her Private Correspondence (New York: Saunder and Otley, 1836) 1.103.
88 Chorley 1. 107.
89 Wolfson 389.
90 Chorley 1. 244.
92 Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Hope Leslie, or Early Times in the Massachusetts (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990) xxi.
the colonial slavery debates, so too is Sedgwick. According to William and Jane Pease, editors of *The Antislavery Argument*, “the British [people’s] antislavery actions so frequently served as models for the American cause,” that in 1824 when the British adopted “the doctrine of immediatism” regarding the abolition of slavery, they sought to introduce their “American colleagues” to it.93 It is not out of the ordinary then that in response, Sedgwick would imitate the plot of Hemans’s poem; however, what is interesting is that Sedgwick alters the conclusion of this plot. This reworking is Sedgwick’s attempt to “map out”94 an American identity that is different from “that derived from the former mother country.” While Sedgwick succeeds in defining America apart from Britain, imagining an American identity in opposition to Hemans’s—a nation where “the white man and Indian can no more mingle”—she also intrudes upon the colonial slavery debates. By altering the conclusion of Hemans’s poem, Sedgwick removes, from *Hope Leslie*, the guilt and pity Hemans’s poem and the debates relied upon.

Sedgwick’s novel as well as Hemans’s poem perform the work of nation creation. However it is, ironically, the British author who imagines the “horizontal” nation formulated by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Anderson argues that a nation is “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”95 According to Anderson, “no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind”; in other words, nations will continue to exist even if mankind ceases to exist. In conjunction with this idea, he writes that “nations dream of being free.”96 However, with this admission, he introduces the “creole,” people “of pure European descent but born in the Americas,”97 who compromise the nation’s “dream of being free.” Because their birth place is in America, they are never really considered “of pure European descent,” despite the fact that they are “largely indistinguishable” from members of their own country. Creoles are always

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94 Giles 126.
96 Anderson 7.
97 Anderson 47.
already “consigned … to subordination.”

98 However, according to Anderson, “all [new American states] were creole states, formed and led by people who shared a common language and common descent with those against whom they fought.”

99 This change came about, as Anderson writes, in the early nineteenth century, when the “‘model’ of ‘the’ independent national state was available for pirating.” At this time, the creoles, the “oppressed compatriots,” were “invite[ed] in[to]” the nation, reshaping the nation as “the ultimate locus of sovereignty” shifted to include “the collectivity of [a particular nation’s] readers and speakers.” In allowing creoles to become a part of the nation, “serfdom had to go [and] legal slavery [became] unimaginable.”

100 These definitions and ideas of nation coincide with the nations that are “imagined” in both “The American Forest-Girl” and Hope Leslie. In each of these works, Hemans and Sedgwick take part in nation-building, in particular “America-building,” creating two different Americas. It is the British writer, Hemans, who recognizes the value of America’s “oppressed compatriots,” Native Americans; therefore, she imagines a nation where they were “invited in.”

In Chorley’s Memorials, Hemans’s fascination and, to some extent, respect for Native American culture reveals itself. Referring several times to “Indian life,” she writes at one point: “For my part, I am never the least surprised to hear of people becoming fascinated with Indian life, and giving up all our boast refinements for the range of the tameless forests.”

102 Here, by recognizing other’s “fascination” with “Indian life,” she can justify her own. Even more importantly, though, is the value she places upon their “tameless forests,” which are worth more “boast” than “civilized” society’s supposed “refinements.” Chorley notes that Hemans continues this fascination of and esteem for Native American culture to the end of her life, including a letter in his Memorials when she writes, “I am thinking generously of gypseys and Indians and all the free creatures that live under the sky.”

103 Again, she attaches a value to “Indian life.” Here, she imagines the “Indians” as noble savages, simple, uncorrupted, “free creatures.”

98 Anderson 58.
99 Anderson 47.
100 Anderson 81.
101 Anderson 82.
102 Chorley 1.245.
103 Chorley 1.232.
In “The American Forest-Girl” Hemans tells the utopian story of an English boy held captive by Natives in the American wilderness. While the Native Americans are preparing him for death, the English captive thinks of his home in England; at the same time an American forest-girl looks on, thinking of her own dead brother. Just before the captive is to be killed, the forest-girl steps from behind the trees, and proclaims that the captive “shall not die.” Her statement stops the Native Americans’ sacrifice ceremony and as she is running back into the forest, the Natives are letting their captive go. Although the forest-girl is not quite British, not quite American and not quite Native American, she successfully crosses between all three cultures at once, “freeing” both the English captive and his Native American captors.

In “The American Forest-Girl,” the forest is a dangerous place, where the fire is “fiercely bright” and “blaz[ing].” While “strange sounds” fill the forest, it is more than a “strange” place; it is also a prison, holding an Englishman captive. The captive, “a youth, a fair-haired youth of England,” who stands “like a king’s son,” is in a foreign, “strange” land. The captive is not a creole; instead, he is directly linked to the mother country, “England,” and more importantly, the monarchy, being “like a king’s son.” However, the captive is still imprisoned in the forest: “With tall plumes crested and wild hues o’erspread,/Girt him like feverish phantoms; and pale stars/Looked thro’ the branches as thro’ dungeon bars, shedding no hope.” Here, the wilderness physically imprisons the captive; the “tall plumes and wild hue” strap, “girt,” him in, and the branches, like “dungeon bars,” offer no escape, “[shed] no hope.”

While looking like a statue, “his press’d lips look’d marble,” “who could tell of what within his secret heart befell?” Hemans informs the reader that the captive “[thinks] of his far home.” Here, Hemans begins to uproot the British domestic scene, implanting it in the American wilderness. Just as there appears to be no hope for the English captive, he thinks of his home in England. Although the “dark” forest where

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104 Wolfson 390. Line 66.
106 Wolfson 390. Line 32.
111 Wolfson 389. Line 16.
Native Americans gather around a “fierce” fire surrounds the captive physically, the domestic scene of his “far home” is “clear as day”\(^{112}\) in his mind. Mentally, the captive is surrounded by a “gentle mirth,”\(^{113}\) where his sisters “wander hand in hand and gather round the hearth.” Unlike the “fierce” fire in the wilderness, the “hearth” in the captive’s “happy hall of England”\(^{114}\) is surrounded by maternal love, not savage hatred.

At this moment, Hemans introduces the American forest-girl. “A young slight girl, a fawn-like child,”\(^{115}\) the American forest-girl embodies nature. Because she is “of green Savannas and the leafy wild,”\(^{116}\) she absorbs the Native American’s culture, becoming part of it. However at the same time the American forest-girl, being a woman, possesses, as Hemans’s epigraph states, “a fearful gift, a power to suffer and to love, therefore thou so canst pity.”\(^{117}\) Being able to pity the captive’s situation, she is also able to insert herself into his domestic memory, creating “the happy hall of England” in the American forest.

The American forest-girl asserts her liminal position to rescue the English captive, “dar[ing] [t]o intrude” upon the Native American’s vengeance. In this poem, Hemans’s forest girl is “sway’d by passion”\(^{118}\) and pity. As “the pity of her soul [grows] strong,”\(^{119}\) the American forest-girl creates a domestic scene in the forest as “to the stake she rush[es],”\(^{120}\) becoming a surrogate mother when she “gently lay[s] [the captive’s] bright head on her bosom.” Here, the American forest-girl declares freedom in a “clear-toned voice,”\(^{121}\) freeing the captive from the stake and his death.

However, the American forest-girl also frees the Native Americans from their “vengeful mood.” In “The American Forest-Girl,” “God’s mercy” is not “suited” to the Native American’s Great Spirit; instead, the American forest-girl expands the frame of religion, bridging the Native American’s belief in the Great Spirit with Christianity’s belief in heaven: “Something o’ermaster’d them from that young mien--/Something of

\(^{112}\) Wolfson 389. Line 19-20, 24-25.
\(^{113}\) Wolfson 389. Line 23.
\(^{114}\) Wolfson 390. Line 39
\(^{115}\) Wolfson 390. Line 53.
\(^{116}\) Wolfson 390. Line 54.
\(^{117}\) Wolfson 389.
\(^{118}\) Wolfson 390. Line 61.
\(^{119}\) Wolfson 390. Line 60.
\(^{120}\) Wolfson 390. Line 61.
\(^{121}\) Wolfson 390. Line 66.
heaven, in silence felt and seen;/And seeming, to their child-like faith, a token/That the
Great Spirit by her voice had spoken.”122 The American forest-girl is “something of heaven” while at the same time “by her voice had spoken the Great Spirit.” Here, the American forest-girl converts the forest: “the gloomy forest thrill’d to [her] sweet sound.”123 In achieving this conversion, she is able to convert the Native Americans; their “dark souls bow’d before the maid.”124 Instead of holding someone captive, they are being held, captivated, by the forest-girl.

When the American forest-girl “intrude[s]”125 upon the Native American’s physical and the English captive’s mental scene, she completes her cross between both cultures, assimilating herself into the British domestic scene while at the same time converting the forest and capturing the Native Americans. In this poem then Hemans “invites” the Native Americans into American culture by having her American forest-girl occupy a liminal space, which allows her to bring together Native American, British and Anglo-American cultures at once. Through this assembling of different cultures, forming one nation, Hemans composes a poem that revalues American and, at the same time, British national identity. Hemans imagines a Utopia, a nation that hides “[…] inequality and exploitation,” and achieves Anderson’s idea of nationhood, as she “invites in” the oppressed Native Americans, forming a “[…] deep horizontal comradeship.”

In contradistinction, the inequalities and exploitation do prevail in Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*, and no single character is able to exist in the same liminal space as the American forest-girl. Set in seventeenth century America, Sedgwick’s novel details the struggles between Anglo and Native Americans. These struggles begin when William Fletcher, who is in love with his royalist uncle’s daughter, Alice, decides to leave England to pursue his Puritan beliefs in America because his uncle tells him, in order to marry Alice, he must relinquish them. After leaving for America, both he and Alice marry other people; Alice has two daughters, Hope and Faith Leslie, and William has one son, Everell, who is friends with the two Native American siblings, Magawisca and

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122 Wolfson 390. Line 75-78.
124 Wolfson 391. Line 71.
125 Wolfson 390. Line 51.
Oneco, who work in his home. William soon receives a communication from England, telling him that Alice has died and that she wants him to raise her daughters.

When the day arrives for William to pick up Hope and Faith, he sends Faith back early with his other men, and decides to travel home a little later with Hope. The day that William and Hope are supposed to arrive home, their village is raided by Mononotto, Magawisca and Oneco’s father, who leaves with his daughter and son, while also capturing Faith and Everell. Although Mononotto plans to kill Everell, right before he is to die, Magawisca rescues him, and he returns safely to his father’s house. After arriving home, he meets Hope for the first time and they become close friends. Meanwhile, Hope’s sister, Faith, has wed herself to Oneco. By the novel’s end, all the main characters have, at some point, been captured and rescued.

These captivities form the basis of *Hope Leslie* and are directly related to the tangled relationships that exist among Everell, Magawisca, Hope, Faith and Oneco. In order to disentangle these relationships, Sedgwick “imagines the nation.” Unlike Hemans’s “imagined community” though, Sedgwick’s nation not only continues to exist without Native Americans—it is not “coterminous with [them]”—but also relies upon “being free” from them. In doing so, Sedgwick’s imagined nation asserts and relies upon the image of the “vanishing Indian.” In Astrid Wind’s article, “‘Adieu to all’: The Death of the American Indian at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century,” she details the use of Indian themes in both American and British literature. She writes that “Indians are featured with greater frequency and increased approval in literary, philosophical and political writings of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.”

In particular, she concludes that both British and American authors portray Indians as a vanishing race, “doomed to recede before a nation of Christians.”

This image of the “doomed” Indian provides the basis for Sedgwick’s imagined nation; however, at the same time her novel uses this image to recognize America’s duplicitous identity. In *Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic*, Edward Watts writes that America is both “colonizer and colonized at once,” and claims that not acknowledging this “becomes more than self-deception,” that such an admission “might

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127 Wind 39.
soften policies toward natives while simultaneously revaluing national identity.”

Through authorial intrusions, Sedgwick shows that she acknowledges America’s hypocritical identity by claiming her “imagined community” is not at all imagined and is, instead, real:

We hope our readers will not think we have wantonly sported with their feelings, by drawing a picture of calamity that only exists in the fictitious tale. No—such events, as we have feebly related, were common in our early annals, and attended by horrors that it would be impossible for the imagination to exaggerate. Not only families, but villages, were cut off by the most dreaded of all foes—the ruthless, vengeful savage. We forget that the noble pilgrims lived and endured for us. What was their reward? Fortune?—distinctions?—the sweet charities of home? No—but their feet were planted on the mouth of vision, and they saw, with sublime joy, a multitude of people where the solitary savage roamed the forest—the forest vanished, and pleasant villages and busy cities appeared—the tangled foot-path expanded to the thronged high-way—the consecrated church planted on the rock of heathen sacrifice.

Here, Sedgwick asserts that the nation she is imagining is not “a picture of calamity that only exists in the fictitious tale”; instead, it is a historically accurate picture, according to “early annals” of the period. Just as Wind’s article acknowledges that “those who were not ‘friends’ of the colonists made their mark on the literature at the turn of the eighteenth century,” so too Sedgwick incorporates these “dreaded foes, the ruthless vengeful savage.” However, Sedgwick is conceding more than the “hostile encounters” between Native Americans and colonists; she is also accepting as true that “the historical context [of these encounters] create[s] the need to perceive the Indian as a soon to be extinct species.” In Hope Leslie, the colonists’ vision is one of “sublime joy,” where the multitudes of Native Americans are replaced by a multitude of Anglo-Americans. In this passage, not only the forest, but also the Native American vanishes.

Sedgwick confirms this vision of America through Mr. Fletcher. Just as the British writer Hemans recognizes America’s duplicitous identity in “The American Forest-Girl,” so too does the British colonist recognize it in this American novel. Mr.

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129 Sedgwick 72-3.
130 Wind 43.
131 Wind 43.
132 Wind 45.
Fletcher flees England to escape its religious oppressiveness, only to find that America has its own inequalities: “He was shocked when a religious republic, which he fancied to be founded on the basis of established truth, was disturbed by the out-break of heresies; and his heart sickened when he saw those, who had sacrificed whatever man holds dearest to religious freedom, imposing those shackles on others from which they had just released themselves at such a price.” Here, Sedgwick visualizes both Britain and America, showing how the “colonized” can become the “colonizer.” Individuals in the new world “sacrificed” their lives to establish “a religious republic”; however, they also “sacrificed” Native Americans, “imposing those shackles on [them] from which they had just [been] released.” Originally founded as an asylum for the oppressed, America soon became a site of oppression, colonizing Native Americans.

In order to complicate this vision of America, Sedgwick introduces Hope Leslie, who becomes, in part, a humanitarian colonist. Through her description, Hope becomes Sedgwick’s “American forest-girl” and, like Hemans’s forest-girl, she is linked to nature:

Nothing could be more unlike the authentic, ‘thoroughly educated,’ and thoroughly disciplined young ladies of the present day, than Hope Leslie; as unlike a mountain rill to a canal—the one leaping over rocks and precipices, sportive, free, and beautiful, or stealing softly on…Her love for exploring hill and dale, ravine and precipice, had given her that elastic step and ductile grace which belong to all agile animals.

Hope Leslie is “a fawn-like child,” having “that elastic step and ductile grace which belongs to all agile animals.” Like the American forest-girl, her home is in the forest; Sedgwick writes, “there [is] never any keeping her within the four walls of a house.”

However, even as Hope, being of nature, is similar to the American forest-girl, she does not occupy the same liminal space. Despite her animal-like qualities and her humanitarian thinking, Hope Leslie cannot unite the Anglo and Native American because she, at times, feels threatened by the Natives’ culture. Hope’s sister, Faith Leslie embodies the “dual threat” Wind describes. According to Wind, “the numerous captivity narratives of the eighteenth century and unwritten stories of white men and women who refused to leave their adopted Indian families made clear that the Indian posed a dual

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133 Sedgwick 16.
134 Sedgwick 121-2.
135 Wolfson 390. Line 53.
136 Sedgwick 173.
threat to the advance of white civilization, one that was at once physical and spiritual.”

Following her capture, Faith marries Oneco, physically and spiritually uniting herself to the Native American’s culture. Once she has “mat[ed] to [a new] parent nest” and “mingle[ed] with [Indian] waters,” Faith is neither English nor American; instead, now she is only Native American: “She and my brother are as if one life-chord bound them together; and besides, your sister cannot speak to you and understand you as I do. She was very young when she was taken where she has only heard the Indian tongue; some, you know, are like water, that retains no mark; and others, like the flinty rock, that never loses a mark.” Unlike the American forest-girl, Faith does not occupy a liminal space; she is “like water, that retains no mark” of her previous culture. In her “savage attire,” the only English she knows is “No speak Yengees,” and even this phrase “exhaust[s]” her. She is “bound” to the Native American, wearing his clothing, speaking his language, being a member of his culture.

Although Hope does not understand why her sister, Faith, cannot return to her Anglo-American family, Oneco’s sister and Everell’s childhood friend, Magawisca, does; she understands that the two “nations,” Anglo and Native Americans, are always at war. America may have been formed to be a religious haven, yet Native Americans know first-hand that its retreat from the religious beliefs it was formed to embrace threatens the Native American: “The English turned and gave them battle. All fled save my brother, and him they took prisoner. They pressed him with offers of life and reward; he faithfully refused, and with one saber-stroke they severed his head from his body.”

In this passage, the English captors and Native American captive are “liable to hybridization,” capable of blending into the other culture. In this moment, the captive Native American is more “civilized,” “faithfully refus[ing]” the English’s “offers of life and reward” while the English are the savages, who “with one saber-stroke sever [the captive’s] head.”

Through this twisting and fragmenting of Anglo and Native Americans, cultural categories in Sedgwick’s text get confused. Because of this, there is no inferior creole

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137 Wind 48.
138 Sedgwick 187.
139 Sedgwick 192-3.
140 Sedgwick 227-8.
141 Sedgwick 50-1.
because no creole exists; colonizers are colonizers, whether they are born in America, like Everell, or in England, like those who killed her brother: “You English tell us, Everell, that the book of your law is better than that written on our hearts, for ye say it teaches mercy, compassion, forgiveness—if ye had such a law and believed it, would ye thus have treated a captive boy?” Unlike the Anglo-American’s beliefs, which are written in a “book of law,” Magawisca’s are “written on [her] heart.” Questioning not only their beliefs, “if ye had such a law” and their actions, “would ye thus have treated a captive boy,” Magawisca challenges the superiority of the Anglo-American to the Native American.

However, Sedgwick’s America relies upon this “superior Anglo/inferior Native American relationship.” Specifically, Sedgwick uses this “superior/inferior” relationship to expose, just as Magawisca does, the hypocrisy in Christianity, but unlike Magawisca, she does not reject this relationship. Instead, Sedgwick uses this moment to reinforce the unequal relationship between the Native and Anglo-American, justifying the racism that divides the two: “The contrariety between its divine principles and the conduct of its professors; which, instead of always being a medium for the light that emanates from our holy law, is too often the darkest cloud that obstructs the passage of its rays to the hearts of heathen men.” While Sedgwick acknowledges that “the contrariety between [Christianity’s] divine principles and the conduct of its professors” is “the most serious obstacle to the progress of the Christian religion,” she still imagines an America that is an asylum for the Anglo-American’s religion, disregarding the Native American. She still imagines an America that is filled with superior Anglo Americans and inferior Native Americans, “heathen men.”

Sedgwick maintains this inequitable relationship through the trope of captivity, revealing how, no matter who is captured and rescued, this relationship must always exist. Unlike the American forest-girl who rescues the English captive, Magawisca, in *Hope Leslie*, is unable to save the Fletchers when her father’s tribe invades their home:

> Magawisca darted before the Indian who was advancing towards Mrs. Fletcher with an uplifted hatchet. ‘You shall hew me to pieces ere you

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142 Sedgwick 51.
143 Sedgwick 51.
144 Sedgwick 51.
touch her,’ she said, and planted herself as a shield before her beneactress. The warrior’s obdurate heart untouched by the sight of the helpless mother and her little ones, was thrilled by the courage of the heroic girl—he paused and grimly smiled on her when his companion, crying, ‘hasten, the dogs will be on us!’ leveled a deadly blow at Mrs. Fletcher—but his uplifted arm was penetrated by a musket shot and the hatchet fell harmless to the floor.145

Here, Magawisca’s words only cause the warrior to “pause”; she is unable to touch his “obdurate heart.” However, Everell, using violence and firing “a musket shot,” is capable of saving his mother’s life, at least for the moment. By the end of this scene, Mrs. Fletcher is killed and Faith and Everell are taken captive by Mononotto’s tribe and, more importantly, Magawisca silently leaves the “bloody scene,” “following her father.”146 Unlike the American forest-girl, Magawisca’s language as well as her actions are ineffective; both are incapable of affecting change, of uniting the Anglo and Native American.

At the point at which Everell is taken captive, Magawisca recalls her dead mother’s words, “unwittingly touch[ing] the spring of her father’s vindictive passions.”147 However, Mononotto cannot forget Magawisca’s dead brother, who was a victim of English cruelty, forcing him to act upon his “vindictive passions.” While Hemans’s captive remembers England, Sedgwick’s captive remembers his faith, a faith that brought him to and helped construct America: “Mononotto embellished his victim with praises, as the ancients wreathed theirs with flowers. He brandished his hatchet over Everell’s head, and cried, exultingly, ‘See, he flinches not.’ Everell sunk calmly on his knees, not to supplicate life, but to commend his soul to God. He clasped his hands together. He did not—he could not speak.”148 Just as Hemans’s captive does not move, so too Everell “flinches not”; instead, he uses all of his energy to “[sink] calmly [to] his knees [and] commend his soul to God.” In the American wilderness, Everell is recreating America as an asylum for Christianity, disregarding the “dark cloud of savages”149 that surrounds him. Like Hemans’s poem, the savages here are “dark” and also only forms, creating a

145 Sedgwick 63-4.
146 Sedgwick 65.
147 Sedgwick 75.
148 Sedgwick 91-2.
149 Sedgwick 91-2.
“cloud.” Also Everell, like the English youth in “The American Forest-girl,” is absent, filled with “holy inspiration” in the same way that the English youth is absent, filled with “the happy halls of England.”

Sedgwick’s forest-girl, Magawisca, like Hemans’s, saves the English youth’s life because she is reminded of her own dead brother. Both the American forest-girl and Magawisca are true to humanity, seeing a connection between all people, despite their origins. Rejecting the “…convenient, vulgar deduction that creoles, born in a savage hemisphere, were by nature different from, and inferior to, the metropolitans[,]” who in this case are the natives, the American forest-girl and Magawisca do not look upon the captives as “…visible social groups”; instead, they look upon them with pity. As Hemans’s epigraph states, Magawisca’s gender allows her to feel and act from pity. Knowing that “the sun never sets on the soul of the man that doeth good,” she sacrifices her body because, unlike the American forest-girl, her words alone cannot save Everell’s life. In rescuing Everell, Magawisca must lose a part of herself, literally, to rescue the “enemy”: “The chief raised the deadly weapon, when Magawisca, springing from the precipitous side of the rock, screamed—‘Forbear!’ and interposed her arm. It was too late. The blow was leveled—force and direction given—the stroke aimed at Everell’s neck, severed his defender’s arm, and left him unharmed.” By “sever[ing]” Magawisca’s arm and “le[aving] [Everell] unharmed,” Sedgwick is imagining a “dead Indian,” Magawisca. In her article, Wind writes that “Indians dying or dead became the major theme of literature dealing with natives at the turn of the century when Europeans and Americans refused to understand them because the very understanding of the natives and their cultures would have eroded the myths that rationalized the progress of white civilization at the cost of native cultures”; specifically, “the only Indian in Anglo-American imagination, who would not halt the progress of white civilization, was a dead Indian.”

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150 Anderson 60.
151 Anderson 59.
152 Sedgwick 75.
153 Sedgwick 93.
154 Wind 51.
155 Wind 52.
Yet, Sedgwick complicates the “Indians dying or dead” theme because Magawisca brings her dying upon herself. The “progress of white civilization” is compromised by the Anglo-American, Everell:

Everell’s faculties were paralyzed by a rapid succession of violent emotions. He was conscious only of a feeling of mingled gratitude and admiration for his preserver. He stood motionless, gazing on her. ‘I die in vain then,’ she cried, in an accent of such despair, that he was roused…To all it seemed that his deliverance had been achieved by miraculous aid. All—the dullest and coldest, paid involuntary homage to the heroic girl, as if she were a superior being, guided and upheld by supernatural power.156

Again, Everell is “paralyzed; however, this time he is not alone. All the onlookers are also paralyzed while they “[pay] involuntary homage” to Magawisca. In this moment, the Anglo and Native American are united through their admiration of Magawisca. Similarly, in “The American Forest-Girl,” the Native Americans and English captive are also united through their admiration of the forest-girl; however in Hope Leslie, unlike the poem, the admiration does not last, and Everell is “roused” to leave the scene, thus leaving behind the hope for a different, more united America.

Like Magwisca, Hope also has the ability to “save” a captive, herself. Similar to Everell’s escape, Hope’s escape leaves behind the possibility for a more inclusive America:

Hope, even in her present extremity, forgot her fear and danger in the sublimity of the storm. When the wild flashes wrapped the bay in light, and revealed to sight the little bark leaping over the ‘yetsy waves,’ the stern figure of the old man, the graceful form of Oneco, and Hope Leslie, her eye upraised, with an instinctive exaltation of feeling, she might have been taken for some bright vision from another sphere, sent to conduct her dark companions through the last tempestuous passage of life.157

Hope is surrounded by “fear” and “danger,” as a “wild” storm “wrap[s] the bay” just as the American forest-girl is surrounded by the “wild and mournful [sounds of] the Indian drum,”158 when the captive is “bound to the stake.”159 In both “The American Forest-Girl” and Hope Leslie, a scene of danger is transformed into a scene of hope. Yet, Sedgwick continues to reinforce the divide between the Anglo and Native American,

156 Sedgwick 93.
157 Sedgwick 237.
159 Wolfson 390. Line 41-2.
creating an America that is free for the Anglo-American, and free of the Native American. Hope’s escape is not only her escape, but it is also her moment to “conduct” the Indians. Here, Sedgwick again reveals the superior/inferior relationship as the Anglo-American, Hope, can “conduct” the Native Americans, “her dark companions,” “through the last passage of life.”

Although Sedgwick frames Hope as a conductor of Native Americans, Hope Leslie ends with the Native Americans conducting themselves, not toward the Anglo-Americans but away from them. Specifically, Magawisca leads this flight, becoming the voice of knowledge in Sedgwick’s novel as she fully understands the consequences of the Anglo-American’s presence to the history of the Native American: “My people have been spoiled—we cannot take as a gift that which is our own—the law of vengeance is written on our hearts—you say you have a written rule of forgiveness—it may be better—if ye would be guided by it—it is not for us—the Indian and the white man can no more mingle, and become one, than day and night.”

...Magawisca’s “deep invincible sense” forces her to recognize the Native American’s reality, and how the hypocrisy of the new settlers has helped create this reality. By exploring Anglo-American religious beliefs, showing how their actions contradict these beliefs, Magawisca exposes a “colonizer yet colonized at once”:

...While the Native American is “an integral part of the American environment,” the Anglo-American’s colonial mission supercedes the Native American’s relationship to their land. With the Anglo-American’s presence, the Native American must “vanisheth,” either by a natural tempest or, and more likely, by the Anglo-American’s axe, his colonial mission. Just as Wind writes in her article, so too
Magawisca knows that the Indian is “a race doomed to recede and vanish” before the Anglo-American; “the Indian and white man can no more mingle.”

Catharine Maria Sedgwick imagines, in *Hope Leslie*, a nation where the Native American is not “invited in,” thereby challenging the “imagined community” Felicia Hemans envisions in “The American Forest-Girl.” In *Romantic Dialogues: Anglo American Continuities 1776-1862*, Richard Gravil writes that Hemans’s “Indian lyrics” helped to show how Americans were oppressing Natives just as they were trying to free themselves from their own oppressors, Britain. Here, Gravil, like Giles in *Transatlantic Insurrections*, suggests that the relationship between Britain and America is an “uneasy mirror.” By writing “Indian lyrics,” Hemans reflects America’s identity as colonized subject of Britain while at the same time shattering that identity by revealing it as a colonizer of Native Americans. While both authors recognize America’s “colonized” yet “colonizer” status, thereby indirectly taking part in the colonial slavery debates in Britain during the 1820s and 1830s, it is the British author that supercedes this category. In her poem, Hemans imagines an America that Sedgwick is not able to, and in doing so, she “maps out” a British identity that is superior to the identity Sedgwick “maps out” in *Hope Leslie*. By imagining a nation that “invites in” Native Americans, Hemans shows how Britain can eradicate slavery; thereby becoming a “better” nation than America.

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165 Wind 39.
Conclusion

At the center of my thesis are the transatlantic conversations that were occurring between Felicia Hemans and several prominent women writers during the early nineteenth century. While Giles maintains that the opposing relationship between Britain and America allows them to become “uneasy mirrors,” he suggests that the mirror only works one-way, that only America helped to redefine Britain. By considering the transatlantic dialogues between women writers in the nineteenth century, and how these conversations helped them think about the nation, I have shown that the mirror reflects in both ways. Both British and American writers used one another not just to define their nations, but also to redefine their national identities.

Specifically, in examining Hemans’s American wilderness poetry, I revealed how she employs the trope of captivity as well as Native Americans to engage in her own nation’s political debates. In doing so, she not only is writing “America” but also Britain, suggesting that it can function as a more superior nation than America. Hemans’s poetry and even Hemans herself then, move beyond the category of “feminine accomplishment.”  

Like other nineteenth century women authors, Hemans’s work became more than a political text; through transatlantic conversations, it became an important political document that “map[ped] out” national identities.

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167 Wolfson xv.
168 Giles 126.